

From: August 18-19, 2020 Board Meeting-Public Comment
To: Meeting Info
Subject: [External] August 18-19, 2020 Board Meeting-Public Comment
Date: Monday, August 17, 2020 8:58:13 PM

STATE BOARD OF EQUALIZATION



Anonymous Item # N
Item Name: Public Comment Not on the Agenda
Meeting Date: 8/19/20 Minutes Exhibit #: 8.20

PUBLIC COMMENT

Name: Anonymous

E-mail Address:

Phone:

Agenda Item(s):

N. Public Comment on Matters Not on the Agenda

Comment:

(I would like this comment to be submitted anonymously. Thank you) Honorable Board Members, I wish to alert you about an alarming situation unfolding at the Assessor's Office in Santa Clara County, where I work as an appraiser Ever since our County implemented a shelter in place order in mid-March, our office of 250 employees has largely been working from home. Certain essential functions were still performed in the office, and those who preferred to come in were still allowed to, but most of the work was being done at home. Under these extraordinary circumstances, we managed to close the assessment roll of \$551 billion. In many cases, we found ourselves more productive, completing more assessment activities than during the same time period the year before. For real property assessments alone, we completed 99.63% of all activities, a new record in our office. But late last month, we were made aware of a plan by our Assessor Larry Stone to bring all teleworking employees back into the office on a rotational basis. The plan, which he developed unilaterally without input from staff, would have placed as many as 25 employees on one floor of the office at a time. All of this while Santa Clara County reports around 200 new cases of Covid-19 per day, and most public and private organizations are still largely teleworking (including other departments in Santa Clara County, and other Assessors Offices in large counties throughout the state). Thankfully, after over 150 members of our office raised objections, the Assessor's reckless plan was rejected by the County Executive. However, the Assessor was so incensed by the County Executive's decision, that he resorted to the nuclear option and closed the office to all employees except senior managers. Consequently, some essential functions that we depend on to will not be able to be performed. Roll corrections can't be made, because nobody can mail the notices. If our computers break down, we can't get them fixed and will need to take leave, because Assessor Stone has barred all IT personnel from the premises. Assessment appeals cannot be defended because we're not allowed to be present at the hearings, resulting in an automatic win for applicants. In short, because Assessor Stone did not get his way, his new strategy is to intentionally impede his own employees' workflow, so that he can turn around and tell the public that teleworking has a detrimental impact on assessment roll production. He's putting his thumb on the scale to get the results that support his narrative, holding schools and essential services hostage in order to fulfill his own shortsighted prophecy. He admitted as much in a recent San Jose Spotlight article: "If I'm prevented from deploying my staff the way I need to to get my job done, then I'll let them know ... how much money we left on the table. I'll let school boards and the cities and everyone who depends on property tax revenue know what happened.". In the same article he dismissed our concerns as lies and implied that our desire to continue work from home was more out of laziness than concern for personal safety. We cannot afford to participate in the Assessor's dangerous and potentially deadly game of chicken. My colleagues and I just want to do our jobs in a safe and supportive environment. Our issue was always about safety, and

following the Countywide directive to telework whenever possible. I am leaving this comment because I want to assure the members of the Board and the public that, in spite of the Assessor's interference, my colleagues and I will continue to go about our work with the efficiency and professionalism that we have shown over the last five months. I implore our Assessor Larry Stone to do the same.