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EL DORADO COUNTY ASSESSOR

M E M O R A N D U M

DATE: November 7, 2012

TO: Mike Applegarth, Principal Analyst

FROM: Karl Weiland

SUBJECT: Comments on proposed fire fee regulations

The comments from the Assessor on proposed regulations in Title 14 CCR Ch 13 §1665 principally address four issues:

- 1) The inclusion of all mobile homes should be revised to eliminate mobile homes located in mobile home parks.
 - a. These habitable structures are almost entirely inhabited by senior citizens on limited incomes and the fee can impose undue hardship.
 - b. Mobile home parks do not receive much benefit from fire prevention services commensurate with other surrounding residences. This is due to the general high density and minimal vegetation commonly found in these communities.
 - c. The State Board of Equalization, Cal Fire and the third party administrator have generated a substantial number of double billings on mobile homes, principally due to conflicts between the records of County Assessors and those of the California Department of Housing and Community Development (HCD). This difficulty goes back a long way. Mobile homes can be licensed through DMV, licensed with HCD or assessed on the local roll. Using multiple sources almost guarantees billing errors. These billing errors are falling mostly on senior citizens.
- 2) The definition of Property owner should be revised to exclude public agencies. The bill takes general fund dollars from local agencies and gives them to Cal Fire to use in fire prevention. Any local agency providing fire service is already funding fire prevention. Since part of those dollars must be returned to Counties in the form of grants, taking the money in the first place makes no sense.
- 3) Current language provides that the person responsible for the bill is the owner as of July 1st. Assessment rolls reflect the owner as of the lien date, January 1st. Because the basis of the fire fee bills is the assessment roll, the date should be changed and the conflict eliminated.
- 4) There are three recommendations in the language for filing petitions for redetermination:
 - a. Allow 60 days for filing a petition. 30 days is simply not enough time for property owners to complete sufficient research, obtain supporting documents and complete the petition process without undue disruption.
 - b. Clear up the confusion about where the petitions should be filed. Currently there is confusion and the adopted regulations should eliminate any confusion.
 - c. Eliminate the necessity for the property owner to file a claim for a refund of

money did not owe in the first place. If a petition is successful and a refund is due, the burden to make the payment should belong to the state, not the property owner.

I have made the specific comments in a Word version of the proposed rules. I'm not sure how the comments are to be submitted but between this memo and the commented version, we should be able to meet the requirements.

Call me if you have any questions.