Last call!

Oconee braces for final day of reassessment appeals

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WALHALLA — The window of opportunity for challenging reassessed property values is closing fast.



Moulder

Property owners have until today to file appeals before the Oconee County Assessor's Office closes its doors at 5 p.m.

County Administrator Scott Moulder said Thursday that Assessor's Office staff would concentrate on getting the official appeal form filled out and stamped, and not spend too much time on the particulars of the appeal if there is a rush of people coming through today.

Moulder said the Assessor's Office added temporary help, worked overtime and on Saturdays to deal with more than 6,000 appeals that have been filed to-date during the three-month appeal period.

Moulder ruled out extending today's deadline.

About 150 people jammed into Council Chambers at Tuesday's council meeting, and many of them came to voice their displeasure with the countywide reassessment.

While some in the audience directed their frustrations at Tyler Technologies Inc., which did the reassessment, others blamed elected officials who hired the company and paid $1.8 million for the job.

Many have asked how their property values could have spiked when the housing market has been slumping for the past four years.

In recent weeks, former temporary Tyler employees in Oconee told The Journal that the company did not adequately train or supervise its data collectors.

Ex-employees alleged that a handful of workers took drugs and drank on the job.

"There were some bad apples, but they were fired and their work was reviewed," said a former employee.

"In my opinion, Tyler was not a professional company at all," added the ex-employee, who asked to remain anonymous because of his ties to the community. "The actions of management were not good. They weren't really paying a lot of attention. You would ask them questions and they'd beat around the bush and try to give you something to leave them alone, but they didn't answer the question."

Many of the questions had to do with the setting of values from the data that had been collected.

"They'd say, 'Well, there are some 60,000 parcels, we're going to get some of them right and some of them wrong, don't worry about it.'

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APPEAL: 'We had no clue'

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"As far as appraisal experience, we had no clue," the former employee added. "Our basic training for the appraisal was pretty much Tyler showing us the software and what buttons to click on the program."

The ex-employee said Tyler prepped data collectors on making sure that values made based on grades and conditions did not fluctuate too much from house to house in any given neighborhood. He said management stressed the a state certified appraiser would come in, and if anything "fluctuated too high or too low" it would catch his attention.

"That made lower value homes rise in value and made more expensive homes drop in value so they met this average baseline," the former employee said.

Calls and emails to Tyler officials have gone unanswered.

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