

**MY TAXES HAVE GONE UP,  
SO I MUST BE OVER-ASSESSED.**

## **LAKE COUNTY APPEAL**

**BY: RON KINGSLEY, TAX ATTORNEY AND OWNER, LAKE COUNTY APPEAL**



About two weeks ago, a client contacted us regarding her 2015 tax bill. She shared how shocked she was by the new tax bill because, in 2015, she had hired Lake County Appeal to try to reduce the property's assessed value.

Last summer, we initially reviewed the property's assessed value that the county had sent to the client. We then looked for three or more 2014 / early 2015 comparable property sales. We searched for similar size properties in the vicinity that sold for less than the market value set by the assessor. A market value is one that the assessor believes a client's property is worth. If the property was not highly unusual (i.e., no appraisal was required), and if Lake County Appeal couldn't find three or more of such comparable sales, the vast majority of the time we advised the client that the property was fairly assessed. (There are exceptions to every rule, right?)

### **How Could a Fairly-Assessed Property's Taxes Skyrocket?**

So back to the client's initial question of how one's taxes can skyrocket in a year while the



client's home value increased, but only by a small percentage. She believed that the two

just didn't add up. LCA determined that the client's property was fairly assessed in 2015. So, how could the client's 2015 taxes have shot up so astronomically in one year (i.e., since 2014)? 99% of the time the answer is that the client was under-assessed in 2014, the

last year of the previous quadrennial assessment period.

In 2015, we were in the first year of the new quadrennial assessment period, and the assessor who reviewed the value of her home deemed it was now fair to raise its assessed value. As reassessed, it was now in line with recent sales of comparable properties in the area.

### **An Unnecessary Mismatch**

The assessor raised the 2015 assessment after computing the average of 2012—2014 sales prices (on a square foot basis) of comparable



properties in the vicinity. Unfortunately, when Lake County Appeal did the 2015 assessment review (hoping to file a property tax appeal), the laws only allowed it to consider post-2014 comparable sales, which are likely higher than the comps the assessor uses. In many instances, it is comparing apples to oranges. This mismatch doesn't make sense. The assessor and the taxpayer (or the taxpayer's representative) should have been looking at the same years in determining what the assessed value should have been!

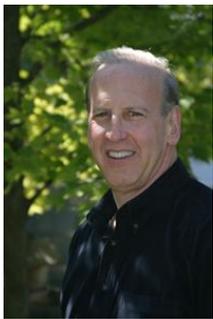
Complexity such as this illustrates why a law firm that does almost exclusively property tax

appeals should represent clients in filing their tax appeals, rather than clients doing the appeals themselves...Lake County Appeal understands the “ins and outs” of property tax appeals, and it is a massive undertaking for most homeowners to fully grasp the complexity of the property tax appeal process. Moreover, Cook and Lake Counties’ rules permit only lawyers to represent non-individuals (corporations, trusts, partnerships, etc.) that own property.

Fighting one's property taxes alone is like climbing a mountain without a rope. To obtain the best chance for success, one must equip oneself with the proper resources to reach the top.

#### **Ron Kingsley, Tax Attorney and Owner**

Ron Kingsley is the owner of Lake County Appeal. He has practiced tax law since 1985,



has worked for some of the largest accounting firms, corporations and law firms and has spearheaded many complex transactions. In 2013, Ron acquired Lake County Appeal in order to represent residential and commercial clients in their

fight to reduce the assessed values of their properties. Ron earned a Master of Laws in Taxation at DePaul College of Law, a Juris Doctorate at Loyola University Chicago School of Law and a Bachelor of Business Administration at Loyola University Chicago. Ron is an active member of the Illinois Bar, the Illinois Real Estate Lawyers Association, as well as the Lake County Bar Association.



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