

# Open Letter from Ela Township Assessor, John Barrington

Each year the Ela Township Assessor's office reviews and adjusts assessments as needed to ensure all properties are uniform based on the previous 3 years of sales. This ensures that property tax bills are fair and accurately reflect the varying market changes that occur throughout Ela Township. In the past 10 years I have been with Ela Township, I have not seen every single home in every single neighborhood along with every commercial and industrial property increase or decrease by the exact same percentage. The real estate market does not work this way.

For the 2016 assessments, the Appointed Lake County Chief Assessment Officer, Martin P. Paulson, notified all of the locally Elected Township Assessors that for the first time we would be forced to take the county equalization factor even though it is incorrect for many properties. This brazen attempt to prevent Township Assessors from performing their statutory duties, then removing any neighborhood equalization and applying a blanket 5% increase for Ela, removes local control and accountability while spreading the tax burden unfairly. This also forces residents to file an unnecessary appeal when their local Assessor may have been able to resolve any inequalities. Many folks will now pay more than they should which means others will pay less than they should.

The Property Tax Code allows Assessors to equalize assessments in Non-General Assessment years by property class, neighborhood, area, etc. to adjust for the varying market changes throughout the Township to ensure fair assessments, and ultimately fair tax bills.

The reason for this turmoil provided by the Lake County Chief Assessment Officer, was **to save Lake County 80 CENTS** per parcel by not having to publish Assessor changes in the newspaper as required by state statute. This short sighted policy may have saved Lake County 80 cents per parcel in publication costs, but could cost more in the long run with additional BOR filings and may cost you even more on your individual tax bill.

As you may be aware, the position of Assessor is not always an easy or popular job. I have to make very hard, unpopular decisions that I know will change the tax burden for all property owners. After being elected by the residents of Ela Township, I was required to take an oath of office stating I would "faithfully discharge all the duties of the office of Assessor to the best of my ability" and I take this oath and my duty to residents seriously.

The Lake County Chief Assessment Officer is APPOINTED by the Lake County Board. Either this position should become an elected position so they work for and are accountable to the taxpayers directly, or local Assessors should be allowed to do their statutory duties locally. I encourage you to contact your County Board member along with Chairman Lawlor to express your opinion on this matter. Otherwise, they will assume that this process is safe to continue in future years. Please note: Your Rep cannot reduce your assessment or discuss your assessment in detail.

While we were not allowed to equalize the assessments neighborhood by neighborhood and apply the appropriate adjustments, we can help you to review your assessment to ensure it is fair and accurate. Instructions are on the back of this letter for filing an appeal. The deadline is September 26, 2016. Our office will review all appeals and reach out with an offer to reduce the assessment if warranted. Please feel free to contact me with any questions or concerns you may have. I would also appreciate your feedback; Feel free to e-mail me anytime at [jbarrington@elaassessor.org](mailto:jbarrington@elaassessor.org)

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**Requesting a review of your 2016 Assessment with Ela Township and the Lake County Board of Review**

**New Process** – In an effort to both modernize and simplify the pre-review and formal complaint process, our office has changed how we handle the pre-review assessment inquiries. This new process eliminates the need to complete multiple copies of appeal forms for both the Assessor's office and the Board of Review. If you have reviewed your assessment and determined a review and/or appeal is necessary, you have two filing options. **Option A:** On-line filing is the fastest and preferred option and we will be able to see this filing the next day. Our office can assist you with this filing. **Option B:** Mail the appeal form and comparable grids/evidence directly to the Lake County Board of Review. Please note that there could be a 2-4 week delay in scanning the appeal into the system. Make sure to read the Board of Review Rules regarding the filing of an appeal. If the criteria are not met, the Board may not schedule a hearing for the case or render a decision and the appellant will have forfeited the right to further appeal the current assessment of a subject property.

To start an appeal, you will need the Property Assessment Notice and/or the Parcel Identification Number along with the Key Code. (located on the top right of the Assessment Notice). We can look up this information if you do not have your notice.

The website to start the appeal: <http://assessor/lakecountyil.gov>

Click on Board of Review- Online Appeal Filing

Enter your Parcel Identification number or street address and submit.

Read the Terms and Conditions Notification – Acknowledge and accept the terms if you wish to continue.

Select a reason for the appeal. You will then be prompted to provide evidence – either a reason for claiming a factual error, closing statement and PTAX-203 for a recent purchase, a recent appraisal, or comparison grids either based on equity, market or both. The program will prompt you in each step with filling in the information. Our office can scan appraisals and sales documents if you do not have a digital copy.

If you have chosen recent sales or equity comparables - you will be prompted to choose comparative parcels in which you would like reviewed for any inequities.

When the chosen reasons are complete and all evidence is uploaded, you are ready to click the “Complete my filing” button on the bottom of the Appeal Reasons screen.

The Appeal Form screen is next and you will need to fill in all required fields marked with an asterisk \*.

There are 3 ways you can proceed: Back to reason for Appeal Page- to change the Reason for Appeal.

Save and Come Back Later- to save your appeal, but submit it at a later date. Review and Submit. Use this final screen to double check all of the information that will be submitted on your case and print a copy for your records. Click on Submit Appeal when you are ready to file your appeal submission. This step must be completed for the Board of Review to docket the appeal. Appeal files not submitted before the filing deadline of **September 26, 2016** will not be reviewed by Ela Township or the Board of Review.

If you do not receive an e-mail as confirmation within 24 hours, please call the Ela Township Assessor's Office @ 847-438-8370. Ela Township will review all cases in the order they are filed online/scanned into the system. We will contact you if we are able to offer a reduction. Thank you for your patience as we work to implement this new process.