



Property owners irate over appraisals

Taxes: Caughlin Ranch residents dispute increase in assessed values

By Susan Voyles
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Caughlin Ranch residents might be next in line to join a property tax revolt sparked by Incline Village homeowners.

Larry Winkler and his wife, Jeannie Cassinelli, whose property assessments increased 67 percent this year, said they intend to send a message on how to appeal Washoe County's assessed property values this week to 1,600 home owners in Caughlin Ranch, Juniper Hills and Juniper Terraces.

These are exclusive neighborhoods in the southwest Truckee Meadows.

The message will appear in a newsletter prepared by Dickson Realty, where Cassinelli is a real estate agent.

"It's getting to the point where you have a second mortgage on your house for life-your tax bill," Winkler said. "What needs to happen is the tax law has to change."

More than 807 property value appeals have been filed with the Washoe County Assessor's Office, a recent check found. All but four are from Incline Village.

This fall, the Village League to Save Incline Assets filed a class-action lawsuit against the assessor, complaining about what property owners all an arbitrary system of rating their views of Lake Tahoe. Another pending lawsuit involves 16 property owners who appealed their property values this year.

Winkler, a commercial artist who lives in Caughlin Ranch, said he's upset the taxable value of his land has been raised from \$117,000 this year to \$195,000 next year - a 67 percent increase. Winkler said he spent nearly two hours with three appraisers in the assessor's office recently to get appraisal records for his property. "It was like going to a car dealer," he said.

He said he finally was given three comparable property sales that could have been used in raising his land value. Of the three sales, he said, one sale was the last vacant lot in his immediate neighborhood. He said the buyer spent a lot of money for it.

"That doesn't mean every lot in the neighborhood should be valued the same way," Winkler said. He plans to appeal.

Ernie McNeill, a senior appraiser in the assessor's office, said Winkler spent 30 to 45 minutes in the office. He was given a copy of the appraisal report on his property and maps with comparable land sales. "To my knowledge, that was everything he asked for or needed," he said.

The Caughlin Ranch area was re-appraised this year in a once-in-five-year cycle. Each year, one-fifth of Washoe County is subject to an in-depth appraisal. Last year, Incline Village property was assessed. Deputy District Attorney Blaine Cartlidge said the assessor's office is unfairly being made a scapegoat for complaints over property values.

The complaints from Incline Village and now at Caughlin Ranch, he said, "reveal nothing but frustration with a very complex tax system and rising property values, neither of which the assessor controls," he said. "This is the most complicated tax system in the country."

But Ted Harris, a leader in the Incline Village tax revolt, said the county assessor's office asked for trouble. In tax hearings early this year, Harris said, Carlidge said there was no tax revolt because only 123 Incline taxpayers filed appeals. "They sat on their rights," Harris said, in recalling Carlidge's words.

But no more, Harris said. "Literally, thousands of people are upset by the assessor's methods," he said.

As for Caughlin Ranch residents, Harris said, "We are offering advice and counsel and suggest they follow the same procedures we use."

HOW TO APPEAL PROPERTY VALUES

* Contact the Washoe County Assessor's Office and ask for an appraiser to determine how the office arrived at your property's taxable value. .

* To assist Incline Village taxpayers, the assessor's office has put a manual of its view classifications for Lake Tahoe properties at the Incline Village library. People can compare their views with those in the manual to see if their views are rated appropriately.

* If you are not satisfied, you may appeal to the Washoe County Board of Equalization by Jan. 15. At the hearing, you will be asked for evidence, such as comparable home sales or vacant land sales, to make your case. Hearings will be set for January and February and you will be notified of a hearing date.

* If you are still dissatisfied, you may appeal to the Nevada State Board of

Equalization. Beyond that, you can appeal to the courts.

* Washoe County Assessor's Office: 328-2233.

Note from Nevada Property Tax Revolt Webmaster. RGJ website only allows searched for articles in the last two weeks. Therefore the direct link to this article could not be found. For archival purposes, this article was scanned in and then converted to a pdf file. Wayne Fischer, 01/31/04.