

MEDIA RELEASE

County of Santa Clara
Office of the County Assessor
Administration

County Government Center, East Wing
70 West Hedding Street
San Jose, California 95110-1770
1-408-299-5572 FAX 1-408-297-9526
E-Mail: david.ginsborg@asr.sccgov.org
Web Site: <http://www.scc-assessor.org/>



Lawrence E. Stone, Assessor

For Immediate Release:
May 22, 2007

Contact: David Ginsborg
(408) 299-5572

Assessor Objects to fee to challenge assessed values

Board of Supervisors imposes \$30 fee to appeal an assessment

At the recommendation of County Supervisor Pete McHugh, the Board of Supervisors established a \$30 fee to challenge assessed values, the first of its kind for the County. County Assessor Larry Stone strongly opposed the fee and stated to the Board that “charging a property owner a fee for what ultimately may turn out to be an over assessment is unfair.”

Santa Clara County joins just three other counties who charge a filing fee. “There is a reason 54 counties have decided not to impose a fee. The legality of the practice is very questionable,” said Stone. A previous effort to impose a statewide filing fee was vetoed by the Governor, and the Board of Equalization has stated that the Board of Supervisors does not have the authority to impose a filing fee.

The Assessor was especially concerned that the Board’s new fee does not allow for refunds when the Assessor’s value is incorrect. In Santa Clara County, 31% of all assessment appeals are adjusted lower and nearly half are withdrawn by the property owner. “We get it right most of the time, but not always. I dislike the idea of charging a taxpayer when ultimately the property owners’ opinion of value may be correct and our assessment incorrect. Even San Francisco’s ordinance allows a partial refund of the fee when the taxpayer is correct in requesting a reduction in their assessment,” said Stone.

The Santa Clara County Assessor’s office is very proactive in arriving at the correct values early in the process. On May 15, the office mailed 450,000 assessment notification cards, informing taxpayers of their preliminary assessed value. As always, that notice advised taxpayers that there was no charge to challenge the Assessor’s values. “Taxpayers will be confused by the Board’s swift action,” said Stone.

July 2 is the first day to file an appeal of the 2007-08 assessment roll and it will also be the first day of the new filing fee. “Some taxpayers will invariably ask to file their appeal prior to July 2, however the schedule to file appeals is statutorily set and they will be unable to do so. Most taxpayers probably will not even learn of the new fee until they file an appeal,” said Stone.

Taxpayers with questions about the new filing fee or how to file an appeal should contact the Clerk of the Board at (408) 299-5001.