

Hamblen County, Tennessee, modernizes operations with Sage Fixed Assets



Some of the deeds in Hamblen County, Tennessee, date from the days of Davy Crockett, its most famous native son. So assigning a value to fixed assets owned by the county is no easy task. Since its founding after the Civil War, Hamblen County's fixed assets have all been tracked the old-fashioned way—on paper.

That all changed in 1999, when the county passed legislation that consolidated its accounts payable, payroll and other accounting functions into a newly formed finance department. At that time, Hamblen County issued a formal request for proposal (RFP) and conducted research on the Internet to evaluate automated fixed asset solutions.

“Sage Fixed Assets Government Edition with Sage Fixed Assets—Depreciation and Sage Fixed Assets Government Edition Reporting were the most userfriendly products around,” says Amanda Simerly, finance director. “We looked at several products used by other counties in Tennessee, but found they were tied to specific GL packages or accounting programs. We use proprietary software, and therefore needed the flexibility Sage Fixed Assets provides.”

Shifting through centuries of records

Existing records had been maintained manually, “if we were lucky,” Simerly says. Many departments did not have complete information, and had not updated their fixed asset data in years. To create a fixed asset database in the new software, Simerly asked department heads to list everything in their office they could touch that was worth \$5,000 or more.

“Valuing new equipment was easy,” she says. “But how do you put a price on things like the courthouse, built in 1870? Or our 415 miles of roads? We had to dig through old archives for deeds, make sure that we located all the pieces of property we actually owned, and then decide how to capitalize them. Many of the addresses were from the days when we had only one street in town, and referred to landmarks that have long since vanished.”

Hamblen County now uses Sage Fixed Assets to store data on fixed assets like roads, bridges, furniture, fixtures, machinery, vehicles, buildings, leasehold improvements, computer equipment, software, and even construction in progress. “The Sage Fixed Assets solution is wonderful,” says Simerly. “I can ask very specific questions of the database and get the exact information I need, like depreciation on all of our roads, equipment in a single location, or items purchased in a single year. It's fast, easy, and incredibly flexible.”

Challenge

Comply with new regulations to centralize, capitalize and enhance control of fixed assets owned by the county, and automate countywide records that had always been maintained manually.

Solution

Sage Fixed Assets—Depreciation provides complete database of all County assets over \$5,000, and Sage Fixed Assets—Reporting allows flexible, customizable reporting.

Customer

Hamblen County

Industry

County government

Location

Morristown, Tennessee

Number of locations

Three

Number of employees

200

System

Sage Fixed Assets

Modules

Sage Fixed Assets—Depreciation
Sage Fixed Assets—Reporting

Results

Fixed asset audits now are completed in a few minutes rather than several days; county avoided spending \$40,000 on outside consultants to set up capitalization and depreciation infrastructure.

Answers for auditors

The new tools are popular throughout the county's departments. "Our auditors just love Sage Fixed Assets," Simerly notes. "Whatever they ask of me, I can give it to them. Whereas our audit of fixed assets used to take several days, we can now do the whole thing in a few minutes."

She says Hamblen County's department heads like the new software, too. "I can forward asset lists by department or location, and ask for updates or disposals. That capability makes it easy for everyone to stay current."

Hamblen County saved money by implementing Sage Fixed Assets on its own. "Other counties in the state have spent upwards of \$40,000 hiring consultants to create and install fixed asset capitalization and depreciation programs," Simerly comments. "We avoided a similar expenditure by using Sage Fixed Assets. The product is so easy!"

Because fixed assets were not carefully tracked before implementation of Sage Fixed Assets, Simerly says it is not possible to quantify benefits of the new product. Nevertheless, she experiences plenty of qualitative improvements. "Sage Fixed Assets has saved me lots of headaches at the end of the year—when we're supposed to roll up depreciable assets into the financial statement," she says. "The software is so good that I sleep better at night."

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Amanda Simerly
Finance director
Hamblen County, Tennessee

For more info, visit: Sage.com
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