

# Blau Appraisal Company has been instrumental in these matters

SATURDAY, SEPT. 24, 1994  
PARTLY CLOUDY, WARMER

## The Star-Ledger

### USER FRIENDLY State's computer data opened

By TOM HESTER

A state appeals court, citing a respect and recognition for advances in technology, yesterday held for the first time that computerized government information is public record and that an electronic copy of requested material should be made available at a reasonable cost.

"Here... we are faced with innovations in record-keeping that have surpassed current statutory and regulatory standards," a three-judge panel declared in handing down a ruling that interpreted state law to include computerized government information as public record.

The panel overturned a Superior Court decision and held State Information Service, an Elizabeth real estate information provider, and a client, Robert D. Blau, a Springfield tax appeal attorney, are entitled to an electronic copy of computerized tax assessment records of the 21 Essex County municipalities held by the county government.

Blau said the ruling basically declares—for the first time in New Jersey—that any government information that is public record when in print is still public information when computerized.

State Information Service and Blau turned to the appeals court after Superior Court Judge Leo Yanoff, sitting in Newark, denied them an electronic copy because the assessment information is available on printed lists and because they wanted the data for business reasons.

State Information Service collects tax data from all 21 counties and sells the information via computer to subscribers, mainly residential real estate agencies, according to Blau. The attorney joined the case as a client of State Information. He said he uses the information in preparing tax appeals.

"Any records required to be kept in computerized form are available to all citizens without qualif-

## The New York Times

### Tax Judge Lowers Assessment Developed Wetlands Tract

RAY  
In a decision in a bitter dispute over what to do with the state tax court New Jersey's

Mr. Sisselman died in 1980, and his survivors split into two factions in a land. The dispute thwarted several attempts to develop the site, including a billion-dollar proposal in the early 1980's that would have made it the heart of the Meadowlands.

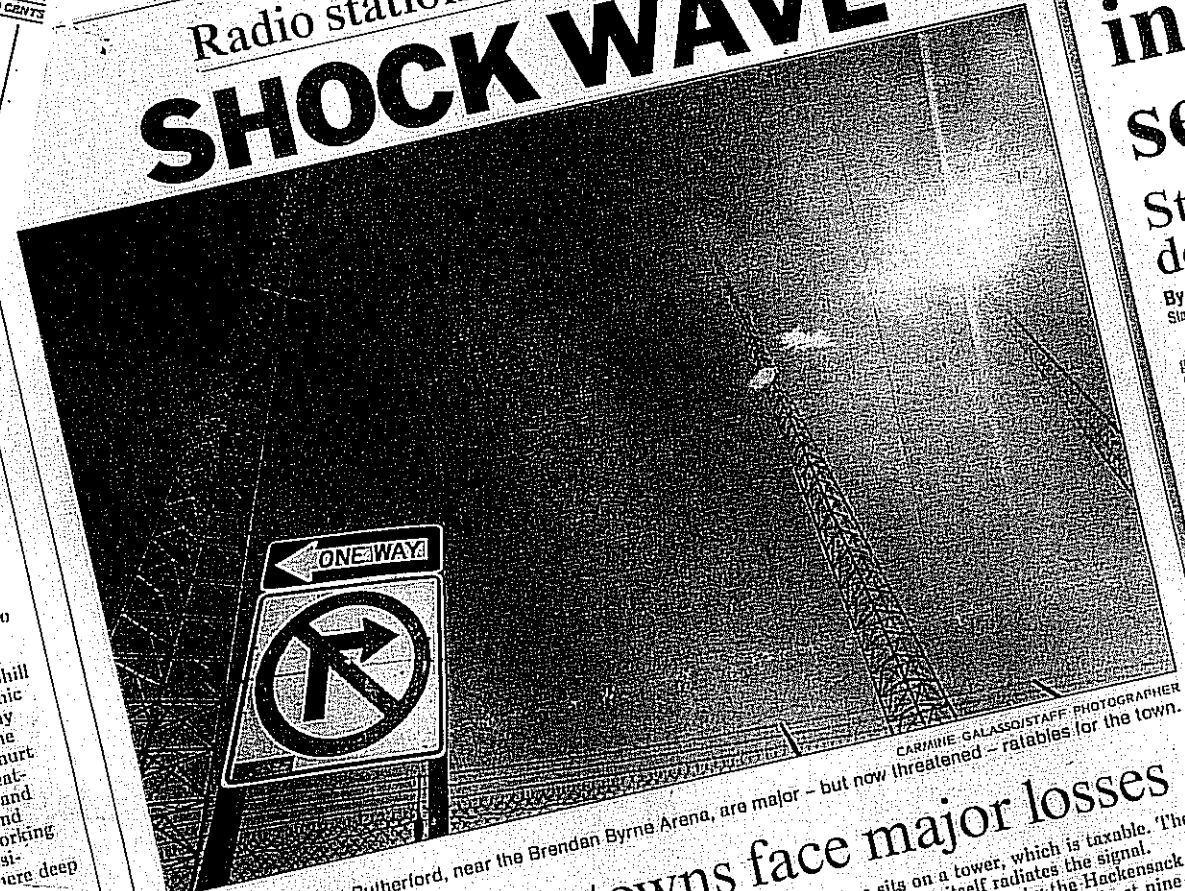
State Condemned Land  
Mr. Ferruggia said development was further hampered by the state condemning the land when it was considering widening the New Jersey Turnpike. He said the state dropped that idea in 1987, after it learned that new Federal restrictions under the

Taxes on a patch of  
land were reduced  
by \$283,000.

Clean Water Act made the project nearly impossible to

## The Record

### Radio station wins tax appeal SHOCK WAVE



Radio towers in East Rutherford, near the Brendan Byrne Arena, are major — but now threatened — ratables for the town.

### Meadowlands towns face major losses

By TOM TOPOUSIS  
Staff Writer

Taxpayers throughout the meadowlands may soon be in a radio daze.

East Rutherford took the first hit when WEVD-AM won a \$500,000 tax refund and a dramatic reduction in the assessed value of its broadcast site due in part to the old-fashioned science behind AM broadcasting.

"This was the first case in New Jersey in which radio towers were found not to be taxable," said Eric Berger, a lawyer for WEVD.

Chances are that WEVD's case in court won't be the last. "There's a whole series of radio towers throughout the meadowlands," said Berger, of the Roseland firm of Friedman and Siegelbaum.

State tax judge ruled last week that because of the AM antennas are business equipment and

An FM antenna sits on a tower, which is taxable. The difference is an AM tower itself radiates the signal.

According to unofficial estimates by the Hackensack Meadowlands Development Commission, at least nine AM stations broadcast from the meadowlands, and more stations are trying to set up shop there.

"The meadowlands, with 7,000 acres of open, flat land just a few miles from New York City, is a perfect broadcast site for radio stations."

Judge Joseph Small ruled in response to WEVD's appeal of a \$22.5 million tax assessment on its 22.58-acre broadcast site on Route 120, near the Brendan Byrne Arena.

In formulating its assessment, the borough placed the value of the station's towers at about \$1.1 million. But the largest part of the tax appeal involved a reduction of the land's assessed value. The borough said it is worth \$6 million; the owner said \$5 million.

After a hearing in tax court, the judge ruled that the property, which includes 6.3 acres of wetlands, is worth \$1 million. Small also granted the property owner a \$500,000 tax refund covering 1991 through 1994.

The borough, faced with the loss of \$16.5 million in \$500,000 tax refund covering 1991 through 1994.

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## Firm makes tax-cut deal

Appeal wins reduction of over \$800,000

Appraisers hired by the township valued the property at between \$18 million and \$25 million. The company's appraiser said property was worth \$14.7 million.

By LILD H. STANTON  
STAFF WRITER

A medical manufacturer in the Iselin section of the township was granted a three-year tax reduction, saving the company — and costing the township — \$818,708 in property taxes.

Siemens Medical Systems Inc. reached an agreement Wednesday with Woodbridge

that will save the company \$275,737 in 1998, according to Carl G. Weisenfeld, an attorney who represented the firm. Siemens also can expect a refund of \$272,249 for 1996 and \$270,722 for 1997, he said.

According to tax records, the Wood Avenue South company was to pay a little more than \$1 million in property taxes this year for the 21-acre lot with an office and warehouse. The

township lists the property's assessed value as \$13.7 million; the new, lower assessment was not available yesterday.

Mayor Jim McGreevey said the size of the appeal was "substantial" but the impact on property-tax rates will be minimal. He said the township prepared by including funds to cover a possible reduction in this year's tax-appeal fund.

Business Administrator Jim

Davy said the \$4.3 million bond, created in January, should cover tax appeals for several years.

Charles E. Blau, a Springfield-based appraiser hired by Siemens, said the facility's location and age were factors in the appeal. While the MetroPark location is excellent for office buildings, it is not a good spot for a warehouse, he said. The 25-year-old

## LOCAL

hired by the township came up with a value between \$18 million and \$25 million, Blau said his numbers showed the property was worth \$14.7 million.

Siemens also owns 2.5 more acres next to the office/warehouse lot. The company was taxed \$37,182 this year on that

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