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Tax revolters continue fight

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Incline's tax revolt group is recoiling in the wake of recent news that the county may continue the fight against a wholesale property tax rollback.

Tax revolter Les Barta this week argued county manager Katy Singlaub was wrong in her recent description of the elaborate process to take place before any kind of rollback is met.

"This argument is fatally flawed," Barta wrote. "First of all, under Nevada's property tax system assessment should be far below total market value and assessments must not be equalized at total market value."

Barta's theory doesn't exactly "ring true" said Washoe County assessor Josh Wilson this week.

That last December's state supreme court decision ordered a rollback for some 17 property owners to 2002 is mutually exclusive from the valuation process going forward Wilson said.

"The median selling price in 2002 (of a single-family home in Incline Village/Crystal Bay) was \$712,000; in '06 it comes out as a median of \$1,083,000," Wilson said. "I represent 160,000 property owners in Washoe County. I have to do what's fair and equitable to all of them."

Village League to Save Incline Assets president Maryanne Ingemanson this week said the county is fighting "tooth and nail" against rollbacks, referencing Wilson's recent request of the state Board of Equalization to schedule an appeal of the county appeals board's decision filed by his predecessor, Bob McGowan.

"I asked Josh Wilson if he had then withdrawn the appeal, he said 'no'," Ingemanson said. "The next question is: 'why?' ...The county has scheduled a hearing in front of the state board of equalization in hopes they will overturn the decision by the county board of equalization in '06 and '07 to raise the taxes back up."

Wilson said continuing his predecessor's appeal is the right thing to do because "it doesn't seem fair that Tahoe values should be frozen in time at a 2002 level, when the rest are 2007 value."

"I want to be as reasonable as I can, I want to meet with people in Incline," Wilson continued. "I don't want to be adversarial with any group - I want to move beyond this."

League representatives maintain that "mov(ing) beyond this" is a goal they've sought since the imbroglio started almost five years ago:

"This has snowballed from a small problem into a millions-of-dollars problem," Ingemanson said. "The people in the league, these are reasonable business people, not raving lunatics. We tried to work out a settlement, the (county) refused. They avoided coming to grips with the true problem, now they're trying to do this - we'll wait to see."

Perhaps reaching out an olive branch, Wilson did acknowledge the supreme court's decision and the fallout to come.

"I wish there was a magic button but I don't think there is," Wilson said. "We have to follow the supreme court decision and if we have to make changes, we'll do that - we'll just move forward and do what we can do."

"(Tax revolter) Ted Harris came into my office and said they'll introduce some legislative changes, so we'll see what happens."

Washoe County taxpayers could pay back up \$14 million if the decision is made to roll back Incline Village property values wholesale with the county and school district taking the brunt of the loss. The supreme court ruled the assessor cannot make up his own rules to value Incline properties.

"The (county's) strategy is to not pay back any of the refund money and to stretch this out as long as possible," Ingemanson said. "In order to have (us) lose heart or run out of funds with which to fight them, or move, or die or all of the above... That's what happens when a citizen takes on government, government does not go away, they can grind you into dust."

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