

Panel might rule on Incline property-value reduction case

Panel OK'd freezing values for 950

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After reducing property values to 2002-03 levels for about 950 Incline Village property owners for 2007-08 taxes, the Washoe County Board of Equalization today could decide to rule on a class-action case to reduce property values for all 9,000 taxpayers there.

And, if it should decline to hear the class-action case, the tax appeals board has been asked to consider Feb. 28 whether it should proceed to equalize or lower tax values for all 9,000 property values at Incline Village and Crystal Bay -- for what could be the second year in a row.

At stake is \$13 million to \$14 million in property taxes primarily for Washoe County and the school district for the fiscal year that begins July 1.

Based on the board's decision in March 2006, county Assessor Josh Wilson has rolled back property values to 2002-03 for the 2006-07 for the 9,000 property owners and is preparing tax refunds for the \$13 million to \$14 million. The board ordered the tax value reductions but the decision was stayed until the Nevada Supreme Court ruled in December in favor of Incline Village in the case of 17 property owners.

For the 17, the court upheld a Carson City district court decision throwing out methods the assessor used for grading views and beaches at Lake Tahoe.

While those refunds are being prepared, the Nevada Board of Equalization has agreed to hear Wilson's appeal of those values, expected in March.

By a 3-2 vote, the county Board of Equalization on Wednesday approved freezing the land values for 950 taxable properties in a

consolidated case to the same 2002-03 levels for 2007-08.

In a motion made by Gary Schmidt, the board rejected a 15 percent boost in land values for Incline Village prepared by the assessor's office, saying the increase was based on noncomparable land values and that land values should remain the same as for the 2006-07 fiscal year.

Krolick and Philip Horan joined Schmidt, while members Pat McAlinden and Jim James Covert were opposed. Horan is a new alternate appointed to the board after chairman Steve Sparks resigned Feb. 16.

Schmidt contends the 723 land sales used for the south county district do not represent Incline sales. Of those sales, Wilson said 43 were in Incline Village. If those property sales were factored, the taxable land values for Incline would have been raised even higher.

Wilson said he still is studying whether to file an appeal with the state Board of Equalization. The deadline is March 10.

Maryanne Ingemanson, leader of the Village League to Save Incline Assets, said she is afraid the appeals could lead up to the Supreme Court again.

"It's just amazing the mess we're in, and it's just getting worse," she said.

Ingemanson contends the assessor's office is still using old, invalidated rules to value property at the lake.

Wilson denied that. He said his appraisers are following rules adopted in 2004 by the Nevada Tax Commission. He said one rule involves tear-downs, homes that are purchased and torn down to build bigger homes.

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