

Property owners question values

By RENEE RICHARDSON

Senior Reporter

Attending Brainerd's Board of Equalization meeting Friday, residents conveyed concerns that prices on their homes had dropped too far and that they hadn't dropped far enough.

Seven people attended the Brainerd Board of Equalization session, which is required in order to have an assessed market value appeal continue to the Crow Wing County Board.

Gary Griffin, Crow Wing County Land Services supervisor in the assessor's office, handled the meeting. The city of Brainerd did not have a three-member board to meet with residents because at least one member needs to be certified. Mayor James Wallin had the certification but it was not renewed. The failure to renew comes with a two-year penalty after which the city can seek to be reinstated to have its own board again.

One member of the three-member board is required by state law to be certified. For certification, a person is required to attend a four-hour seminar once every four years. Wallin told the small group gathered at city hall Friday that he hadn't received notice about the certification's pending expiration. There isn't a notice requirement.

Griffin recommends the board have more than one certified member as a backup and the county plans to be proactive in the future by sending out reminders to cities and townships when certifications are nearing expiration.

The county assessor's office looked at 89 sales in Brainerd and reduced all the residential building values.

The majority of concerns came from property owners who still thought their values were too high. One included the recent purchase of a home for \$70,000 when the assessor's estimated market value was \$76,000 for 2010, which was reduced from \$115,300 in 2009.

But a woman in South View Court had the opposite concern. After paying higher taxes with a higher valuation for years compared to her neighbors, the woman said her property now dropped well below the others with a \$34,800 market value decrease. Neighbors reportedly had decreases more in line with \$15,000 to \$19,000.

Griffin said the decrease appeared to reflect the concern she had for being overvalued previously. While that may have been true, the woman said now that she is older and looking at potentially selling the property, she is losing value.

But other property owners were able to set up appointments to have the assessor's office revisit the property for a second look, including a home purchased from a foreclosure and a business where the value almost doubled.

Another business owner was concerned his value was too high and it might be the difference between staying in business or not.

A homeowner in Buffalo Hills

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reported a home with an assessed value of \$256,900 in 2009 had sold for \$185,000 while it was now assessed at about \$210,000.

Griffin said that may be an indication the decrease didn't go far enough and that sale will be part of the sales study for the coming year.

Griffin said there have been 44 sales in the city of Brainerd thus far and if the pattern continues, values are likely to drop another 10 percent for the next assessment period.

The assessor's office received a compliment from one homeowner at the end of the session for listening to the residents and being responsive to concerns.

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