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**County Board real estate update shows no 'solar effects'**

Anybody who is trying to sell a home or vacant property is likely pleased with the rebound of real estate in Chisago County; but for staff in the county assessor and auditor offices, sales activity also means data-updating and monitoring how it all impacts the county overall tax capacity.

And, the property taxation formula affects how local levies are distributed over individual parcels.

With property tax public hearings approaching soon, the broad horizon of For Sale signs and Open House announcements zooms inward, as city councils, school boards and the county board finalize what they will want to collect next year.

The overall increase in market valuation for property in the county is up 7.15 percent.

The number shown recently to the county commissioners is \$5 billion, 239 million and some odd thousand dollars. Not back to what it was at the (manipulated) peak before the great real estate recession-- which was \$5 billion 920 million and some odd thousand.

Data presented at the County Board meeting laid clear one major sub-set of statistics the county policymakers are keeping a sharp eye on. The impact the biggest solar array in Minnesota is having (or not) on property values.

The assessor reported that the 1,000 acre rural North Branch- Lent substation-and-Sunrise Township solar energy project, known as

"North Star," has had no apparent negative impact on surrounding property values.

County Assessor John Keefe said there have been 750-plus property sales throughout the county.

Within this data he watched numbers for 15 parcels alongside or close to North Star that have sold. (Three offers as of print deadline were pending.)

Keefe and Deputy County Auditor Bridgitte Konrad presented a valuation summary and budget recap to the County Board. Estimates are that the countywide tax base increased within one to 1.2 percent for next year's payable property tax. And, although the solar effect is not yet a multi-year study, Keefe feels, after analyzing sales near or adjacent to the massive panel array, "There is no adverse impact there."

The value of sales of properties near North Star, between January 2016 and October 2017-- on 375th, 367th, Keystone, Little Oak, Lincoln Trail and Kost Trail were nearly all in excess of assessed. Keefe reported, "It seems conclusive valuation hasn't suffered."

One parcel on Kost Trail was the exception assessed at \$207,046 and selling for \$154,900.

There was much additional detail in the full report-- but of interest countywide:  
 ~ Farmland acreage dipped from five years ago. There are 103,419 now and in 2012 there were 128,677 acres. Five years before that-- in 2007, there were 176,304.

~ The border of Washington and Chisago County still serves as the great demarcation line in agricultural land value. In Washington County a Green Acre value per acre of tillable land in Scandia is \$8,400. This compares to \$3,300 in Franconia and Chisago Lake South. The further north in Chisago County ag property is-- the Green Acre (farmland rent capitalization) value decreases. It goes to \$2,400 per acre in Nessel, Harris and Sunrise North.

~ Waterfront properties' prices are up eight to nine percent 2015 to 2016 (as of Oct). The 2016 trend for non-waterfront is up six percent. (Based on 1,097 total residential sales in 2016)

~ New home construction permits total as of end of September were 116.

The county zoning department is at 105 percent of budgeted for construction and land use (subdivision, platting) permit revenues for 2017, with Oct, Nov and Dec remaining.


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