

Breaking down the tax assessment process

County, citizens group offer help to strapped homeowners

November 16, 2007

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Zion resident Michael Naegele was floored when his property assessment notice arrived this fall with the news the market value of his home jumped about 50 percent.

He is one of the many homeowners who will seek relief through the appeal process before the Board of Review, and residents who choose that path have several options for help in the next month.

The Lake County Chief Assessment Office is sponsoring a public informational meeting on assessments Saturday.

Citizens Action Project (CAP), a Grayslake-based group critical of assessment process procedures at both the county and township levels, will hold its own informational meeting Nov. 27.

CAP spokesman Steve Minsky declined to reveal specifics about the group's public meeting, which is titled "What Your Township Assessor Doesn't Want You to Know," but he said residents who have successfully appealed assessments will reveal their methods at the gathering.

The group, which maintains the current system is "broken," has stressed a need for assessment process consistency from township to township, and has asked the Lake County Board to review the local assessment process.

CAP also is lobbying for potential state legislation to eliminate "rogue" assessment practices.

Minsky said he expects good attendance not only from homeowners, but from elected officials and candidates running in next year's elections.

"I think it's going to be a huge election issue," he said.

Chief County Assessment Officer Martin Paulson said he couldn't comment on the CAP meeting because he doesn't know what the group plans to say, but he added that as long as the information is accurate, it may have a positive impact.

"Anybody who can get information -- hopefully correct information -- into the hands of the taxpayers, that's great," Paulson said.
