Women call out Oconee

Claim county is withholding reassessment info.

BY CARLOS GALARZA
THE JOURNAL

WALHALLA — Oconee County apparently is holding back on providing information to justify property appraisals conducted by Tyler Technologies Inc. during reassessment.

'There are rules these folks are breaking.'

Dawn Learst
Licensed real estate agent who's gone to bat on behalf of her 81-year-old mother

Two county taxpayers told The Journal on Friday that they've been unsuccessful in getting the county to substantiate reassessed values they are challenging.

Dawn Learst of Fair Play and Susie Cornelius of Mountain Rest say they've been frustrated in their efforts to get information from the county that would help them challenge Tyler's work.

Learst said she is a licensed real estate agent who's gone to bat on behalf of her 81-year-old mother.

In Georgia where she works, Learst said it's up to the government to justify reassessment. However, the burden is on taxpayers in Oconee to prove that their property values were incorrectly reassessed.

"For my mother or anybody to get an appraisal, when they (Oconee County) don't have anything to back them up is ridiculous," Learst said.

Learst said she went to the Assessor's Office where she was told that they did not have information for comparable sales.

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"There are rules these folks are breaking," she said.

Cornelius said she asked the county for Tyler's reappraisal of her property, but got nothing.

"They told me they did not have Tyler's appraisal," Cornelius said. "I can't get anything from the county."

Cornelius went so far as to file a Freedom of Information request with the county in which she asked for the program that transferred Tyler's data to the county's reassessment database. The county denied the request for proprietary reasons, she said.

County Administrator Scott Moulder said Friday that the county does not have the comparable sales used by Tyler to determine the reassessment values the company produced.

Moulder indicated that the county could generate its own list of comparable sales to verify Tyler's work.

"They (Tyler) produced values and they've done that," Moulder said. "That's what they were required to do by contract."

Moulder said that to his understanding, when a taxpayer files an appeal the county would pull up its comparable sales information to verify numbers. Moulder said he sees no reason why the county's comparable sales information could not be shared with taxpayers.

"I'd have to talk with Linda (Shugart, the county assessor) to see if it is being done."

Learst is questioning the validity of the county's reassessment based on the requirements listed in the Uniform Standards of Professional Appraisal Practice. She said that among the requirements is Standard 6 of the USPAP, which calls for a statistical model used in producing valuations be tested with back up data to establish validity.

"From my investigation this has not been done because I asked to see it and it was not provided," Hearst said.

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