

County board rolls back some Incline property taxes

By Susan Voyles
svoyles@rgj.com

Incline Village residents won another round Wednesday in their battle to reduce their property taxes when the Washoe County Board of Equalization rolled back property values to 2003 for 244 homes, raising the total to close to 300 this year.

As a result of these decisions, the board will decide on March 8 whether to roll back land values for all 7,000 parcels in Incline Village and Crystal Bay. And if that's done, the board will consider rolling back property values elsewhere in the county. Millions of property tax dollars to the county and local school district could be at stake.

"I'm just absolutely thrilled to death," Maryanne Ingemanson, leader of the Village League to Save Incline Assets said of the cases heard Wednesday by the tax board.

For her Tahoe lakefront home, she expects her property tax bill for next year will drop from \$70,000 to \$35,000.

She suspects her children, who help pay that tax bill, also will be thrilled.

The Nevada Supreme Court in February allowed the board to roll back land values based on a decision by Carson City District Judge William Maddox. But the court ordered no tax refunds for the new tax year in July be processed until it reviews the county's appeal of the Maddox decision.

In January, Maddox ruled four methods used by the Washoe assessor to value land at Lake Tahoe were invalid. The rules covered rating views of Lake Tahoe, the quality of beaches, studying old land sales and putting no value on homes likely to be torn down.

Maddox said the county should have obtained state approval to use those rules. Since then, new state-approved rules took effect in August 2004.

Based on the Maddox case, the tax appeals board by a 3-2 vote rolled back property values to 2002-03, the year before Incline and Crystal Bay were reappraised using the old rules.

Those in favor were Steve Snyder, Philip Horan and Charles Woodland. Opposed were Diana Pichotta and Benjamin Green.

Reno lawyer Tom Hall, representing the Tahoe property owners, said he expects even more appeals to the state board and courts to be filed by the county in the tax case.

"It's called the exhaustion theory," he said. "The county has gone to the max to wear people out."

WHAT'S NEXT

The hearing on March 8 will be at 9 a.m. in the interpretive center at the Bartley Ranch Regional Park, 6000 Bartley Ranch Road in southwest Reno.