

The Herald

Tax auction set for today
August 03, 2010
By Laura B. Martinez

Taxpayers on Monday were scrambling to pay delinquent taxes or face seeing their property being sold to the highest bidder today.

Delinquent taxpayers headed to the Cameron County Tax-Assessor Collector's Office and to the law firm that collects delinquent taxes for several entities to pay back taxes owed.

The Linebarger, Goggan, Blair & Sampson LLP law firm will hold an auction from 10:30 a.m. to 4 p.m. on the steps of the Cameron County Courthouse on East Harrison Street to sell some 60 properties that are delinquent on their taxes.

One of the most delinquent on the list is the old Dolly Vinsant Memorial Hospital in San Benito, which according to the tax office owes \$630,275 in back taxes to Cameron County, the city of San Benito and the San Benito Consolidated Independent School District.

The property has an appraised value of more than \$2.7 million and as of Monday, the hospital still remained on the property tax sale list, said John Guevara, a partner with the law firm.

"Something could happen tomorrow (Tuesday)...like with any taxpayer if they came in the morning and paid. We could still put it from the sale, but as far as I know they have not paid," Guevara said on Monday afternoon.

The hospital has been closed since October 2007 because of financial problems.

Also on the list is property where two Taiwan Shrimp Farms are housed. Listed as Lot No. 13 and Lot No. 14, a combined \$57,874 in back taxes is owed.

Guevara said property owners have been stopping by the law firm to either pay the taxes owed or make payment arrangements to prevent their property from being sold. As each arrangement or payment is made, the sale of the property becomes cancelled.

"The numbers are changing by the minute," Guevara said.

On Friday, 64 properties throughout the county were originally scheduled to be sold, which combined owe more than \$1 million in delinquent taxes, officials reported.

"It's not fair to those citizens who pay their taxes to not go after those who refuse to pay," said County Tax Assessor-Collector Tony Yzaguirre Jr.

According to Yzaguirre's office, the 2009 taxes became delinquent in February and the accounts were turned over in July to Linebarger, Goggan, Blair & Sampson LLP for collection.

Guevara said 36,361 delinquent notices have been mailed out to the property owners. The amount of money owed on these delinquent taxes is more than \$26.9 million.

In addition, 533 lawsuits have been filed to collect an additional \$1.5 million on back taxes, Guevara said. The law firm expects to file more lawsuits in August and September against those delinquent taxpayers.