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Late property taxes coming to various entities

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Orange County delinquent property tax collections will get a nice boost this month due to the resolution of an ongoing collection dispute.

Steve Bird, a partner in the Austin based Linebarger Goggan Blair & Sampson, LLP stated that the law firm's foreclosure proceeding against a developer of properties in the City of Orange has netted the local taxing jurisdictions over \$250,000.00 in late property taxes.

"We have been pursuing this delinquent tax revenue for well over a year and I'm glad to finally have this resolved in favor of the local entities," Bird said. After initial negotiations with the developer failed to result in any tax payments, the law firm filed a foreclosure lawsuit in District Court alleging that over 70 pieces of property that the developer had improved had accrued unpaid property taxes.

A judgment was entered in favor of the taxing jurisdictions but when the developer still failed to timely pay the judgment amount the properties were posted for foreclosure sale.

The sale was to have taken place on Tuesday, May 4th however the developer and his lender came in at the last moment and delivered the funds to pay the judgment amounts in full.

"We never like to post property for sale and we believe that we try very hard to work with property owners to take care of their tax obligations without litigation; however, cooperation is a two way street," Bird added. "We have to see progress in actually taking care of the obligation or else foreclosure is a last option."

Lynda Gunstream, Orange County Tax Assessor Collector agreed stating that "My office wants to work with property owners but there are times where we simply have no choice but to ask the law firm to step in and handle matters. This revenue is very important to the local taxing jurisdictions that I collect for and my job is to insure that every effort is made to get it collected." According to the tax records the actual payment by this developer totaled \$259,368.62. Of that total Orange County realized \$54,592.29, the City of Orange realized \$72,964.65, the West Orange Cove CISD's share was \$84,286.93, the Little Cypress Mauriceville CISD received \$35,908.40, the Port District received \$947.89 and the Drainage District received \$10,668.46.

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Steve Bird, a partner in the Austin based Linebarger Goggan Blair & Sampson, LLP, hands over a check to the Orange County Tax Assessor Collector.