

North Lake Tahoe
Bonanza
July 16, 2004

Friday Letters to the Editor

Time for a new assessor

Bonanza Staff Reports July 16, 2004

After reading our county assessor's comments in the Sunday Bonanza and after hearing numerous comments about his pious and "we'll use our own interpretation" attitude, I thought I would throw in my two cents' worth.

I had serious questions about Mr. McGowan when he came to an Incline forum and was asked about why they didn't have view classifications for places like Arrowcreek (who actively sell "view" lots) or why similar properties in Incline and Douglas County were assessed at such radically different levels. He answered, in front of 25 people, "don't worry, they'll get theirs next year." This smug response put me on high alert. It's about attitude - an attitude of "I'm right and everybody else is wrong." Now he says "60 percent (increase) is a horrendous jump in value. Even if it's right, it doesn't make it easier to swallow." The operative statement is "even if it's right." We would contend that IT IS NOT RIGHT (nor fair, nor equitable, nor legal.)

It's your office, Mr. McGowan, which seems to believe it is the

only body that can determine what is right in terms of how you go about assessing land values or market values. It was clear from the article that the recent changes were no big deal to you because of the way you would choose to interpret those changes. Fortunately, every one of the workshops that led to the changes was audiotaped so that the discussions, conclusions and intent were captured. Your interpretations have gone unchallenged for far too long and it's time you were challenged and stopped. To that end, the Village League to Save Incline Assets has hired an outside assessment expert, Dr. Marvin Wolverton, to ensure that the intent of the changes are clear. We will use that analysis with the taxing authorities to ensure the changes are properly administered by our office.

One must seriously question Mr. McGowan's proclamations that "we are just following the law" which he stated on many occasions. If that were the case and you were challenged on legal grounds, why wouldn't you allow those claims to be adjudicated in a court of law? No, you chose to challenge the suit based on who filed it and that we had not "gone through the administrative process." People are asking why you didn't

want the legal issues heard? I think I know why. You must be very concerned about the appeal and the other case which is being heard in Carson.

Your suggestion that you might consider asking someone else to do property evaluations up here would be supported. With all of the protests and challenges to your office, I could imagine some of your assessors could have the attitude of "wait 'til next year, we'll really stick it to them." Building trust and confidence in your office up here is a long ways off - the response for information is unacceptable, using drive-bys and cherry picking view assessments is unacceptable, and the way you calculate market value and land is unacceptable. We will not stop until we get a total reappraisal of all properties!

Finally, it is imperative that the residents of Incline Village/Crystal Bay find and support a fair-minded and well-qualified candidate for the position of county assessor in the next election. A total house-cleaning is something we should all rally around.

*Chuck Otto
Incline Village*