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Property tax protest deadline approaches

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The deadline for Liberty County residents to file a property tax appraisal protest is quickly approaching.

Estimates were sent out to residents on April 30. Once a resident gets a notice of appraisal value, they have the opportunity to protest it if they disagree with it, according to Alan D. Conner, chief appraiser for Liberty County Central Appraisal District.

"If they are dissatisfied, it will go before the appraisal review board," said Conner.

Protest hearings will occur throughout the month of June on Tuesdays and Thursdays. There will also be special hearing dates such as a night hearing date, hearings on one Saturday and two days in Cleveland.

Conner said that the district usually receives approximately 3,000 protests of which 300 go before the appraisal review board. This amount of protests has been steady for the past 10 years. There are approximately 100,000 properties in the Liberty County.

The last day to protest property valuations is June 1 since May 31 is a holiday, according to Conner.

The estimates can be protested by the homeowners and the final valuations will be set in August.

The appraisal district uses last year's tax rate for their valuations, according to Kelly Foxworth, appraisal supervisor for the Liberty County Central Appraisal District.

She explained that local tax entities, such as school boards, water districts and the hospital district choose to raise or lower tax rates.

The appraisal value may increase, but each taxing entity decides each year whether to raise, lower or keep tax rates at the same level. So while the valuation may increase, the tax rate may increase, decrease or stay the same depending on the taxing entity.

According to data released by the appraisal district, valuations are increasing and decreasing among several areas such as the county, school districts and cities.

Liberty County's taxable property in 2009 was valued at \$4,053,355,960. The estimated value for 2010 is \$3,878,847,352.

Property within Cleveland ISD in 2009 was valued at \$600,080,997. The 2010 estimated value is \$629,399,706.

In 2009, the total valuation for property within Dayton ISD was \$1,345,314,577. The 2010 estimate is \$1,283,268,922.

Among the three largest cities in the county, Dayton is expecting a significant decrease in values; Liberty is expecting an increase and Cleveland will remain close to the same level as last year.

Dayton's 2009 values were \$654,440,618 and the 2010 estimate is \$524,741,006. Liberty's values were \$446,213,815 and the 2010 estimate is \$471,344,110. Cleveland's values in 2009 were \$323,080,233 and the 2010 estimate is \$323,732,414.

Several websites offer additional information on property appraisals and the tax protest process. The Texas State Comptroller's Office offers an overview of the appraisal process. Visit their website at www.window.state.tx.us and click on the local property tax link.

The Liberty County Appraisal District's website address is www.libertycad.com. The site offers additional information on property valuations and a link to a video on how to present a case before an appraisal review board.