

Press Release February 19, 2007

County Assessor's Office Mistake Creates Erroneous Property Tax Bills

Everett:

Just Days after the 2007 Snohomish County property tax statements were mailed, the county assessor's office informed county officials that its annual tax assessment roll was incorrect. The Assessor's Office error resulted in the production and mailing of about 267,000 tax statements that are wrong. According to County Assessor Cindy Portmann, the error occurred because one personal property tax account with an assessed value of about \$150,000,000 was left off the tax roll.

Property tax statements are produced by the county treasurer's office only after assessed property values are certified as accurate and complete by the County Assessor. The Assessor's Office error caused tax burdens to be shifted to all other property taxpayers in the county. Although the error occurred in the assessor's office, the burden to correct things falls upon the county treasurer's office.

"Had the treasurer's office been informed of the error in advance of mailing the tax statements, the trouble could have been averted" according to Bob Dantini, County Treasurer. The first batch of tax statements were mailed Tuesday February 13th but the Treasurer wasn't informed of the Assessor's error until Friday February 16th although the error was discovered by assessor staff as early as the beginning of the week.

County Treasurer Bob Dantini says he is committed to finding a solution that will correct the problem. "We have the ability to correct about half of our total tax accounts prior to April 30; those accounts that are serviced by taxpayers' banks and mortgage companies and those on our automatic tax payment service.

"We are evaluating the feasibility of reproducing and mailing corrected statements countywide. If that isn't possible within our timeframe, it will be necessary to issue refunds to taxpayers that will have overpaid", said Dantini. Refunds, if needed, would be made sometime after the end of October when the 2nd half taxes are due.

"At this time, we're waiting for a new and corrected tax assessment certification from the Assessor's Office," said Dantini.

For questions concerning tax bills, a faster response can be expected by emailing the treasurer's office at: treasurer@co.snohomish.wa.us

Telephone inquiries may be made to: 425 388 3366 and will be responded to as staff resources permit.