

CHIEFLY SPEAKING

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Calhoun County Appraisal District

April 6, 2020

Greetings from the Calhoun County Appraisal District.

This “newsletter” is my attempt to update the local governmental bodies and the citizens of Calhoun County as to what is going on at the appraisal district in regards to the effect of the COVID-19 pandemic and the annual reappraisal of property.

Property is valued according to the State Property Tax Code as of January 1st of each year. Each year we review all properties in Calhoun County to determine an estimate of market value. We review sales activity over the prior 12 months or so and then measure current values against sales whenever possible and make adjustments accordingly including property changes or improvements. Overall, we are seeing an increase in property values when compared to last year either due to sales, property improvements or new construction. What this means is an overall increase in property valuation for 2020. Current plans are to mail notices of appraised value in mid to late April.

As of March 18th, our office was closed to the public to help curtail the possible spreading of the COVID-19 virus. Taxpayers are encouraged to make payments by mail, by credit/debit card either by phone or through our website or utilizing the payment slot located to the left of the office entrance. All staff members were working in the office or making onsite reviews, but I recently ordered several members of the staff to work from home leaving only 8 of 14 employees, including myself, remaining in the office. We will alternate employees working from home and the office to minimize exposure to one another. Fortunately, our office is arranged with enough space to practice proper distancing. To say that this has hampered our work progress would be an understatement.

These conditions are not limited to our county, but are statewide, indeed nationwide, as we all know. Everyone is affected. Appraisal districts across the state are faced with mailing out notices of increasing values to property owners in a time of an economic downturn of which we won't know the long-term effects until sometime in the future.

Some chief appraisers have shared their concerns with county judges and commissioners. Some county officials have voiced their concerns to the Governor by adopting resolutions recommending a rollback of values to 2019, with some exceptions, in order to ease the concerns of their citizens. As of yet, no changes or deadlines have been authorized, nor do we expect any. It is probably too late at this point in time. If taxable values due increase from last year it may enable the taxing units to lower their tax rates.

In 2019 the appraisal district underwent the biannual property value study conducted every other year by the comptroller's office. The preliminary results indicate that the values within the District are "invalid" meaning, in this case, that values are too low. We are protesting this determination and will be having an informal hearing at a date yet to be determined.

Should anyone have any questions or concerns, please let us know.