Tea Party crowd rants against reassessment

Councilman Wayne McCall blames Tyler Technologies for the mess

BY CARLOS GALARZA
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SENECA — More than 100 taxpayers jammed into a Tea Party meeting Thursday to rant about their reassessed property values.

They vented frustrations, concerns and outrage with what they perceive to have been a botched reassessment by Tyler Technologies Inc., the company Oconee County paid $1.8 million to do its reappraisal of properties.

Organizers of the Tea Party event invited Councilman Wayne McCall.

McCall stood behind a microphone at the Bounty Land Baptist Fellowship Hall and as advertised — he bravely answered any and all questions hurled at him.

A woman who lives in McCall's District 2 in the Walhalla area said her mother fears losing her home because of the higher property value assessed and higher tax bill.

"I called Tyler for two weeks and got a busy signal," she said.

Another person got up and asked whether there were grounds to file a class-action suit.

A man said that according to someone in Tyler's office, he would have to hire a real estate agent.

Stan King had heard enough and asked to speak.

"Something strikes me a little sad," he said. "It looks like the left hand does not know what the right is doing. Talking to Tyler several times, they don't seem to know what they're doing."

Moderator Randy Simpson asked the crowd two simple questions.

"How many of you here had taxes go down?"

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A handful raised their hands.

"How many had taxes go up?"

Almost every hand in the room went up.

In addressing the group, McCall said people have legitimate complaints.

McCall said he knew there was trouble brewing when he started getting phone calls from people early in the reassessment process. Callers were complaining because

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Tyler employees were measuring their chicken houses and pigpens.

McCall also circulated a copy of an email sent by Assessor Linda Shugart to Administrator Scott Moulder on Sept. 20 indicating the need of $38,000 to cover overtime pay for her staff.

"We have already been inundated with work flow beyond our clerical capacity," Shugart wrote.

McCall's advice to the crowd was to appeal before the Dec. 9 deadline.

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He said gone were the days when taxpayers would get notices from the Assessor's Office that included the warning — "If you appeal, you're taxes could go up."

"The county employees are not to blame," McCall said. "It's the people we hired."

McCall told people to see Shugart or Moulder if they think they did not get a fair shake from Tyler.

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PHOTOS BY JESSICA NELMS | THE JOURNAL

Top photo, a large crowd of frustrated taxpayers assemble at a Seneca Tea Party meeting Thursday to vent against Oconee's reassessment of property values. Bottom photo, Oconee County Councilman Wayne McCall fields questions about reassessment from some of the more than 100 taxpayers that jammed a Seneca Tea Party meeting at the Bounty Land Baptist Fellowship Hall on Thursday.

