



Stop the excuses and stall tactics

Bonanza editorial

INCLINE VILLAGE, Nev. — Sometimes it's OK to admit you were wrong.

In the case of Washoe County being ordered to refund an estimated \$40 million to 8,700 Incline Village parcel holders, we hope the county commission when it meets next week acknowledges the errors its assessor made years ago and acts swiftly on approving a process to locate and pay back the money. In our view, it's the only option left in order to begin the long road to recovery taxpayers in Incline Village deserve.

Simply put, we feel the county has done nothing but make excuses ever since Incline parcel holders began paying their 2006-'07 taxes in protest four summers ago. The commission's direction over the years to have its legal staff defend this particular lawsuit from the Village League to Save Incline Assets — and later appeal the district court ruling in 2009 — feels to us like a stalling tactic made in a misguided hope the county would be exonerated.

Furthermore, we've heard for many months from Washoe DA Dick Gammick and others that the county's assessors have operated as best they could under a broken state taxation system — sure, the state may need to fix things, but that has absolutely nothing to do with paying back the money rightfully owed to Incline Village taxpayers. That's a dispute between Washoe County and the state of Nevada — tossing taxpayers into the fray is completely unfair.

Breaking down the numbers, the original district court decision in 2009 hinted to the county being responsible for refunding \$13 million in taxes and interest. Now it's ballooned to \$40 million. Just imagine if the county agreed with taxpayer concerns way back in 2007 — how much smaller a burden would that dollar figure be on Washoe County?

What's even more unfortunate is despite the years of stalling, the option the county might not win apparently didn't register. How else can the county explain why it hasn't set aside any money in a reserve account, fearing a negative decision? Other entities who will have to pay some of the cash — IVGID, the North Lake Tahoe Fire Protection District, the county school district — apparently knew what the county didn't know, and did the responsible thing by setting aside money.

Now the county — already forced to find \$20 million in reductions and concessions to shore up a \$33.8 million deficit — has the tall task of securing perhaps another \$40 million, and the irony of it all is that taxes county-wide could be raised in order to pay back those taxed in an unconstitutional way.

While we don't envy that position, we certainly don't feel sorry for Washoe County. They saw this coming a long time ago and had every chance to begin planning for it.

Now the task before commissioners next Tuesday is clear — admit you were wrong, and direct your county to correct this error as quickly and efficiently as possible.

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