

From Assessor John Barrington: "We're here to help."

The 2018 assessment notices for Ela Township went out in August and many of you may have noticed another blanket increase applied by Lake County. In most cases, our research DID NOT support this increase. Since 2016, the Appointed Lake County Assessment Officer has increased Ela Township properties by nearly 10% whether the sales in your area supported it or not. This eliminates local control and accountability while spreading the tax burden unfairly. This also forces residents to file an unnecessary appeal when I may have been able to resolve any inequalities for everyone in a neighborhood, not just the few who appeal. Many folks will now pay more while others pay less than they should.

This issue goes back to 2016 when the Lake County Assessment Officer, Martin Paulson, notified the locally Elected Township Assessors that for the first time we would be prevented from equalizing assessments and forced to take the blanket county equalization factor for every property to save the 80 cents on publication costs. The Property Tax Code allows Assessors to equalize assessments in Non-General Assessment years by property class, neighborhood, area, etc. to fairly and accurately reflect the varying market changes that occur throughout Ela Township. By not allowing Assessors to incrementally adjust areas that are outside the norm each year, these areas could potentially see huge value changes in the 2019 General Assessment year, some by as much as 40% or more causing huge tax bill changes all at once. This means for three years in a row, thousands have grossly underpaid or overpaid what they should come tax bill time.

I hear many local complaints from across the state as a director of the state Assessors Association but have never seen a county intervene in the assessment process in such an intrusive way. Most counties want their local assessors to get it right to reduce unnecessary, costly appeals and provide fair tax bills. It is extremely frustrating to not be able to carry out the duties of my elected office per state statute. We have reviewed assessments for thousands of properties that filed appeals, and some have been overvalued by as much as \$100,000 or more in areas we tried to reduce these past few years. I should have been able to reduce everyone in these neighborhoods, not just the few who appeal. At the end of the day it is you, the taxpayer, that suffers.

It's no secret that Lake County has some of the highest property taxes in the state, yet our elected officials and their appointed members cannot seem to understand that their policies only make them worse. I have heard many say the assessor cannot affect how much you pay in taxes. Every time an assessment is changed, it shifts the tax burden for everyone else. While the across the board factor does not shift any burden, some areas of the township are seeing values increase rapidly, while others are flat or declining. These disparities warrant a review of whether their assessments should be adjusted accordingly. I urge you to contact your County Board Member and the Lake County Board Chairman directly. Voice your concerns to them on how unfair this process is. Collectively, we can make a difference.

While the deadline may have passed this year to file an appeal, our office can still correct any factual errors or missed exemptions. Reach out to us if you feel that there is an error right away. Remember, we are your local resource and most importantly, we are here for you.

In closing I would like to remind you that our office is here to help you. If you ever have any questions or comments about anything you can always contact me at jbarrington@elaassessor.org, give me a call at [847-438-8370](tel:847-438-8370), or stop by our office at 1155 E. Route 22 in Lake Zurich. We are also on Facebook, www.facebook.com/ElaTownship, and Twitter, @ ElaTownship, to help provide you with recent updates and assessment news. You can also find information on our website, www.elatownship.org/assessor

John Barrington

Ela Township Assessor