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1 message

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Sun City gets some answers about tax bills

By ELENA FERRARIN ..

Daily Herald

Article updated: 6/18/2011 9:18 PM

[PHOTO] Kane County Supervisor of Assessments Mark Armstrong, left, talks with Bud Gallagher on Saturday. Gallagher is a resident of Sun City, a retirement community in Huntley, where many residents are unhappy about getting higher property tax bills this year. Elena Ferrarin | Staff Photographer

Some Sun City property owners in Huntley were disproportionately taxed this year, and Kane County officials hope that a request to recalculate the apportionment of taxes to five taxing bodies that straddle Kane and McHenry counties will result in a more fair calculation in the future.

On Saturday, Kane County Supervisor of Assessments Mark Armstrong spoke to a crowd of about 500 residents of Sun City, a Del Webb retirement community. Residents complained that differences in assessed values resulted in higher 2010 tax bills for Sun City homes in Rutland Township in Kane County compared to the same homes in Grafton Township in McHenry County.

Armstrong said that on Friday he put in a request to the Illinois Department of Revenue to recalculate how future property tax dollars are distributed to Huntley, the Huntley Fire Protection District, the Huntley Area Public Library District, the Huntley Park District, and Huntley School District 158.

Sun City residents' tax bill increases partly were due to a higher tax allocation to properties with senior assessment freeze exemption, typical when property values drop, plus about \$570,000 in increased tax levies from local and regional taxing bodies, Armstrong said.

When Kane County calculated its levy, it had only received estimated property values from McHenry County, before they were equalized by the state. That resulted in an additional \$500,000 tax levy increase for Sun City residents who share those local taxing districts, Armstrong said.

"Next year when the taxing districts ask for X million dollars, that half million comes off before the levy is extended," he said.

But the main problem, Armstrong said, was that Grafton Township

Assessor William Ottley made a request to the board of review to recalculate the assessments of more than 9,300 parcels. By comparison, Rutland Township Assessor Janet Siers made the same request for only 51 parcels.

"I can't speculate why he did that," Armstrong said. Ottley previously has said his office used current market values to determine assessed values, while Siers used the three-year market average.

"I am going to do everything in my power to try to get assessments back on track," said Bob Ross, chief county assessment officer for McHenry County. "I apologize for any problems that have occurred."

But an apology did little for Sun City resident Sharon Sullivan.

"Had I known this was going to happen, I would have never retired in Illinois. I would have retired elsewhere," Sullivan said. "Until we fix the revenue problem, it's going to be devastating for some of these people."

Armstrong projects that 2011 assessments will drop by 6.14 percent for Rutland Township and increase by 5.31 percent for Grafton Township. "Some properties may be less, some more. Those are aggregate numbers," he said.

The five taxing bodies have until Dec. 31 to block his request, but Armstrong said he does not expect that to happen.

Sun City resident David Mahlke, whose home is in Rutland Township, said that was good news, but is still peeved that his tax bill is 10 percent higher than last year's — and higher than his neighbors'. "If anybody objects, I want to know, will they let us know?"

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