

UELRR Advisory Committee Meeting

Meeting of May 14, 2009

MINUTES

The UELRR Advisory Committee met at the Louisiana Department of Revenue on Thursday, May 14, 2009 at ten o'clock a.m. (10:00 a.m.)

Committee Members present were: Chairman, Mark West, Cynthia Bridges, Cynthia Boudreaux, Henri Louapre and Roy Austin (by phone). Also present were Rick Mekdessie (RAMware), Stacy Garrett and Krissy Thomas (Revenue).

Chairman West declared the meeting duly convened at 10:09 a.m.

Board Member Roy Austin made a motion to adopt the minutes from Advisory Committee meeting of February 19, 2009, the motion was seconded by Cynthia Boudreaux and the committee all agreed. Minutes were adopted.

The following agenda items were discussed by the committee:

1.) Bandwidth Issues

- Issues have been resolved.

2.) LDR Logo Removed from the website

- Rick Mekdessie of RAMware says this wasn't intentional. When they replaced the LDR logo at the bottom of the page with the Parish E-File logo it disappeared.
- The LDR logo will be put back on the website.

3.) Progress of Validation System

- Some parishes are having issues with getting it on their system. on January 12, 2009.
- Working with East Baton Rouge Parish right now.
- Parishes not only want to validate the account numbers but also the columns. Rick is looking into this option.
- Should have made some progress by the next meeting.
- Iberia Parish is up next for the validation system.
- Cynthia Boudreaux asked how Jefferson Parish has been handling the system and Rick answered that Jefferson is handling it well with little to no problems.
- Evangeline is also coming up. One issue has been with integration between the two systems.

4.) System Change Request Form

- Parishes should request changes and then it is to be evaluated by the committee for a decision.

- Orleans – Asking for a selector at the top of their form for taxpayers to select whether they need to file and pay 4.5% food /prescription drug tax. Rick reminded the committee that Orleans is the only parish whose has a different form due to the negligence penalty. Rick referred to the committee for an answer. Secretary Cynthia Bridges made a motion that we allow this change and her motion was seconded by Henri Louapre and all agreed.
- Secretary Bridges added that if we start to get a lot of requests like these then we need to think about charging the parishes for the changes they want and asked for suggestions from other members. In further discussion it was suggested that regular system changes (that will affect and benefit everyone) should be absorbed but special features specific to just that parish should be absorbed by the parish.
- Terrebonne Parish is asking for a feature that will allow clerical users of the system to be able to view information without having access to alter information. Cynthia Boudreaux made a motion to allow this feature to be added and it was seconded by Henri Louapre and all agreed.

5.) Optional Exemptions

- The Legislature passes exemptions for the state and have made them optional exemptions for the parishes. The issue is that the parishes have many different exemptions and columns on their forms. TIFs (Tax Increment Financing) have also become an issue.
- Chairman West brought up the paper return and the upcoming meeting that he will be having with the representative from the eight regions around LATA to discuss the uniform paper return. He believes this will be an issue that revolves around the paper return. Rick thinks it's a good idea to wait and see the outcome of Chairman West's meeting. Chairman West proposed a horizontal return instead of a vertical return and believes that may take care of the optional exemption issue.
- Chairman West's meeting concerning the paper return will be May 27, 2009 in Alexandria.
- Chairman West requested from the committee members that he would like to see sales tax returns from other states. Roy Austin suggested looking at Arkansas and Texas. Henri Louapre and Roy Austin both spoke of Mississippi's return which business seems to like.
- Rick suggested a "Classic Return" in which the parishes would have the option to choose which column to put information in.

6.) Helpdesk for Taxpayers

- RAMware is receiving a lot calls regarding filing dates and thinks if they had a representative from the LDR to answer questions for Revenue. Secretary Cynthia Bridges suggested a Parish E-File mailbox for those questions.
- Revenue will work on getting a contact for RAMware. Rick will email Secretary Bridges with the phone number they have been giving out to taxpayers.

7.) Website Banner

- RAMware would like permission to give the website a little enhancement. Approval was given.

8.) Funding

- Secretary Bridges informed the committee that there is sufficient funding now for maintaining the system but if we would like to add enhancements or any mandatory changes that will need to be made we may need to go ahead a start looking at requesting additional funding. Secretary Bridges reminded the committee that we need to request the money a year in advance.

Public Comments: Secretary Bridges informed the committee that she has informed the Boards and Commissions of the UELRRAC and its membership. Rick also gave an updated numbers for Parish E-File. At the end of April we have collected about \$347 million, 166,000 returns have been filed and there are about 15,000 users. Chairman West added that he would also like to take a look at the people who are not filing. An electronic mandate was discussed as an option for the parishes. Roy Austin suggested to the committee that if an electronic mandate is required then it should be mandatory for all parishes. Chairman West agreed with Mr. Austin but thought that we should maybe wait until the system's anniversary to discuss further. Another suggestion brought up was that the committee meet every other month.

The next Advisory Committee Meeting is scheduled for Thursday, September 10, 2009 at 10:00 AM, and will be at the Louisiana Department of Revenue, 2nd Floor Calcasieu Room.

There being no further agenda items or public comments Roy Austin made a motion to adjourn the meeting and the committee seconded the motion. Chairman West then carried that the meeting be adjourned at 11:16 a.m.

Respectfully submitted by:

Mark West, Chairman