

County Government Budgeting: Profile

Funny About Money

It helps to have a head for numbers and a heart for self-deprecation if you plan to be a tax assessor-collector.

Williamson County Tax Assessor-Collector Deborah Hunt was on a float with an army of children throwing candy during a Fourth of July parade last year when the announcer, an old friend, took a shot.



"This year she's giving back," he cracked, "instead of taking."

Zing.

"You need a sense of humor in this job," Hunt said. "People who know me know my sense of humor. They know they can have at it."

Still, it's not Hunt's ability to take a joke that's kept her as one of the most recognizable officials in the nation's sixth-fastest growing county. Instead, it stems from her ability to oversee the annual collection of more than \$500 million in taxes from 77 jurisdictions, as well as title fees for the more than 350,000 vehicles registered in Williamson County.

That and the fact that nearly every adult in the county of more than 400,000 has written a check to Hunt since she took office almost 13 years ago.

The Texas Tax Code holds assessor-collectors personally liable for lost or misplaced funds, unless a court finds no negligence or misconduct.

Like all tax assessor-collectors, Hunt is bonded, "but it's not even close to one day's bank deposit from the tax office," she says.

"In all the counties the tax assessor usually has the highest name recognition and gets the most votes," Hunt says. "That's not an ego thing for me. I realize it's all about name recognition."

Hunt, a sixth-generation Texan, got her tax collecting start when a PTA connection helped her get a job as a Municipal Utility District tax collector. She was elected to the Williamson County office in 1996.

Along the way she's made customer service her main focus.

"Hopefully few go to jail or have business with the sheriff or constable and not as many deal with the clerk and other offices," she says. "But virtually everyone has business with the tax assessor. We're the face of county government."

An avowed technophile, Hunt keeps her office on the cutting edge. She's working to eliminate convenience charges on credit and debit card payments and expanding more taxpayer services to the Internet.

"We have a generation coming up that's becoming more and more inclined to do that," she says. "My vision is that nearly all of it will be done online."

Learn more about the [Williamson County Tax Assessor-Collector's office](#).

Find out about the [Tax Collector-Assessor Association of Texas](#).

(Mark Wangrin)