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Open letter to county assessor

letters to the editor

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First, thank you for your presentation at Wednesday evening's Washoe County Citizens Advisory Board meeting here in Incline Village. You are one of the bravest elected officials I have ever witnessed in facing a very angry crowd.

However, I would like to take you to task on two of your statements.

1. You stated that once the assessor's office publishes the property assessment valuation in December for the following tax year, that there is nothing else the assessor's office can do. If a property valuation is to be challenged, the property owner must file an appeal, which is then heard by the local county's Board of Equalization. Your answer turned my stomach, because it was far from the truth. At the county Board of Equalization, your office fights like crazy to justify the assessment given to each and every property. And then, if the Board of Equalization rules in a property owner's favor, your office files an appeal to the State Board of Equalization. Now the property owners must appear again to yet another board to state why your office did a poor and in many cases an incorrect and illegal job in its assessment of the land values in Incline Village and Crystal Bay.

I would also like to make a second counter point to your statement. Your office has the power to recommend mass reductions in land valuation when an error is made in assessment valuation. This happened in 2003, when several property owners challenged the land valuation increases of over 200 properties in Mill Creek from \$225,000 to \$400,000. Several property owners got their land valuation reduced back to \$320,000. Your office then recommended to the Washoe County Board of Equalization that over

200 other properties of similar size be reduced by the same amount.

Bottom line: your office does have the power and authority to recommend mass reduction in land assessment valuation after the middle of December.

2. In another statement you made, you said that when you equalize adjacent property, your preferred choice is to "equalize upward." Whatever happened to fair and equitable taxation? Why can't your office equalize down, just like you did in 2003? This was in response to a question about the 7,700 property owners who did not get a 2007/08 reduction in land valuation to their 2002/03 level. The reason the Washoe County Board of Equalization voted to reduce the land valuation for 1000 of the Incline Village property owners was that your office used illegal appraisal methodologies in assessing our land values. But your answer was to raise the land valuation of the 1000 people who received a reduction in land values for re-equalization. How disgusting!

In summary, it seems very little has changed since you took over from Robert McGowan in January. You say you are the new "kid" on the block and want to do the right thing.

But from where we are sitting as Nevada property taxpayers here in Incline Village and Crystal Bay, we don't see any changes by the Washoe County Assessor's Office. Same old stuff over and over and over again.

Bottom line, we are going to continue to fight for what we were granted by the Nevada Supreme Court. So give us our refunds and be done with it.

Wayne Fischer
Incline Village

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