

November 28, 2011

Rhonda Greene
10130 West Suder Lane
Campbellsburg, IN 47108

Re: indianaproud.com comments

Dear Mrs. Greene:

It has come to my attention that there is a video on your website, indianaproud.com, regarding treatment of Washington County residents by the County Assessor. The video suggest that people are not treated equally by our local government and specifically states to the effect that "it kind of looks like the good ole boy politics system may be alive and well in Washington County." I have now watched it twice and believe that your video conveys misinformation. In addition, you suggest improper activities that constitute criminal conduct on the part of the County Assessor. The allegations you make, if not defamatory, are very close to being defamatory against local government. The purpose of this letter is to advise you of the actual facts explaining the situations from which you draw your inferences and ask that you correct or remove the allegations altogether.

First, you suggest that there is a problem with a transaction between Martha Jean Trueblood and Randall Bills as well as a property owned by Tony and Debbie Trueblood as showing no tax bill due. You refer to these properties not having a tax bill as "helping your friends" on the part of Jason Cockerill with respect to Randall's property and state that Tony's not having a tax history is due to the fact he may be related to Susan Bills. The fact is, these two parcels were split out from Martha Jean Trueblood's farm between March 2, 2010 and March 1, 2011. As you know, real estate taxes are paid in arrears. That is, they run a year behind from March to March. So when you are paying taxes in 2012, it is for the period March 2010 through March 2011. The lack of a tax bill is the result of the timing of the split. Because these parcels did not exist the year before, there was not tax bill due on them in 2011.

For the record, tax bills are calculated by the County Auditor. The Assessor's office develops assessments based on strict rules and evaluation guides. With respect to the Trueblood and the Bills properties referenced above, you suggest that they should be considered "premium industrial property." Please be advised that assessment is done based on actual usage, not zoning or potential usage.

You then comment on the County Assessor's house on Washington Boulevard in Salem. This house was sold on contract to the Howells. When one records a contract, the transfer history shows the property as going from the seller to the seller, as there is no deed transferring the property until the contract is fulfilled. Regarding the Assessor's house on North Main Street in Salem, you question the drop in value. You refer to this as "servicing yourself." The drop in value is due to the fact that his house burned. He filed a disaster petition for review of the

assessment as allowed by law. The first deputy performed the assessment under the direct supervision of Joe Lukomski from the Department of Local Government Finance. The disaster petition filed in 2010 reduced the assessed taxes payable 2011, and the assessment of March 1, 2011, for pay 2012 is still a somewhat reduced amount. It will return to its full assessed value for pay 2013.

With regard to tax amounts, more than the assessed value must be considered. Primarily, you would have to look at what exemptions are on a particular property.

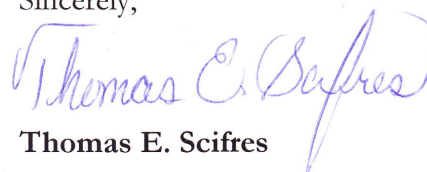
You also comment on Susan and Amanda Bills working in the Assessor's office. Susan worked under the prior Assessor, Eugene Trueblood, and her job was not terminated when the present Assessor took over. Amanda Bills also started work part-time under the previous Assessor and was allowed to continue while she was in college. She has since moved on. You also suggest that Randall Bill's cousin is working in the Assessor's office. That is not true. Jackie Trueblood works for the Recorder. Prior to that, she worked part-time during tax collections for the Treasurer.

Regarding Mount Motors, you suggest that the County Assessor increased the assessment on that property as a result of its employee, Eric Worley, testifying against Jason Cockerill and Randall Bills at the State Republican Party hearing regarding the caucus in which Randall Bills was selected to complete John Fultz's term on the county council. For 2008 payable 2009 and the years prior, the assessed value of Mount Motors was around \$130,000.00. For 2009 payable 2010, the Assessor's office added two new additions and paving to the assessment, which should have resulted in an increase. Because of a computer "glitch" instead of an increase, it actually decreased the assessment down to 34,100 dollars where it remained for the tax year 2010 payable 2011. Reassessment occurred the following year and that error was discovered the value adjusted to where it should be. By law, the County Assessor has the authority to pursue the 2009 payable 2010 amounts that were under-assessed, but he elected not to do so.

To the best of our knowledge, all of these situations you have raised are assessed appropriately under the laws and guidelines for property tax assessment. If you have information to the contrary, please bring it to the attention of the appropriate local governmental officials. Your on-line review of these individual situations omits certain relevant historical information and suggests unethical and illegal conduct on the part of County Assessor and possibly other local officials. If you need further information to satisfy your inquiries, I encourage you to obtain it. Until then, it is the county's position that your allegations are misleading or outright false, and we ask that you either correct or remove your on-line video segment.

Thank you for your cooperation.

Sincerely,



Thomas E. Scifres