

Incline Village residents hopeful of court's order

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A new order from the Nevada Supreme Court is giving Incline Village residents new hope that Washoe County will have to refund more than \$70 million in property taxes.

"It's monstrous," said Maryanne Ingemanson, a leader of the Village League to Protect Incline Assets, describing the impact of the two-paragraph order in a class-action lawsuit filed in 2003.

She estimates the \$70 million refund, including 10.25 percent interest, would be owed if all Incline and Crystal Bay homeowners were given a refund for the past five years.

Suellen Fulstone, the league's Reno lawyer, said that might or might not be what the court has in mind.

The July 26 order says issues in the class action filed in 2003 are identical to those in the court's Bakst decision in December that found methods used by the county assessor to consider lake views, beaches and other conditions in assessing property values were

invalid and unconstitutional because they weren't state approved or uniformly used.

For the 17 Incline taxpayers in the Bakst case, the court rolled back tax values to the 2002-03 level, basically cutting property taxes in half.

In the new ruling, Chief Justice William Maupin wrote it appears the Bakst decision satisfies the relief sought in the class action case. He gave the county and others 20 days to respond to any remaining issues.

County Assessor Josh Wilson said he wants to ask the court what it specifically wants the county to do, including whether tax refunds are owed for five tax years to all the homeowners. Lawsuits regarding all five years are in the courts.

Fulstone said she doesn't expect the court will answer in that way. But to get these cases resolved, she said it may be time for the Supreme Court to appoint a court master to oversee them. That would not be unprecedented, she said.

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