

Uniform Electronic Local Return and Remittance Advisory Committee

Meeting of November 29, 2007

MINUTES

The Uniform Electronic Local Return and Remittance Advisory Committee Meeting met at the Louisiana Municipal Association on Thursday, November 29, 2007, at ten o'clock a.m. (10:00 a.m.).

Committee Members present were: Chairman Mark West, Roy Austin, Cynthia Bridges, Cynthia Boudreaux, and Mr. Henri Louapre.

No Committee Members were absent.

Chairman West declared the meeting duly convened, and introduced the Committee Members to the meeting attendees.

Chairman West announced that RAMware had been awarded the bid to write the Uniform Electronic Local Return and Remittance program, and introduced Rick Mekdessie of RAMware to those in attendance.

Chairman West informed those in attendance that it had been approximately one year since the last Committee Meeting, and explained that the reason for the meeting delay was because the Request for Proposals (RFPs) were reviewed in January, 2007, followed by the timely process of proposal evaluation. Thus, there was no reason to meet until the actual contract was awarded and finalized.

Mr. Mekdessie provided an overview of the project, and informed the Committee that the system will be fully functional by April 1, 2008. After discussion by the Committee, it was determined that the system will be implemented at the beginning of a quarter so that no rate change is experienced. It was decided that April 1 – September 1, 2008 will serve as a testing period, with full implementation on September 1, 2008. According to Stacy Garrett of LDR's Information Technology Division, users will be notified on June 1st that the system is available. The system will actually go "live" on July 1st, however, this date will not be advertised, but will remain a part of the testing period until full implementation on September 1st.

It was announced that, during the program's implementation, LDR's Information Technology Division will work collaboratively with RAMware. Specifically, Greg Montagnino will serve as Project Manager, and Jesse Pettyjohn will be responsible for system requirements and solidifying any changes. Mr. Austin recommended that all questions posed to the system administrators, Ms. Garrett and Mr. Pettyjohn, be collected and presented to the Committee. Secretary Bridges

suggested that, instead of conducting formal monthly meetings, the Committee could opt to bi-weekly telephone conferences or “Live” meetings via the Internet as a forum for reviewing such inquiries and issues.

Chairman West recommended that the Department of Revenue, with the assistance of RAMware, write a letter to local collectors outlining the minimum hardware and software requirements. Mr. Mekdessie suggested that LATA serve as a bank for rural areas where on-line banking is not available. He further stated that two (2) options exist for reporting purposes: keying-in the data or importing the information.

During the training phase, Ms. Garrett will develop a check-list of system operations that must be performed by the user. She will facilitate training for businesses, with emphasis on the smaller businesses, and ensure that they have the capability of performing basic operations (logging-in/out, bank transfers), and understand the fundamentals of how the system works. With regards to training for parishes and municipalities, Ms. Garrett will review their banking transactions for completeness/accuracy, and will assist in facilitating any additional training required.

Secretary Bridges recommended that training videos and a user’s manual be produced by LDR with assistance from RAMware. Mr. Pettyjohn will coordinate efforts with RAMware to produce the necessary training materials, making it user-friendly for the non-IT person, and will obtain actual testimonies from users to include in the training instruments.

Secretary Bridges further suggested that specific information and FAQs be posted on the UELRRAC webpage, and that constant reference be made to the website. RAMware will define whether a new website will be established for the system or a sub-page on the LDR website. Ms. Garrett commented that it will likely be accomplished through a separate URL.

Chairman West stated that a generic letter will be sent to the local tax collectors and their financial institution, outlining the program’s banking requirements.

Upon discussion of the validation procedure, Chairman West stated that a letter regarding rates will be mailed to each local collector’s office, requesting their confirmation of those rates. Any changes (rate, address, contact) requested by the local collector must be submitted to the Committee and LDR by “certified” mail.

Chairman West stated the need for “test files”, and Mr. Mekdessie agreed to provide test data files within the next month. In an effort to accommodate various issues that may arise, Chairman West expressed a desire that his parish (Ascension) be included in the test files, along with inclusion of Orleans Parish and smaller remote parishes in North Louisiana. The implementation of the system will be beta-tested, and Chairman West requested that LDR use its influence to get Orleans Parish “on board”.

Mr. Ray Tangney of LDR’s Policy Services Division, will work with the Committee to solidify and amend the provisional statute/law for rate change notices. Chairman West reiterated the fact that rate changes can only be made at the beginning of the quarter. To ensure a “check and

balance” system, Secretary Bridges recommended that an LDR employee review the rate change, and that this step be incorporated as a “work item”. Further, within the process, LDR will place an area for approval of the rate change.

After some discussion, it was determined that the initial focus would be the roll-out of ACH debit, in advance of ACH credit. Any problems that arise with ACH debit must be identified and resolved before proceeding to the roll-out of ACH credit. Mr. Austin voiced his concern that parishes using ACH credit cannot participate in the test period.

The issue of bulk filing was discussed, and the Committee concluded that filing requirements and additional useful information would be posted on the website. Legislation may be required for bulk filers and form companies to make form changes.

Ms. Garrett presented the Committee with a recommended solution to potential form changes, Ms. Garrett recommended that the returns be “padded” with twenty (20) additional fields, and as changes occur, those fields can be activated. This step can be accomplished with 2-3 weeks.

Chairman West voiced his concern about the impact that holidays (federal, state, local/parish) will place on the system. Any holiday observed by LDR creates an “automatic” holiday, although the local or federal office is open on that day. Secretary Bridges will provide a list of set holidays, some of which are declared, and work with IT to resolve this concern. Mr. Mekkessie will discuss the requirements at the next bi-weekly Sub-Committee meeting with local collectors and update the Advisory Committee at their January, 2008 meeting.

After discussion, it was determined that bi-weekly Sub-Committee meetings would be scheduled for the second Tuesday of each month, beginning on December 18, 2007. It was moved by Chairman West and unanimously carried by the Committee, that Bobby Craig serve as Chairman of the Sub-Committee. Chairman West stated that LATA will submit to Mr. Pettyjohn a list of members designated to serve on the Sub-Committee. Mr. Pettyjohn informed the Committee that he will secure the meeting location, develop a list of questions, create the agenda, and coordinate a “live” meeting, if necessary. Secretary Bridges made the recommendation that the meetings be held at the Department of Revenue.

Chairman West stated his desire to continue holding Advisory Committee meetings on the second Thursday of each month, beginning on January 10, 2008. This will allow the Lisa Pike will reserve a conference room at the Department of Revenue for these meetings, and will make the necessary postings to the UELRRAC webpage and to listserv.

Chairman West announced that LATA passed a Resolution that requires a single column for deductions reported on Lines 2 through 11, and Lines 13 through 25 “stack” the columns whereby taxes reported for a taxpayer’s single location will be reported in a single column representing the sum of all local taxes for that location.

To all parishes, LATA mailed a letter stating either their compliance or non-compliance to the Resolution. Chairman West updated the Committee with news that he has spoken with eight (8) of the non-compliant parishes, and they are currently making the transition. Those parishes that

remain in non-compliance will be reminded at the LATA Conference, and a second (follow-up) letter will be mailed in January, 2008, to the non-compliant offices.

Chairman West stated that a poll is necessary to determine whether figures would be reported as trunkade or rounded up. He suggested that Mr. Mekkessie discuss this item during his presentation at the next LATA meeting.

There being no further agenda items or public comments, it was moved by Mr. Austin, seconded by Mr. Louapre, and carried that the meeting be adjourned.

Mr. West declared adjournment of the meeting at 11:50 p.m.

Respectfully submitted by:

Mark West, Chairman