All Points elevator explosion causes largest drop in property values

Property owners in and around Cozad complained the most about valuations this year.

But then again, that's where property values were updated by the Dawson County Assessor's office.

A fair number of protests were from agricultural ground owners, according to county assessor John Moore.

Of the 210 protests heard when the Dawson County Commissioners met as the board of equalization in July, Moore said more than 65% were from in and around Cozad followed by about 30% from a smattering of other farmers and commercial and residential property owners across the county.

Most of the protests concering agricultural land were from owners with five or six pieces of land, he said.

"A lot of those protestors were from out of state," he said.

Moore said some of the protests also came from property owners at Midway Lake where land was reappraised because of sales activity.

In 2008, Moore said, valuations were all over the board.

For example, the elevator explosion at All Points Cooperative accounted for a $750,000 drop in valuation while the owner of the Pamida building requested a $600,000 increase in valuation, Moore said.

Because the increase involves tax-increment financing, it has no bearing on the tax valuation base.

“You don’t gain in taxes but you don’t lose either,” Moore said.

TIF, used in economic development projects, supports a project by allowing the tax revenue generated by the property to help pay for its development.

Looking ahead to what property owners can expect in 2009 valuation notices, Moore said rural acreages located away from cities and towns are being studied mostly west of Cozad.

State statutes say valuation must be between 92% and 100% of market value.

“If we don’t make those changes, the state will and we try to keep them out of the picture,” he explained.

For example, state officials recommend that irrigated farmland be valued at $1,750 an acre.

“We’re already at $1,500 an acre,” Moore said.

The assessor said he couldn’t recount the actual number of decreases in valuation following the protests, noting that the amounts varied considerably for many reasons.

Several property owners had legitimate protests and valuation lowered because the inside of their homes were outdated, he said.

“Mostly due to the condition of the interior of the dwellings since we don’t often get inside when we do our work,” he said.

Moore said there were no changes in the ag area after the protest period because that market continues to increase.

He noted that the board of equalization told almost all of the property owners who protested that values were still too low for the sales that were occurring.

Moore added there were several instances of owners filing multiple protests.

As a result, the actual number of property owners involved in the protets was smaller than the total number of protest forms submitted.

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