

Meeting began with the pledge.

Maryanne Petrilla: Once again, we have three pages of people who wish to make public comment. You promise to be held to five minutes. In the event that your comments are continually repeated over and over and over again, I ask you to, you know, forgo your time on the plate, because, you know, we really need to hear from people. It's very important that people have their concerns and problems heard. (Many people talking at once) Well, the Commissioners' Meeting is held at five o'clock seven times a year. And if we had them all at seven, the people who were on second shift would complain that they're not in the morning. So, we've really made an effort to try and accommodate as many people in the county as we can by having seven of them at five o'clock in the evening, throughout the whole county, so people don't have to travel and they have an opportunity to come to a meeting. (Talking) Now, I'll ask everyone to be quiet and your name will be called if you signed up for public comment. Any jeering, any screaming, this meeting will be adjourned. (Booing and chatter)

(Inaudible)

Someone: One announcement. An executive session was held on Wednesday, July 2, 2008 to discuss legal issues. That's it.

(Noise and chatter.)

Someone: An executive session was held Wednesday, July 2, 2008 to discuss legal issues. That was all, Commissioner.

(Inaudible).

Maryanne Petrilla: All right, Public Comment. I will call your name. I would ask that if you can come forward, come forward. Five minutes. Thomas Dziak West Pittston. (Inaudible) Wherever, sir.

Thomas Dziak: I live with my son. He has four rooms on a forty-five, maybe one-ten. His value is, assessment, went from \$930 to \$1,880. Four rooms about 1000 square feet, okay? But the same living space, basically the same lot size, was a garage. There taxes are \$1,300. My son's was \$1980. We went to 21st Century's informal hearing. You know what we were told? One is a ranch. One is a bungalow, so your house is worth \$600 more than that. Is there such thing, in the county, as a difference between a bungalow and a ranch, the same living space, I'm talking within ten or fifteen square feet of land and inside? You get an answer. One is a bungalow. One is a ranch. That's why you're paying more. Tell me. And then to go up from \$930 to \$1880. (Inaudible) I don't want to tell you what happened with mine. It would take me all day. If you three commissioners would just go up there and see these people walking in with canes and all. They're like sardines up there on our street. Twenty-four homes, seven of which are widows. Three or which their taxes went up \$600,000. They have no pension. They got social security. They tell me, "Tom where the hell am I gonna get \$50 a month for?" Unbelievable guys. I mean,

I'm sorry. I mean mine went up \$350 and I compared it with a comparable home 1000 feet away from me and they're telling me that house is worth \$745 more than mine. (Inaudible) Nothing against the property owner. He's got fifty feet, a nice driveway, residential value \$745 more than my identical. I brought pictures. They don't want to see pictures. (Inaudible)

Maryanne: You'll find the formal hearing a lot different.

Thomas Dziak: What's that?

Maryanne: You will find the formal hearing different, I assure you.

(Booing)

Thomas: I mean you go up \$900 some dollars. (Inaudible). A bungalow verses a residence.

Maryanne: Michelle Boice, Harvey's Lake.

(Clapping)

Thomas Dziak: Maryanne, one more thing I have to ask you and 21st Century. Is it more land than you have costs less per (inaudible)?

Maryanne Petrilla: He'll answer those questions after the meeting.

(Inaudible)

Michelle Boice: Madam Chairman, I respectfully, respectfully beg for just a little more time because I am here representing my community, who is very well-represented here tonight. Some are going to speak. Others have asked me to speak for them. They're not comfortable in this crowd. So I am respectfully asking for just a little more time.

Maryanne Petrilla: There's many, many people on this list.

Michelle Boice: I'm representing a lot of people from Harvey's Lake. Would the people from Harvey's Lake who are not speaking raise your hands? (Clapping and cheering). I am Michelle Boice, a lifetime resident of Harvey's Lake. And I am here today to make a plea on behalf of my community, which has been brutally raped in the reassessment process. (Cheers) We are proud people with a passion for our small, lovely, rural community. And while we sympathize with our neighbors throughout the county and especially those from the Back Mountain who were also hit hard, we come here to plead our case today. I've invited you out to Harvey's Lake. I've sent you letters. I talked to Mr. Urban on Friday, who promised me he'd come before this meeting and he did not. Our streets are not lined with gold. You need to come out and see that. There ain't no oil in them thar hills. You need to come out there and see that. The majority of our residents,

the majority are made up of middle class, working people who absolutely cannot pay one third and more of their annual income in property taxes. I have taken phone call after phone call till I'm weary from residents that are breaking down and crying. I've listened to their personal stories. An elderly widow, who will remain nameless because she was ashamed to tell me, she goes to the food bank to be able to eat because she can't pay her heat bills and her taxes. And now you want more from her. A dying senior hooked up to oxygen, he's sick. He doesn't know what he's going to do. His taxes increased so much. And what is going to become of his wife when he dies? He's trying to fight from a deathbed. How's he supposed to get up there? I had a working man. These are just a few examples of Harvey's Lake people. A working man who had an appraisal done two years ago – Listen to this! – Two years ago for a bank loan, he had a certified appraisal done. His land was valued at \$4,000. 21st Century came in and said it's worth \$400,000. (Booing) He went to the review process. He went to the review process and got no relief. No one there is comfortable adjusting land at Harvey's Lake. They did the same thing to me. I have a parcel of land not on the shoreline, half of an acre, valued at \$396,000 by you people. Then along the shoreline, in my own neighborhood, on a corner, Lakeside Drive waterfront property, same amount of land, \$112,000. On the shoreline! My land was valued at \$396,000. I went to the formal review. Here's my booklet. Don't tell me. You didn't change my land.

Maryanne Petrilla: Ma'am, please (inaudible).

Michelle Boice: Well it's a little hard when you got somebody standing here calling me a liar.

Maryanne Petrilla: Ma'am.

(Noise)

Michelle Boice: Tell him not to lie. They're incompetent. (Cheers) Please, I don't want them to shut this meeting here. I got more to say on behalf of my people, and its also on behalf of all of you. Properties that I sold, just in the last few years, have been assessed at three times the sales price. Three times the sales price! I sold a property at Harvey's Lake for \$46,000; she got slapped with a \$149,000 value. It's a bungalow. She can't pay what she has now. She's on disability. They cannot pay these unrealistic, ridiculous taxes. And they don't have the money to hire appraisers. It's all well and good to say you're going to be taken care of at the formal. Where are they getting the money? And if you cared, I'm willing to show you the data. I've sent you some. There's absolutely not a shred, not a shred, of consistency in the values placed on Harvey's Lake properties. And I don't care if you're looking at waterfront or not waterfront. And we can't get an answer as to what methodology was used, Mr. Barr. (Cheers) Harvey's Lake has some very affluent people. And they live in some extraordinary homes. But they're the exception to the rule. They are in a position to fight for themselves. And I'm speaking for the majority, who live both on and off the waterfront, who are like me, ordinary working people, with ordinary homes, and ordinary incomes. In fact, I could find only two properties that sold for a million dollars at Harvey's Lake in the last five years or so. One of them, they were

mansions, one of them was over 10,000 square foot of living space and it was right down on the lake. That's extraordinary. How you justify this? 2007, which is a year we're all supposed to use. I could find 36,000 homes at Harvey's Lake. One third of them were under \$100,000. The median price was \$140,000. Where do you get these ridiculous numbers and how do you justify them? It would appear that we were targeted, and we'd like to know why. There's something very seriously flawed. There are other lakes in the county. Some of them are neighboring lakes, Lake Silkworth and North Lake. Lovely little communities like ours, and they didn't get hit this way. A lake view is a lake view is a lake view when it's two miles down the road. The informal review process is a joke with no merit. And people are going there unprepared because they have no idea what they are fighting if they don't own a computer to see what errors were made. There's no help from the county and there's none from 21st Century Appraisals. And please do not tell senior citizens they can go use the library computer, because you might as well send them to NASA and tell them to fire up the space shuttle. They don't know how to use it. They need some help, and this county should be helping them. I'm trying to help as many people as I can, and I'm weary from it. Your decision that is handed down by someone so quickly that is nameless and faceless and kept behind closed doors like it's a big secret. You can't even get their name to find out what their credentials are when they just made a life-impacting decision on your property that's going to cost you money. And you can't get a name. It's ridiculous. Formal reviews are costly. That office is now overburdened and understaffed. It's hurry, hurry, hurry and the poor taxpayer can't get any answers until October. Now you've added more steps to the process – more time, more money that we already don't have. People are sick with worry. They're frightened about their future, and they can't get an answer until October. Even the appraisers are overwhelmed and hurrying the process. The whole process is being done haphazard and it's being shoved down our throats. And it appears that the commissioners are doing everything possible to push this through by wearing the weary taxpayer right out. (Applause) This is communism. This is not the America that we know. (Applause) I'll go so far as to say it borders being criminal. And I'll say that you people should be held accountable for the sudden and untimely deaths of people who are already ill, mainly seniors with respiratory problems, heart problems, suffering with diabetes, and other illnesses. And they're sick with worry, trying to hang on to what little they have left in this economy, and you're pushing them over the line. How do any of you sleep at night? It's a sloppy, unprofessional job done by temp workers with little training, and it's all being rushed through to meet deadlines, caused by you people putting it off till after the election. There's no justice. There's no reasoning. You're accountable to the taxpayers, and we are demanding tonight that you hold 21st Century Appraisals accountable for our \$8,000,000. (Applause) Regroup. Regroup. (Noise) I'm asking you to regroup. Somebody up there has a backbone, the compassion, to put a motion on the floor to stop the assessments. (Applause)

Maryanne Petrilla: Sandy Dobrowolski

(Noise)

Sandy Dobrowolski: Hi. My name is Sandy Dobrowolski. I live in Hunlock's Creek. I own two pieces of property. One is in Lehman Township. One is in Hunlock Township. I went to the informal appeal. When I got there, I was told that it was an hour and a half wait. I was told before this that there would be no reappointments, so that if something were to happen, I had to be there. My mother was taken to the hospital at three o'clock that morning. I walked in there and they tell me that there's an hour and a half wait. I walk in, the girl takes my name and information. She says, "Go ahead and have a seat." This is what the room looked like. I said, "Well, where am I supposed to sit? Should I sit on top of the vending machine?" I said, "Can I go outside and sit on the corner? Will you come and get me?" She told me no. "Well, no, we're not coming out there." I said, "You mean to tell me that I'm told that I have to be here and you're not even going to come outside when there's no place for me to sit here?" Well, as it worked out, she did wind up coming outside. But that's the kind of thing that we're facing when we go to these informal hearings. When I got to the informal hearing, the lady I spoke to, when I finally got there, by the way, my appointment was for quarter after four; I never got out of there until seven-thirty. When I went in to talk to the lady, she was very nice. Helpful? No. First of all, on my property, that I live in, they had listed two outbuildings. One was my barn, which is there. The other one was a pole barn that does not exist. I explained this to the girl. She said to me, "Well, we'll see what we can do. Now what do we need to talk about the other property? I'm going to go over the other property, because that's a big one." The other property's appraised at \$160,000, and I showed her a couple of houses in the area that were the same size house that were way under that appraisal. She took a few notes. She went back. She comes back out to me. She said, "We can't do anything about the one for \$160,000 and if we take this full barn and turn it into a barn, they're going to appraise you higher." I said, "Wait a minute, what I'm telling you is that building does not exist." So she takes it back, she comes back, she takes the barn off. I go back to them, she took off the wrong building. So the pole barn still remains, which is the higher priced item. And the barn is gone. The barn has been there for over a hundred years, okay. That's the kind of thing that we're looking at, at these informal hearings, which by the way, I had to take off work to get to, which, I think that's unfair. I'm a working person. I'm not highly paid. So now I had to take off work and lose money to go down there and do this to begin with, while my mother's in the hospital and I spent several hours there, which should not have happened. The one that my daughter lives in at Lake Silkworth. Like I said, I own two properties. My daughter lives in the one at Lake Silkworth, and the reason it's in my name is because she is a working woman with three small children, could not afford to get a house on her own so I helped her to get a house because she wanted her children to go to Lake Lehman School District. She takes responsibility for all that house. She pays the taxes. She pays everything on that house. She called me crying. "Mom, I can't afford this. What am I going to do?" I can't afford to pay. Her taxes are over \$2,000. She said, "Mom, I can't afford this. I'm going to have to move. I'm going to have to find a house to rent or something, cause there's no way that I can afford this." So I started looking. And I have them here, and I'll hand them to you when I'm done. I found properties, I found five similar properties to hers, near where she lives. I have two that are just in Lehman Township. One appraised, same size as hers, appraised at \$59,900. Another one at \$78,000. Now, there's one right on the lakefront at Lake Silkworth. Now, we're not talking Harvey's Lake. We're talking little Lake Silkworth.

There's a house that sits there, beautiful house, same size as hers, brand new home, concrete driveway. They're assessed at \$88,000. Okay. Another house on the lakefront property, and they own lakefront property, by the way. Another one, \$121,000, right on the lake. My daughter's house is up a hill. Her front yard literally drops about twenty-five feet straight to the road. Her lot is .24 acres. Her home. I'll show you her home that's appraised at \$160,000. That's her home. That's her home. Would you pay \$160,000 for that? Because, if you would, please come and I will sell it to you right now. I will sell it to you. (Applause) Because, when she moved in, it wasn't big enough for her and her children. We moved the top part of it and we added on. We made it straight. The top was all little (inaudible) that was wasted space. We added onto it. She does not have the money to side it. And you know what she said to me when she called me crying? "Mom, what am I going to do? I'm going to either pay my taxes or I'm going to side my house." That's the kind of thing that you're doing to people. And I have these. I want you to see these, because these are the things that this woman looked at and the Assessors Office looked at and told me that they couldn't do anything about a \$160,000 appraisal. Now for mine, they wouldn't even talk land. I don't know if you know, they wouldn't talk the land.

Maryanne Petrilla: You're way over five minutes. You're way over your five minutes.

Sandy Dobrowolski: Well, see that's the whole thing that I've been getting at. When we went to the Assessors Office, there was nothing they could do for me. I go here, there's nothing they could do for me. I call the (inaudible) because I got my formal hearing notice, which is supposed to be on both properties. Only the one property is on there. When I called, guess what the girl told me? "Well, you know, we have thousands coming that day. It probably got misplaced somewhere. So now, my formal appeal, I'm going to talk about one property. I said to her, "What's going to happen once the deadline goes by?" "Well I don't know what to tell you." That's the kind of thing we're getting, and that's why it's even so frustrating to come here and be told that my time is up. (Applause)

Maryanne Petrilla: Jacqueline Latosek.

Jacqueline Latosek: Hi, I'm Jackie Latosek. I'm Tax Collector in Jackson Township. I've been meeting for the last couple of years with the reassessment company. I asked, at the meeting, that the Tax Collectors would have the listing of the reassessment values, because I knew that the seniors would be contacting the tax collectors, because they do not have access to computers as much as everyone. Mr. Barr told me they're going to have to figure it out for themselves. He did tell me that. We did get a list finally a week ago, but all it has is a summary. It gives you the totals. It doesn't break it out, land or improvement. That is one issue that I have. I try to help my people as much as I can. I'm elected to do it to help them and I try. That's that issue. Michelle sold my daughter a house a year ago, June 20 of last year. We paid \$120,000 for that house in a bid war. It's assessed at \$216,000. Went to the informal. They took it down \$8,000. It's still \$207,000. That was in a bid war. I had an appraisal there. I had the HUD statement. That's what they did for it. Same thing on my own home. I showed them my own home. I have an older home. They had me with a fireplace. They took the fireplace off, but no value came

off. This is all I have to say, but God bless us. And I hope that you people shut this down, hold it for a year. I'm not saying throw it out, because some of it is correct. (Shouting) But the land, the land is way out of proportion. The land is not what it is. In my neighborhood, I could show you six acres two people own, alongside one another. One is \$131,000. One is \$70,000. And they're the same six acres, same style, same topography, everything. Why? And then down the road for me, \$131,000, \$67,000, and \$131,000. All six point some odd acres, all three of them. And it makes no sense. I'm right on the road. My land's \$39,400. I have eight tenths of an acre. You step out my front door, twenty feet you're on the road. And when you do the .8 of an acre, my base acre's \$48,000. Everybody else in my neighborhood is \$42,000. Why is mine so much? And the same thing for my house. My house is way overvalued. If Mr. Barr thinks it's worth \$236,000, write me a check. (Applause)

Maryanne Petrilla: I'm having trouble reading this name. Not sure if it's John Shevisko from Harvey's Lake.

John Sherisko: I'll pretty much reiterate what the last three people said. My question is, why don't we postpone this, reevaluate what's happening, because I know, from the little bit I've done in research, I found a lot of mistakes. Just in my area in less than a quarter of a mile, I have three people's names I'd rather not say. One has improvements to his house, x number of rooms, I think there were six rooms, I know there's more. So that tells me that the appraisers didn't stop at the houses as the video shows in the courtroom scene on the courthouse channel. They didn't come in and tell the people that they're there to appraise the house. If they did, I would've let them into my house. There was no tag saying that there was an appraisal done on my house, okay, and I could only estimate about when it was done by the photograph they took of my house. My main concern is my property consists of four pieces of property. The four pieces equal less than .8 of an acre, okay. The parcel that my house is built on has gone up over \$1,800 a year in taxes. It's valued at \$177,000. The lot is about sixty feet by 125 feet that the house is built on. So apparently, the people who did the appraisal didn't go to the borough and find out what the laws are for Harvey's Lake Borough as far as building laws. From Ridge Street on Carpenter Road down where the sewer ends, you need a minimum of sixty feet frontage, set back twenty-five feet or 4,000 square feet. Most of the homes don't have that. So there's problems if there's a total loss for the property on a rebuilding. My property consists of a sixty foot by 125 foot, two thirty foot by 125 foot separately gated, and 110 foot by 148 separated by a borough road. So I can't build on any individual lot. I can't sell them combined as a building lot, because I'm above Ridge Avenue, where you have to have a minimum of an acre to build on. I have .8. According to the zoning officer, I could probably rebuild because I've lived there. It has to be done within a year's period of time to get the paperwork started. But I would have to file for a variance. I know that for a fact because of my son's house burning down. When he replaced his house, because of his lot, he had to file a variance. And I was at the hearing. There was a construction trailer on a proposed road, which was actually a right of way behind Carpenter Road that belongs to a young lady who just built a house a couple years ago that was assessed for, I believe, \$1,700. It was a construction trailer. They had it down as an aluminum building. So, you know, fine, 21st Century, they're accountable. I'm not even going to say it's their

fault. It's the people they hired to do the assessment on the road. What the commissioners need to do for the people is reevaluate what we're doing. I have \$425 out of pocket and I haven't even scheduled my appeal hearing and I haven't even got the assessment person here to reappraise my property. And my informal hearing, I got tomorrow morning. I got my appointment today for it. So when I leave here to go home and finish preparing. And again, my biggest problem isn't so much my house. It's my properties. But I can only go to the informal hearing with my house property. The other three parcels, I can't use until I go to the formal appeal. So I might be knocking on a commissioner's door, because I just told you that and from what Sandy just said, I don't want to get down there and say, "Well, we lost the other ones," because I got all four parcels with me when I come. So that's all I have to say. But I really think, and by the way, I'm a disabled vet and I don't work. And I'm going to scratch my behind (inaudible)

(Applause)

Maryanne Petrilla: John Tereska, Harvey's Lake.

John Tereska: That was me.

Maryanne Petrilla: Oh. Rosemary Kocrs.

Someone: Stand up for your constituents. You gotta be ashamed of yourselves!

Maryanne Petrilla: Rosemary Kocrs.

Someone: You're all retarded!

Someone Else: Maryanne, would that be Rodney Kolb? K-O-L-B?

Maryanne: Rodney Kolb.

(Noise)

Rodney Kolb: My name's Rodney Kolb. I live at Harvey's Lake. One of the properties Jack was talking about was mine. I was looking at it. If my house burned to the ground today, today, you know, they valued the property at \$22,000 for .15 acres. There's no lakefront. It's up by the road, Harvey's Lake Ghettos, if you want to call it that. The property with that (inaudible) fifty feet by 140 feet. If it burned down to the ground, I'm not allowed to rebuild. What really got my gripe up, I looked at the paper, in the printout on the computer and whatnot. It said I live in a story and a half house, excuse me, two-story house, with a three-bedroom, a bath and a half. It's a one story house with one bedroom and one bath. Now, I don't mind paying my fair share. I realize the government's got to have tax money to run. That's the way it has been and always will be. We're getting a little bit carried away. I paid \$50,000 for the house and it was overpriced then, but I needed a place to live. And it went up to \$137,000 or something like that on the value on it. The property taxes went up 250 percent on the price of it. Guy

went by, snapped a picture, didn't look that upper floor they said is an unfinished attic. Nothing but insulation up there. You can't even live there. It's just a (inaudible) house like this. I don't know who could live up there. Bats come in once in awhile, but that's about it. Now, I listen to everyone else's horror I story. I call to get my formal review. They say it's sometime in the month of August. August 13. I said, "Hopefully you've spoken to the people and we get better results by then." Thank you.

Maryanne Petrilla: Thank you. (Applause) Linda Barber.

(Noise)

Someone: We can't hear you.

Someone Else: If you guys are quiet, you can hear her!

Linda Barber: We moved to Harvey's Lake thirty-seven years ago into the old (inaudible) farms house. And it should have been torn down and something new put up. But we had to scrape together every penny we could to have the (inaudible) finished, to get a down payment to move there. And we loved it there. It's been wonderful. It's an old house, but they said it was built in 1940, the reassessment. And it was first sold in 1865. We have an in-ground well. We have (inaudible). Our basement's timber, stone, dirt basement floor. And we have (inaudible), you name it. Now I'm not complaining about our house. I'm just complaining because our taxes went up over \$10,000. (inaudible) We raised our six kids there. (inaudible) loved it there. We have grandkids. (Dissolving into sobs) I can't give you the details. I'm just shaking all over. I've been so upset to think that we bought an old house, and we were going to raise a family there and live there. Now we make get kicked out because we can't pay the taxes! (Cheering, shouts of encouragement)

Maryanne Petrilla: Thank you very much. Stephen Barber.

Stephen Barber: I think she pretty well took care of it. I know we're all here for the same reason. We're all here because we're overtaxed. (Noise, chatter, applause) \$1,500, as my wife said, \$1,500. (muffled) \$10,000. By the way, (inaudible). During election time, we heard a lot from Lisa Baker, Paul Kanjorski, Karen Boback and other political (inaudible). Where are they? Are they here? (Noise, applause) But we really need somebody to (inaudible) class action suit.

(Applause)

Someone: No more reassessment! No more reassessment!

Others: Quiet!

Stephen Barber: I think we can last for awhile. I don't know how long. We have to use our (inaudible). We're really thinking about selling. (Murmuring) \$12,000. \$1,500.

\$3,000. \$2,500. We have two weeks to find a buyer. (Murmuring) \$12,000 a year. No way. (Murmuring, shouts)

Maryanne Petrilla: Please stop talking. Please. (Murmuring) Please. It's not helping with people screaming in the background. (Murmuring) Ellen Turner. Ellen Turner.

(Murmuring, shouts)

Ellen Turner: Okay, I'm Ellen Turner and I live in Ashley. And my house was just appraised, and I can't see the price going up. I just became a widow, and I think it's so unfair that the older people on incomes that we have with everything going up in the county, gas prices, food prices, and now the taxes. How do you people expect us to live and keep ourselves going without losing our properties? It's going to come down to that. I mean, every town that has the property taxes going up are going to become ghost towns. Then who's going to vote for you people to come and help us when you're here right now to help us. We expect something for you people to do for us, because we don't think the assessment was fair. It was unfair for everybody, not only the people in Ashley. I think it was unfair to the whole county. (Applause)

Maryanne Petrilla: Shirley Hanson, Harvey's Lake.

Shirley Hanson: Hi, I'm Shirley Hanson. I've been a businesswoman for forty-eight years over at Harvey's Lake. I was with the last reassessment, I hate to say. But it worked out well. I want to know why-

Maryanne Petrilla: Excuse me. Ellen. Ellen. The fire chief has come and said we're violating fire code. (People screaming.) Excuse me. Excuse me. We're trying to come up with a solution as to not cancel the meeting. If people are here and do not wish to be heard publicly, I would ask if you could step outside and let the people that have signed up to speak publicly speak. And as they come out, you could come in.

(People screaming. Sounds of general chaos.)

Maryanne Petrilla: Michael Tureko, Harvey's Lake. (Yelling) Shirley Hanson, Harvey's Lake.

Shirley Hanson: I've been a businesswoman out there for forty-eight years. I was there for the last reassessment. I want to know why there are so many errors. Why? I have a trailer park. There are no buildings on that trailer park (inaudible) 8.7 acres. I was assessed for \$525,000 for buildings. I want to know where they got these buildings. There's only a little pump house. Why those kind of errors. It's not acceptable. I have a little house on that same property that doesn't belong to the trailer park. I had it appraised in 2004 by the bank, certified appraiser (inaudible). I get the new one; it's \$155,000. And I got news for you. There's no superior view on that little house. I have lakefront. Nothing on that lakefront. But, see, I want to know where they got the prices for our lakefront.

They have to give us answers. We are paying too much taxes for what they did and they have to correct those errors. And that's what I have to say.

Maryanne Petrilla: Thank you, Shirley. (Applause) Michael Turisko.

Michael Turisko: I pass.

Maryanne Petrilla: Boyd Barber. (Inaudible) Signed it twice. Birney Fisher.

Birney Fisher: Yes. (Chatting) How do you come up with your land value of people's property? Now my land, uh, square lot, was 3,833. They gave me a value of \$20,700 on my land. My neighbors have 7,000 square feet, and they're \$2,300. Well, if you calculate \$20,000 divided by 3,833, it's \$540 a square foot. My neighbors are \$320, \$329. Where do they come up with these numbers? When I went to the informal, I had my survey paper. My survey says 3,100 feet, not 3,833. You know what they told me? Pay the \$5 and appeal it. Well is the county going to pay me the \$5 (inaudible)? No. And that's bullshit on them. (Murmuring) Yeah, but how could my neighbor next door have 6,000? She's paying \$329 a square foot. That 7,000 is paying \$320. And I'm paying \$540 for 3,000. How do you figure that? I have a two bedroom home. The neighbor has a three-bedroom home, with a bath and a half. Their taxes are the same as mine. How do you figure that? What did they do? Have a kid just come out of high school and say, "Here, go now." The guy that was doing it was two weeks on the job. (Applause) Two weeks on the job and he's certified? No, because I'm pissed off and everybody else here is. (Cheering) You could even walk down the street because I live right here. Now you tell me that property is worth the same as mine. And then when I had the informal, they said, "Oh, I'll take \$2,000 off." For what? They didn't tell me. Oh, to keep me quiet. That's what it was. (Murmurs of agreement) And I talked to Steve, and Steve corrected. Because I had the survey paper. I went to the courthouse, and then I finally got in touch with him and he corrected it, but I still have to appeal because of these morons. Why should I have to pay? The next thing is: Are you gonna put a homeless shelter for all these other people that can't pay the taxes?

(Applause)

Maryanne Petrilla: Louisa Goton, Wilkes-Barre. Louisa Goton.

Louisa Toton: Toton.

Maryanne Petrilla: Toton. I'm sorry. I can't read the penmanship.

Louisa Toton: I live in the City of Wilkes-Barre. And I'm eighty years old, live on social security, and my taxes have gone up. And I had to (inaudible). And I don't know what I'm gonna do. I don't sleep at night. We have to beg for them to come up and clean the snow off the street, to get out of that street. It's a dead end street. And I'm just fed up to here. I can't take it anymore. But you tell me what an eighty year old on social security's gonna do. And I worked all my life, but we were never able to save a lot of money to live

like you guys live. (Applause) And they just raise it; they don't give a damn about anybody else. So they might as well line us up and shoot us down and do us a favor, get rid of us all.

(Applause)

Someone: Now you people oughta be ashamed of yourself, you too, Urban.

Maryanne Petrilla: Joseph, Joseph Wajern. (Chatter) Joseph Wajern.

Louisa Toton: I have called up that office to make an appointment, to make an appeal. You know what I get? Goodbye. Dial the number again. Goodbye. No matter what time of the day, in the morning, the afternoon, or the evening. Goodbye. And nobody'll talk to you. (Chatter) Bunch of crooks! And they only take your (inaudible). (Applause)

Maryanne Petrilla: Joseph. Joseph. Are you Joseph? Are you on the list? Wait.

Someone: I'll sign it. I'm a real estate appraiser. I just want to show you some of the things.

Maryanne Petrilla: Well, sir, you've gotta wait your turn.

Someone: No, I'm fine. I just wanna. I'll sign it.

Maryanne Petrilla: Joseph Wajern. (Murmuring) Well, I will say this, and I'm not gonna get into answering everyone's comments because that's just gonna create a nightmare. But there are laws in place that will help senior citizens on fixed incomes. They are (boos). There are programs in place that the commissioners have certainly considered. We are trying to get through the appeal process. I think, you know, one of the things, if anything, that we learned here tonight is that there are communities that have some serious errors and I'm going to ask 21st Century to go out to those communities and take a second look at them. (Angry shouting) I am two minutes away from calling this meeting, people, because it has to remain in control. If a whole community has problems, that community needs a second look. So if anything, we're learning here tonight that communities need a second look. (Applause) And there are programs in place that we will consider to help people who are in distress. Thank you. Robert Powell.

Robert Powell: I live in Plains Township, and I'm being, assessed, the property, one of my properties there are assessed at, uh, with a fireplace in it. There's no fireplace in it, there, number one. They said that there, uh, we have, high air. We have steam heat. Always had it. The property was built in the late 1800s. They can't, nineteen, uh. They have it a lot like, uh, 1930. There is just a sham here, this is just, uh. I mean how can you assess some of these properties without going in and, uh, seeing, uh, what it's all about? There's people that, uh, we have a 1,232 feet of living space. Our assessment is, uh, \$46,000. There's other people that were by us, and their, uh, square footage of, uh, living space, is, uh 1,482 square feet. And their taxes, their new taxes is gonna be, uh, \$30,000,

ya know. And if he, in Plains, most of, well, in my area, anyway, we have mine subsidence. Uh, the first (muffled) is sixty feet below our home. We have mine subsidence in terms, that property, from the front of the house to the back of the house there's a nine inch, inch, uh, ya know. They're saying its worth \$46,000. This is out of sight. We're appealing to you commissioners. You're our representatives here in the county. And we're asking you to delay this until we get this all straightened out. I mean, ya know, you just can't do this to you.

Maryanne Petrilla: Well, if we have to, we will. (Booing and chatter)

Robert Powell: And, uh, ya know, we were always taught, ya know, you treat people as you would like them to treat you. Well, I think we're not being treat, uh, ya know, the right way at all. And we're asking you people to delay this till it's straightened out. Now I call this the reassessment program, uh, last week. They gave me August 13 as the date. I said, "Okay, and if I'm not satisfied and I wanna appeal it," "Oh, well," they said, uh, "You're deadline's July 21." Well, if my, if I can't get to the hearing until August the 13, how can I file for an appeal on the 21 of July. So then, they took it, and you have to call the county assessment board.

(Chatter)

Tim Barr: I'm taking real good notes. I'm going to try and answer everybody's questions. (Booing) If you want the answers, you've gotta let me talk. The, the, we can't do anything about the deadline that's set in law, forty days. But you can, all you have to do is send in an appeal form to the county by the date that's on the notice, and that'll preserve your right. But (chatter). If you file that paperwork, but you also have a pending informal review, because we can't deal with all the informal reviews within the timeframe. if you have a pending informal review, we will not schedule you for a formal appeal until after your informal review has concluded. At the informal review, as some folks have said, they make adjustments on the spot. If there's a correction on the spot, and you're happy with it, you can withdraw your formal appeal on the spot by signing a withdrawal form, although you're not pressured to do so. If you're not happy at the informal review, then you simply say, "I'm not, okay, fine, I'm not happy." Then they will schedule you and you'll have at least twenty days from the date of your informal, because you gotta get a mailer in telling you when to come for your formal. So, to preserve that option, the only way we can do that within the law is to tell you file that piece of paper by the deadline that the law prescribes, and that'll preserve your option.

(Booing)

Robert Powell: Are you going to refund us, uh, the fee? Are the county commissioners-?

Tim Barr: \$5 is a filing fee. If you don't--.

Someone: What piece of paper are we supposed to file so that we don't lose the formal?

Tim Barr: I'll be honest with you. I'm a share a little secret. You can write a letter sayin' "here's my name, here's my parcel number, I wish to have an appeal", and send it in, and it preserves the legal right for your hearing. Even if it's not on the right, listen, let me, even if it's not on the right form and doesn't include a check for \$5. Ultimately you will not be scheduled until you have filed the proper form and paid the \$5 fee.

Someone: And where we send it to?

Tim Barr: You send it to the assessment office at the courthouse, which the, um, uh, or for that matter you can send it or drop it off at one of the regional offices. They have a mechanism that they'll all come back to Tony's office and, but they will not be processed, and they won't look to see if it has a check attached, until after your informal review has occurred.

Someone: But that's ridiculous that you don't even get your \$5 back.

(Chatter)

Maryanne Petrilla: Bob Monk. Bob Monk, Harvey's Lake. The one thing I'd like to say, ya know, I think Tim has agreed that Harvey's Lake needs a second look. (Chatter and applause) Harvey's Lake needs to be looked at again. Are we willing to go out to Harvey's Lake again, Tim, and take a second look at all the—.(chatter and applause) What a second! I'm not saying that the, I am not saying that every person in this room's complaints are not legitimate. But we have an entire community in this room who obviously needs a second look. And we are in violation of the fire code. So I am just trying to help the people at Harvey's Lake because they are such a large group to have a second look. And everyone else, everyone else's problems are just as important. We have an entire community in this room, and we are in violation of the fire code. (Chatter) Sir, would you please?

Tim Barr: Let me, let me make a general statement. The answer to your question is yes, that's actually been the plan from the beginning. It's been discussed at the Hazleton meeting that any neighborhood that is identified as having a significant number of informal reviews and formal appeals, in other words, if we learned from new sales and new information that you and professionals, such as some of the realtors and appraisers in the community are providing. What, now that we're in the middle of the process, we're halfway through. If we've learned something new in any neighborhood in the county that indicates that the values are not what the sales indicate, and that entire neighborhood--.(Shouts, chatter) Then that entire neighborhood will be reviewed. Based on the sales, the values can be revised, and new notices can be sent to those taxpayers. And I'll address some of the other concerns a little bit later. But, the answer is yes.

Maryanne Petrilla: Bob Monk.

Bob Monk: Okay, I'm not gonna go into my individual case (inaudible). But I would like to remind the commissioners that you've taken an oath of office when you're elected by

the people you are supposed to serve, the constituents, not just the interest of raising more taxes and spending more money for your programs and stuff.

Someone: Little bit louder please!

Someone: Can't hear you!

Bob Monk: Really need to be concerned about the citizens and what they want. (inaudible) I can't see why this whole thing has been so difficult, why you go to an informal appeal, you really are supposed to have a lawyer, you're supposed to have a certified assessment, uh, certified (inaudible) come out to certify your place. They're impossible to find because they're so overloaded with all the requests. There's no way they're gonna (inaudible) appeals and formal appeals. I'd just like to see this thing slowed down a little bit. And I'd like for you as commissioners to really start, one, worrying about the people more than (inaudible and chatter).

Maryanne Petrilla: Well, we have a process in place, sir, that goes through--. (Chatter, shouts) No-, nobody's taxes, as of this moment, have changed. We are going through the process. Pearce Devine. Pearce Devaice, Shavertown. (Chatter) John Ellerman, Nanticoke.

John Ellerman: John Ellerman, Nanticoke. I'm speaking up for the people in Nanticoke, particularly the old people. (inaudible) My neighbor next door is retired, living on social security. Um, (inaudible and chatter). Can't afford to pay the increase in their property. (inaudible) We have to aggressively in after the (inaudible).

(Applause)

Maryanne Petrilla: George Steltz, Hanover Township.

George Steltz: Yeah, I recently went to the informal process. Uh, I'm an engineer. And I was actually asked by my landlord to look at the property because it was listed as a two-story house online, and it was obviously a one-story house. It was listed as 1,286 square foot living space where all but 1,140 square feet downstairs is a crawl space. I gave, when I took my pictures out, they said, "We have pictures." I said, "No, you have this picture, the one taken from the back of the house that makes it look like a two-story home. Try this one. You can see that the whole side of the house is subterranean, that the windows were eight inches, were only twelve inches width, were eight inches off the (inaudible). We recently had the property appraised (inaudible) at \$35,600. They had it at \$46,800. So, when they, after, and I also drew a pencil drawing (inaudible) couldn't sign it as such. Uh, but it was a scale drawing of my basement. They took the paperwork behind closed doors to make the decision on the property. That to me is classless. (Murmuring) Then they bring it back and put a piece of paper. "All right, will \$38,200 do you?" are the exact words the girl used. Will \$38,200 do you? She ain't buyin' me for \$38,000. We signed a paper because it was close. Now, second thing. The land value. 3,500 square foot land (inaudible) Hanover Township, is where (inaudible). That means

that roughly land in (inaudible) section of Hanover Township is worth \$248,000 an acre. I was a math major in college. I can add. (Giggles) Now, well, what I'm saying is common working Joe like me helping a friend, if she didn't know me, she didn't know that I was smarter than they are, she wouldn'ta got her property reduced. Why can't people, besides bringing certified appraisers, why can't they bring professional engineers? Why can't they bring prints of their homes signed by professional engineers? Why? I'm asking you. Why? Why isn't it allowed?

Tim Barr: Anything is allowed.

George Steltz: No, at the formal hearing (chatter). We were told, in the papers, was it ever mentioned that we could get an engineer to draw a, uh picture of house, a properly drawn, signed, stamped drawing? No, I have to know. A lot of these people from Harvey's Lake (inaudible). And I know how bad they're hurting. This area back here is really bad. And I have one more question. Actually, two. What is Richard Oravic's job in this process?

Maryanne Petrilla: He is, he is a member of our Assessment Appeals Board.

George Steltz: Does he have anything to do, is he also the Mayor of Ashley?

Maryanne Petrilla: That's correct.

George Steltz: What on earth is an elected official doing on an assessment board? I'm (applause).

Maryanne Petrilla: Lou Ann Horsfield. Lou Ann Horsfield. (Yelling) She's here.

Lou Ann Horsfield: I would like to know, take a look around. If you think that we can afford these taxes, you're crazy. Now I would like to know what your houses are appraised at. (Chatter) Are they for us or against us?

Audience: Against us!

Lou Ann Horsfield: Then get rid of 'em!

(Applause, cheers)

Maryanne Petrilla: Audrey Simpson. Audrey Simpson. Audrey Simpson.

Audrey Simpson: (Inaudible) I asked you at the work session about if I had an appraisal done three years ago, I don't see why I can't use that rather than spending \$350 on a new one. (Inaudible)...adjust for inflation, I don't see why (inaudible). (Chatter) I heard somebody say, of course everybody's talking about this, I heard about a, uh, senior citizens, people who are living on limited income. It's called a circuit breaker clause where only a certain percent of their income would be, would be for the taxes. And I

think then the seniors can sleep at night, knowing they're not going to lose their home, and can't go over a certain percentage of their income, which is only right. (Chatter) And, uh, that's what I have to say.

Maryanne Petrilla: Thank you. (Applause) Rena Rothschild.

Rena Rothschild: Well, I'm one of those, uh, Harvey's Lake folks. And, uh, first of all, I'd like to know (chatter) a little bit of (inaudible). If we report omissions, do we get a bounty? (Laughter) I, uh, ya know.

Maryanne Petrilla: We asked people to, I would like people not to feel like they are ratting someone out if there are omissions--.

Rena Rothschild: Oh, there are tons of omissions.

Maryanne Petrilla: -in their neighborhood. I think, I think, it's a, it's a necessity if it's gonna be fair. I mean, we're pledging that reassessment has to be done in fairness and that's all about fairness.

Rena Rothschild: Can it be anonymous?

Maryanne Petrilla: Absolutely. Absolutely.

Someone: You wouldn't really try to do that to one of the other members of your community, would you?

Rena Rothschild: Yeah, a couple, I would.

Someone: That's very poor.

Rena Rothschild: I'm sorry. I'm sorry. You see my square footage is based on nothing inside my house; it's based on the outside. And I have the good fortune of having outside porches. But nobody ever measured the inside of my house. And I don't think anybody ever actually looked. My boathouse is on pilings. In the description, it's a residential unit on a concrete pad, valued \$95,500. Well, ya know, my grandchildren like it, and there is a little bathroom there. But, there are no floors, because we use ours as a boathouse. It's not a party house. There's water, so it, it's difficult for me to understand. And I know I'm gonna get caught. I, I had an appraisal about six years ago, which I know I can't use. The same man has agreed to come out to me, but he said, "Call me again in two weeks." I'm gonna run out of time. And it seems inequitable.

Maryanne Petrilla: We're gonna address that issue.

Rena Rothschild: Okay, and I know at Harvey's Lake, you divided us into three neighborhoods. Well, when I am at my house and I look right across the lake at someone else, I wonder when they have flatland and twice as much lakefront as I have and all sorts

of other things, why their assessment is less than half of mine. And I've been on a computer looking at all those properties and there's tremendous inequities. I mean, it is really a sham. Thank you.

(Applause)

Tim Barr: There's a lot of Harvey's Lake people here. Um, later on, after the regular meeting, after we've talked about the specifics, ya know, the general questions, um, there aren't three neighborhoods in Harvey's Lake. There's thirteen neighborhoods in Harvey's Lake. And I have copies of some of the maps that shows the different neighborhoods and (chatter). There's only about maybe twenty, twenty-five copies here, but the press has been given copies of this, too. So, um, that's something we can make available for Harvey's Lake folks.

Maryanne Petrilla: Walter Griffith.

(Chatter)

Walter Griffith: Well, pretty much everybody said what I wanted to say, and I said some of it at the work session. We have one commissioner up there that wanted the reassessment. Mr. Urban, one. The other two fell into it, sorta, kinda. Mr. Skrepenak said something about, um, Steve Urban was a terrorist at one point. Everybody got all up in arms about it. If I remember correctly. Well, it seems like you're all up in arms today about the whole issue of reassessment. We're not upset that it's not fair, er, we're not upset that it's being done. Mr. Barr, don't misunderstand these people. We're mis-, we're upset because it's not done fairly. We don't care about the reassessment. That's not our issue. Our issue is it's not fair. We're talking to people here that have lots of issues. Wilkes-Barre has lots of issues. I don't want Harvey's Lake to be singled out as the only one in the whole, um, how many municipalities we have in this county, as the only community--. (Applause) As the only community that has a problem with assessment. We all have the same problem if you look at the database, which we've been instructed to do. That problem is countywide, okay. It's not isolated at Harvey's Lake. Yeah, they took the brunt of it. No question about it. But there's others that are suffering the same as--. I'm a working man. I'm on a fixed income, too, just like all the seniors. If my taxes go up, I raise my product to pay more money, which means the person who comes to my shop to have their car fixed pays more money. So everybody suffers. It's the trickle down theory of mathematics, okay. At the work session, Ms. Petrilla said it would be irresponsible for us to stop this process at this point; we have to wait and let it go through. (Booing) Wait and see where it goes and then we'll make a decision later on.

Maryanne Petrilla: That's not what I said. What I said was--. (Chatter) What I said was that this certification doesn't go through till November 15 and we need to--.

(Booing)

Walter Griffith: If the *Times Leader* is here, the article says that it would be irresponsible for us to stop this process until we let it go a little further and see where it goes. That was the comment. It's irresponsible. I don't want the commissioners now to get righteous on us now because if we're talking about irresponsible, let's look at the debit card debacle. If we're looking at irresponsible, let's look at the juvie center. If we're looking at irresponsible, let's look at the warden, at Gene Fisch and the problems we had at the prison. So let's be responsible for once for the people in the county. (Applause) My questions at the Monday work session, and Ed's was the same one. These people have to invest a lot of our money to go through this assessment appeal. A lot. We have to take time off from work. We have to spend our money. We've already spent our money to have Mr. Barr do this job properly. If it wasn't done properly, let him pay his money to--.

(Applause) At the work session we asked, at the work session we asked what the fees were to go to the appeal process. Our solicitor didn't even know if we had to file a fee or not. He had to go upstairs to find out. We're paying that gentleman to know what goes on as a solicitor to this county. He didn't know we had to pay a \$111 finding fee. So now we found out we had to pay that. Now I see in the paper we have to pay 300 and some odd dollars on top of that if we go to a Board of Assessment Appeals. So I think the people need to know what's going on. Now that's all after the fact at the moment. The problem that we have is we have to stop the process now and step back and say "We need to have the reassessment." There's no question, the people here I'm sure would agree, that we need a reassessment. The way it is done is what we're upset about. It's jammed down our throats. We don't have the time to do things right. We don't have the time to get it done this way, so we're gonna do it this way. So now everybody has to step in line and follow the process and cost us money. So what we want the commissioners to do is not to throw the baby out with the bathwater, is to stop this process for a year, make them do it again and at their cost, not our cost. (Applause) If the county can't do that, they need to revisit the contract that we used for Mr. Barr to have him do this assessment. Um, quite honestly, I don't think it was done fairly. Everybody here knows it wasn't done fairly. We're not being afforded the proper way to get it done. The county commissioners need to make a rule that says that anybody, the reason nobody knows how many appeals, I saw in the letter that 21st Century sent to the commissioners today. It said the number of informal reviews to date is lower than expected. No kidding. Who can afford the time? Who can afford the money to come and see you? Who can afford to pick up the phone seventeen times and say, "We're sorry. Call back later"? I've done that all day long.

(Applause) My only concern is, and I'll close with this because I'm very close to being way over, is that we need to make sure that this was put in place properly, first of all, for the taxpayers. We need to make sure it was done timely, not the notices sent out in May and say, "Okay, you have till November." Why weren't the notices sent out last year? Why weren't they sent out in January all at once? They weren't done that way. They were sent May, and June, and July. Now nobody knows when they're gonna get a formal, informal. Now we have to go before a master. Now we have to go before this guy and that guy. It's just all helter-skelter. Nobody has a clue. Even our own people don't know. Tony Alu doesn't even know what's going on. At the last work session, we asked a question. "Well, I'm not really sure, but we'll check on it." He's the assessor! He's the county assessor! (Shouts, applause) So, my question is, from what I understand, I'm not saying that they're not competent. All I'm saying is it was put in place too quickly and it

needs to be readdressed. It needs to be put on the backburner. I would entertain a motion from one of the commissioners, please, to postpone the assessment, and call for a second for God sakes, so these people can go home and do their business and pay the bills. But, for God sakes, this has to stop; we can't keep going like this. And Mr. Urban was the one that wanted to have it done. So remember that at election time. (Cheers)

Steve Urban: I want to address your comment.

Walter Griffith: Okay.

Steve Urban: Specifically, what is wrong with your property?

Walter Griffith: What's wrong with my property?

Steve Urban: Yes.

Walter Griffith: Absolutely nothing.

Steve Urban: Okay. Your property's fine?

Walter Griffith: Absolutely.

Steve Urban: There's nothing wrong--?

Walter Griffith: Nothing wrong with my property.

Steve Urban: Then what are you here for?

(Shouts and boos)

Steve Urban: On the way down here, I had a call. I was in the car until I got in front of the building talkin' to a man that's coming to an informal tomorrow. Don't tell me I don't do my job.

(Shouts)

Walter Griffith: I'm fighting for the people of Wilkes-Barre, as well as my own property. I'm sayin' that that's what we elected those three commissioners. Let me explain! He's not fighting for us, he's fighting for Tim Barr and 21st Century.

Steve Urban: I'm not fighting for him.

(Shouts)

Walter Griffith: Well then stand up and do what's right. Stand up and do what's right.

Steve Urban: Two years ago, two years ago this process was put off and put on the backburner and nothing was done except 900 - \$1,000,000 dollars spent.

Walter Griffith: Whose fault is that?

Steve Urban: There's a process ongoing. The majority of people who voted to put it off. There's a process ongoing. There's a process ongoing now.

Walter Griffith: That's not our fault, Steve.

Steve Urban: You have errors. Report those errors. (Shouts) He has a responsibility to look at those errors.

Walter Griffith: No, no, no, Steve. It's not (inaudible).

Steve Urban: He has a responsibility to look at the value. He has a responsibility to all of us.

Walter Griffith: And you have a responsibility to the taxpayers.

(Shouts)

Steve Urban: And, and I'm trying to do my job.

Walter Griffith: I could see that.

Steve Urban: How is--. Whaddya mean you could see that? (Shouts) Ya know something, Walter, sometimes you have good points, and sometimes you just--.

Walter Griffith: Sometimes you don't have any.

Steve Urban: Well, I have some points. Number one: He's gonna go out and do Harvey's Lake over. (Shouts) He's doing Harvey's Lake over.

(Chatter)

Maryanne Petrilla: Vincent Kimsal.

(Chatter, then applause)

Vincent Kimsal: Hi, my name's Vince Kimsal, and I'm from Penn Lake, another lake community. And, um, I did make phone calls to each and every commissioner today, and Mr. Skrepenak did back to me. He was the only one that did get back to me. Myself, I know at least three or four other people at Penn Lake. We don't have forty or fifty people here. We probably only have two, maybe three. As I looked through the database on the computer, there are corrections that need to be made all over the place. And I'm not

gonna be (inaudible). And I don't think it's fair sending someone out for a second time to review our properties or Harvey's Lake properties without giving everybody that equal opportunity to have a second--. (Applause) This is, this is a pamphlet that we got, probably with taxpayers money, about four years ago. This is a pamphlet we got about four years ago, two years ago, explaining the whole process. I read it now, and it's a joke. Here. It's a joke. You changed the rules. I am not gonna go to a magister. I will (inaudible) and that's it. If I have to go to the other steps, I won't do it. I've wasted too much money. I was at the work session (inaudible) \$111. Now, in the paper, it's, it's not right. The people, when I (inaudible), and Mr. Barr was talking on the phone and he was using terms like, "Well, the general rule of thumb", and "The complaints are a very small percentage." (Boos) Now, people are en masse, they feel comfortable. The people sittin' at their homes, two or three elderly people spoke to me crying. (Inaudible) I watched Mr. Barr the whole meeting. And if someone made a comment against him, then he just. (Chatter) I did not see any of you people up there do that. But I did see him do it. I think it's time to hold them accountable, and I think it's time to make a motion tonight to (inaudible).

(Applause)

Maryanne Petrilla: Michael Pac. Mike Pac, Warrior Run.

Someone: Who?

Someone: Mike Pac, Warrior Run.

Maryanne Petrilla: Ellen Ferrara. Ellen Ferrara, Harvey's Lake. (Chatter) Yes, ma'am. Go ahead.

Ellen Ferrara: All right. Thank you very much--.

Maryanne Petrilla: Now, if you wanna speak, you can speak at the end, but you're not on the paper.

Ellen Ferrara: Thank you very much for the opportunity to present some of the facts (inaudible). I live in Harvey's Lake. The family home has been in our family since 1949. Unfortunately, I'm one of those people; I'm sixty-one years old. I don't own a computer. I'm not computer literate. I am a hard worker. I make \$10 an hour. I've worked all my entire life. I've helped out my family as much as my can. I have a son with four young children, who's a single parent, who lives with me in Harvey's Lake. Now, he could get subsidized housing. Subsidized housing won't give me a dime if I let him have the house, because I'm his mother. So, I pay the bills. The only thing I ask him -- "Please help me with the heat," because he can't do anymore than that. He's a mechanic making about the same amount of money. When my dad bought that property, he bought it in 1949 for \$5,700. My taxes have gone up and I still owe a little mortgage that I had to take out in '91. My taxes went up from \$1,200 a year to \$6,100. (Boos) I can't come up with another \$500 a month and continue to pay the mortgage for \$354. And I've already gotten

notification from the bank. Um, I, I don't know what I'm gonna do. If I just tell him to go get emergency housing and put a sign on the house and sell it and value the land at \$331,000. It's about seventy-five feet across by about 175 feet back. Again, I can make no comparisons, people, because I can't even get into a computer. I don't know how. Um, they valued the home at \$128,000 something. That was, um, the home was built between 1901 and 1905. It, it needs a lot of work to it. It's certainly not worth \$128,000. I'm, I'm gonna go and I'm gonna try to, I have my informal appeal scheduled for the 15th. I'm gonna go try it and explain that. Of course, I can't come up with any comparisons. I don't have the money to hire to get another appraisal done on a property. And I certainly don't have any money to hire an attorney. I'm tryin' to live paycheck to paycheck and do my best to help support myself and my family. And if I'm alone. If this assessment really came down like a ton of bricks, and if Tioga County and Lackawanna County could rescind the 21st Century appraisal, if Luzerne County could only possibly put it off. It came so fast, there was no way that. I mean even if I get a second job, I'm still not gonna have enough money to do that, not in the period of timeframe that I've been given. Mine didn't come out until July 1. Let's see, you have uncertified people. I know that ya, ya gave 'em about two weeks of training. But they never came and (inaudible) to the home. So why is it up to the homeowner to pay for an appraisal? We should not have to prove to Century 21 that they're wrong. On the contrary, it should be their responsibility to explain to me why they're right. (Applause) ...Properties that were in Sunday's paper about two weeks ago out at Harvey's Lake. And, um, they were goin' for around \$459,000. They're magnificent mansions. I don't have any mansion. And they got me at \$459,700. It's (inaudible). Um, we're in a really bad economic timeframe now. Our home values have gone down. The lake, if you go around it now, there's a significant amount of people out there trying to sell their homes because they know they can't afford it. And my sign'll be going up shortly, because I certainly can't afford it. Um, I hate puttin' a (inaudible) up on the market. I have so many memories out there over the last half a century of my life. And now, when I'm supposed to retire soon, I have to give it up. I certainly hope it doesn't happen, but I'm afraid, financially, it will. Our heating costs, our fuels, have gone up. I still owe heating bills from last winter. Our home values have gone down. Um, the market, for sales from homes is flooded right now. We have increases in fluid, higher than it's been in the last twenty-five years. Our gas prices are escalating, forcing the average person to live from paycheck, to paycheck, to paycheck. We're not only in a recession, and I personally think that we're depression, and it's gonna make 1929 look like a picnic. We got banks even closing, and they, they're only guaranteeing \$100,000 to these people that have money deposited in the bank. What about the poor guy that has his whole life's in there, and he made a real good living when he was growing up, and he's got \$400,000? Well, \$300,000 of it isn't gonna be cared for. He'll never get his money back. Even Wilkes-Barre's. We're in a geriatric community here.

Maryanne Petrilla: Ma'am, we have another page of people.

Ellen Ferrara: I, I'm almost, just one more second. Um, we have senior citizens on fixed incomes, the baby boomers ready to retire. You wanted to bring people into the city, into this valley, not chase them out. They don't have any place to go. Where are they gonna live? Where's, where is the tax relief we were promised, even with the casinos? I can't

even get a rebate. I get nothing. I need your help. Please forestall this. I'd be most appreciative. And I know there's a lot of people that feels the same way I do. Thanks very much.

(Applause)

Maryanne Petrilla: Greg Zawatsky. (Chatter) She'll be heard at the end. She, she, I already told her. (Chatter) Were you Mike Pac? (Chatter) Well, why didn't you speak up? You said--. (Yelling) You said you'd take Mike Pac's place. No, you said you'd take Mike Pac's place.

Someone: No, she goes to the end of the line.

(Chatter)

Anonymous Woman: Well, we need the reassessment. Everyone knows that. I'm not (inaudible). But everyone can see, it's painfully apparent to everyone in the, in the whole county that they did a poor job. (Applause) I would even say they were incompetent, and in my job, if I were incompetent and did such a poor job, I would be fired. (Inaudible) You must fire them or you are not doing the job for your constituents. (Applause)

Maryanne Petrilla: Greg Zawatsky.

Greg Zawatsky: Uh, my name is Greg Zawatsky. Uh, I met a lot of the other people here. Uh, I just bought property down the road here in Ashley five years ago. I had a hard time gettin' it assessed at \$98,000. Your employees over here just got done assessin' tha same exact property with, uh, with no improvements, on change. Uh, they seem to have no problem at all, uh, what, figurin' out that it was worth close to \$190,000. (Boos) I was payin' \$1,800 on taxes a year. Uh, now, they figured, uh, \$4,000 uh, eh, uh. Now, uh, number one, I, uh, I got questions about how they did their assessments. Like I said, I had to go true a few assessments, to get, uh, uh, (inaudible). Every last one a them said they couldn't appraise it without goin' true every room in the house and lookin' in every nook an' cranny on the property. Nobody over here'll come down an' talk to me, let alone did I see any a them, uh, on the property. So, I don't know how they managed the amount. Uh, uh, arrived at that hundred grand extra that my place, uh, magically, uh, acquired. My guess is I couldn't sell it, uh, ya know, for anywhere near that price, uh, uh, unless every (inaudible) organization on the face a the earth has been (inaudible). Uh, from what I understand, property prices are down everywhere. (Applause) Somehow mine grew by \$100,000. Okay, now I don't see how, uh, I don't see how they plausibly arrived at that, uh, at that figure. Uh, I've got a place next to me, uh, uh, for rent. Uh, looks like this, uh, lady here, another one over here, that was cryin', talkin' about, uh, ordinary property. I got a call from, uh, uh, (inaudible), and, uh, when I asked him why there, uh, why dere leavin,' uh, da, the comment that I got was their landlady just got their reassessment, and couldn't afford it, so she was selling properties. (Inaudible) This ting is bad from the get go. (Applause) And I, and I not only don't wanna tell pay ya an extra two grand. I don't wanna tell pay ya no extra \$100 for appeal or \$300 for another appeal, er, er. (Applause)

That's a bottomless pit right there, for crissakes. And just to be fair, that guy was over here, uh, uh, singlin' out Mr. Urban. Well, I don't like either a your parties to be honest. (Laughter) The fact a the matter it takes at least two a yas to pass it.

Keith Sorber: Comissar (inaudible). Communism! Now it would seem to me that 21st Century United States of America, that taxation with representation is also tyranny, especially in Luzerne County, Pennsylvania. *Sic semper morte tyrannus*. That's all I have to say.

(Applause)

Maryanne Petrilla: Bob Gorda, Swoyersville.

Bob Gorda: I'm also a landowner in Harvey's Lake. (Inaudible) (Chatter) It went from \$1,400 (inaudible). (Laughter) (Inaudible) -access to the highway. They've done a poor job, and what I want to know is, as far as what the county paid 21st Century? (Inaudible) -all the problems that they're so-called (inaudible) to correct?

Someone: That's a question!

(Chatter)

Someone: Are you gonna pay them more'n you've already paid 'em? (Chatter) That's good.

(Chatter)

Maryanne Petrilla: Part of their contract was to defend, was for them to defend the value.

Someone: But we're paying for that, their defense.

(Chatter)

Bob Gorda: The point that I wanna make is (inaudible) did a horrible job, and are (inaudible). And I think that the county should sue them. (Applause) There's no way someone should be paid for what they did in this county.

(Chatter)

Maryanne Petrilla: Cheryl Pollick, Larksville.

Cheryl Pollick: I'm Cheryl Pollick of Larksville. Um, I've gone through my informal meeting. Uh, I've had to get an appraisal. It cost me \$275 from a certified appraiser. And when I was going through the appraisal through the, uh, informal meeting. I had gotten my amount down \$26,000 off of what I was assessed. I had to pay \$275 to correct a \$26,000 mistake. Okay, I'm not talkin' like \$1,000, \$2,000. I mean, \$26,000 is a huge

mistake! When I went through the informal process, and I had given the man my appraisal that I had paid for, he had told me he had come down to \$26,000. But he had said he would not come down the rest of the way because my appraiser, that was his opinion, and he has his own opinion of what my house is worth. Er,er,er, my appraiser went through my house, meas-, meas-, measured everything. Everything was marked down, but his opinion mattered more, and he wasn't even in my house. He wasn't even probably out to my house.

Someone: Not even certified!

Cherly Pollick: But his opinion meant more than my certified appraiser's. Now, the \$275, bein' that there was a \$26,000 difference, I should get reimbursed for that. (Applause) I don't have that kind of money to just throw away to prove stuff like this. If it was, ya know, off a little bit, but you're talkin' a huge amount that I had to pay for!

(Chatter)

Maryanne Petrilla: David Sebolka. David Sebolka.

David Sebolka: Thank you. Everyone here may have been following my saga in the paper for the last three months. And I'm not only fighting for myself, but I'm fighting for everybody else here. Um, in answer to your question (shouts), uh, in answer to your question whether or not they are receiving extra money, I'd like to read from the June 30, 2008 *Times Leader*. Uh, "Mr. Urban told commissioners Skrepenak and former commissioner Vonderheid added \$1,000,000 to the original \$7,000,000 project by delaying it one more year." Is that true? Which means that they did receive additional funds to correct their errors.

Steve Urban: No, no, no. They put it off for two years, and it cost another \$1,000,000.

David Sebolka: Why? Why if it was wrong?

Steve Urban: Because they didn't wanna go through this process.

David Sebolka: Why if it was wrong? It's still wrong. If we delay it, are they going to get another \$1,000,000?

Steve Urban: Nothing was sent out. They just stopped sending everything out.

David Sebolka: Because they reviewed the values and saw them to be far inconsistent with what they should be.

Steve Urban: And they had two years, they said, to fix them. What did they do?

(Chatter)

David Sebolka: They didn't fix them; they made them worse. So we should rescind that \$1,000,000 and sue them for breach of contract, because they are supposed to have done the job right the first time. (Applause) And until you and Cong- Commissioner Petrilla, and Commissioner Skrepenak hold them liable, they aren't going to do anything, because if you delay it again, you're gonna pay them another \$1,000,000, so they have no incentive to do it right the first time. What, what don't you understand about that? (Laughter, applause) I mean, if you, if you would constantly get paid to do a poor job, would you ever do the job right if they're gonna pay you another \$1,000,000?

Steve Urban: I didn't vote for the delay

David Sebolka: Not the delay, but you voted them to do it. And evidently in your contract with them originally, they didn't have to do it right. They just have to do it. (Laughter) So then when they did it wrong, Greg called you on the mat for it, and because he and Todd had enough sense to put it off, until they could get better values, you went against that. They didn't come up with better values; they come up with worse values. And in Tioga County, they came up with worse values, and they threw them out. (Chatter) Well, the \$7,000,000 wasn't worth it because you contracted with the wrong people.

Maryanne Petrilla: We can't be bantering that debate.

David Sebolka: You contracted with the wrong people. And you need to throw them out and get locals involved soon. (Applause) Get our money back. Get our money back. I mean, this whole matter should have been handled through proper county management for the last fifty years, proper budgeting. Okay, and it wasn't. It wasn't handled properly. The county hasn't been handled properly. If they would constantly watch their management, watch their budgeting, the people wouldn't be worried about this right now, and you wouldn't be looking for all this money.

Maryanne Petrilla: Thank you. (Chatter and applause) Carl Guide. Carl Guide. Carl Guide, Jr. Carl Guide, Sr. (Chatter) Brenda Martini. Brenda Martini, Ashley. Uh, this name I cannot read. It looks like Matt Regawicz from Ashley. Jerry Gola, Hanover Township. Edward Dresses, Mountain Top. Edmond Pegarella, Warrior Run. Mark Panetta, Warrior Run. John, Pittston Boulevard, Wilkes-Barre.

John: Right here. I'd like to just say that I heard a lot of horror stories. And if you believe in half of them, which I believe all of them, these guys should be fired. And you people are the servants of the people. Mr. Urban, Ms. Petrilla, and Greg Skrepenak, you are responsible for this. You called, you especially, you called for the reassessment, okay. These people are so far outta line, it's not even funny. There's another thing. These people are all talking about their taxes. What have you people done to change the form of taxation? There isn't a one person in here that's not a landowner. There isn't a renter in here. There isn't people from the K.O.Z. zone. Everybody should be on board paying their bills, and this taxation would be more fair for everybody. And these guys should be fired. And you should start from scratch, and you should call this whole thing off. And not only that, you have your own assessors in the courthouse. Why didn't you, if you had

problems, why didn't you send them out and reassess people if you had people that were dissatisfied? Why didn't you assess that way? Why did you have to spend \$8,000,000 for people that are incompetent?

Steve Urban: The law doesn't allow us.

John: They are.

Steve Urban: The law doesn't allow us to send out assessors to get--.

John: How was it done before, Mr. Urban?

Steve Urban: it wasn't done. There was no reassessment for forty-three years. (Shouting) No one wanted to go through this type of ordeal. (Shouting, chatter)

John: What have you people done? You're supposed to be educated people elected to office. What have you done to change the form of taxation so everybody gets on this boat and pulls the wagon?

Steve Urban: Well, let me just say that, first of all, the county commissioners, as a whole, not only in Luzerne County, but throughout the entire Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, have lobbied the governor and the legislatures in this state to form the change the form of taxation. We have asked for wage taxes. We have asked for sales taxes. We have asked for a menu, time and time again. And we said (inaudible) doing away with property taxes. The legislature has not adopted anything that we did.

John: You are sending old people that can't (inaudible). And who is Mr. Barr? Why is he the only one picked for reassessment? Why is one person calling the shots? We have three of you making decisions, maybe not good ones, but--. (Laughter) You, you have, you have one Century 21 making all the calls, calling all the shots.

Steve Urban: I don't think they're calling all the shots.

(Shouts)

John: They have a mess.

Someone: We have a mess on our hands!

Steve Urban: I agree there's a mess in Harvey's Lake in particular.

(Shouts)

Someone: This is not a Harvey's Lake problem. This is a one-county problem.

(Shouts)

John: You listen to--.

Maryanne Petrilla: One more outburst, and this meeting's over.

John: --his name is Tim Barr. He could talk and he could sway anybody. He isn't swaying me. He is talking to people that have, that don't have the knowledge to go through the avenues and pay these kind of fees!

Maryanne Petrilla: Sir, do you have anything else? We're just--.

(Chatter, shouting)

John: What have you done to change this form of taxation?

Someone: That's what I'm concerned about. And I've been around for awhile and it's worse now than it ever was.

Steve Urban: We have lobbied the legislature--.

(Shouts)

John: Don't worry about bein' reelected next time.

Steve Urban: I'm not worried about.

Greg Skrepenak: Sir, sir, just to address your issues, I did mention at our last meeting in Hazleton exactly what can be done to address this problem, because I'm gonna tell you something. Even if reassessment goes away, and I agree that there needs to be something done, it doesn't go, the problem doesn't go away. The taxation is certainly unfair in itself because it relies wholeheartedly, both the school district tax, municipal taxes, and, uh, county taxes, rely solely on property owners. So, what happened, and what we're trying to promote, and we even penned a letter not too long ago, with little to no effect. It is our number one issue on our association, County Commissioners' Association of Pennsylvania. We are trying to ask them for three simple options: an earned income tax option, a, er, uh, an income tax option, the County Commissioners' Association's throughout the whole state, and a sales tax. The one that we prefer, and all the other commissioners, the whole state of commissioners, if by 2005 numbers, if we just impose a .05 earned income tax, which makes the most sense simply because it doesn't stress the seniors, because their checks won't be taxed, we will bring in almost \$25,000,000. That's according to that number. You did that with that \$25,000,000 from the \$60 or \$70 odd million that we receive in property tax. That's a large, uh, uh, savings, large savings. Now if you put it to a 1 percent, you get, ya know, double that money, and that's according to 2005 numbers. In addition to that, if we do implement in just a small county tax, I don't think people would see it. And studies have shown that many people wouldn't see it, but you also bring money in from people that don't live in this county, which you

know, seems, you know, better off for us anyway. But we are trying to um, ya know, talk to our state legislator to give those opportunities to us. However, the big problem with the state legislator is Philadelphia and the big markets already have their, uh, local tax up to 7, 8 percent. So that's where the major, ya know, concern is. And that's where, ya know, the legislators have a big time, because Philadelphia, I don't know about Allegheny County, the bigger counties seem to get, ya know, um, ya know, the, uh, um, their due process and the smaller counties don't. But I just talked to Tioga County today. I talked to the Tioga County commissioner today and asked him why he delayed reassessment. Let me make one, ya know, one, something clear. Um, and, he did say they have slowed everything down, but they still are engaged with 21st Century; they did not fire 21st Century. (Boos) They are still engaged. But, ya know, but, and, and, there's numerous reasons to do this 'cause it's a large investment. However, there is one thing that, ya know, after talking to him that made the most sense to me. He said, "What we wished we would have done from the beginning is engaged in the local real estate professional community to help us." (Applause) So, so let's, let's get hopping. And, I know there's something that needs to be done. I know there's something that needs to be done. I lean towards del-, ya know, stopping this, and then moving forward, because what bothers me-- (Applause) What, what, what, what bothers me, what bothers me in this whole process, and ya, ya know what, when we sent out our valuations a long time ago, I was in favor of solely sending out the measurements of the house to get it right. That's the purpose of reassessments – to get the valuations right. Now I know Harvey's Lake is well represented in this room, but I spent the entire morning returning forty or fifty-some odd phone calls, not only from Harvey's Lake, from friggin' Penn Lake, from, uh, Nuangola, I'm sorry, excuse me, it's-- (Laughter) Nanticoke, from, uh, every, everybody in the county. And it's a countywide, uh, countywide problem. And ya know what? I, and most people were very kind to me on the phone. They were happy that I returned their phone call, and they understand the need for reassessment. But what I will call for to 21st Century is that the valuations need to be right. And I don't care if it takes us one year, two year, three year, four year down the line. That's the number that needs to go on. Whether or not the taxes go forward (clapping). However, this is what I want to be sure of. I will, I will call for a motion tonight to engage in the, in the local real estate community to get the professionals in here. (Applause) But I want, I want to make sure that we have a plan of attack. And I would even go so far as convening a special meeting in, in accommodating, ya know, uh, room to, to revisit this, and possibly then ya know, we'll see what we could do to, uh, move forward. (Applause) However, I just want to have that plan in place, because I also want to talk to our lawyers and everybody else to see what happens.

John: There isn't one person in this room, I don't believe, wanna pay taxes. But the horror stories that you have heard tonight—

Greg Skrepenak: Oh, it's, uh, it's--

John: You should fire these people.

(Chatter)

Someone: Fire all of them now!

(Applause)

Maryanne Petrilla: John Grazi! John Grazi! Pittston Boulevard, Wilkes-Barre. (Chatter)

John: That's me.

(Laughter)

Maryanne Petrilla: Joe, Joe Godluski.

Someone: What happened to the motion?

Greg Skrepenak: The motion will, the motion will happen during the meeting. And like I said, I think we should definitely reconvene another meeting in accommodating, uh, atmos-, ya know, accommodating atmosphere, and then--. And I just want to have a plan in place, because to do it tonight, and to emotionally make the decision with nothing in place, it, it, it, ya know, it, it gives us no direction. We need to have direction. Now, I will tell you this. Reassessment was delayed because we had numerous complaints over and over about, ya know, the measurements, about the property, about, ya know, ya know, what people were saying. Now, I'm a little concerned about several things. One: With the numerous calls that I've received the data collectors were so inexperienced and, and really were out of their league, in a sense, which concerns me. But most importantly, ya know, going through this process, and I guess the timing of it couldn't be worse, because the economy is--. Where is the, ya know, the compassion and the concern when you go to these formal and informal hearings? That's what's upsetting to me. And that, ya know, people's lives are, are at stake here. People's futures are at stake, and you know what? They're being run through, ya know, the system like a herd of cattle from one pasture to the other. That's what's upsetting to me. (Applause) Whether you agree with me or not, ya know. And I think the bottom line is the valuation of each property should be correct, and, ya know, we don't move forward until it is correct, and move, ya know, move it forward. (Shouts)

Maryanne Petrilla: Joe Godluski, Tucker Avenue, Wilkes-Barre. Joe Godluski.

Someone: Right here! Coming!

(Chatter)

Joe Godluski: I have a double block. Two parts, right? (inaudible) \$60,900. It's a half of a double. My assessment says it's a single detached home. I mean, this is an assessor? Now, the second one, is uh, a half a double. It's \$45,700. Why would they call the other one a single home? And I'm supposed to pay five bucks to correct that mistake? I, I mean it's--. Mr. Skrepenak, I called your office today. I don't know who I talked to, and they

said, well, some of the papers were fudged because they were in a hurry. The guy in your office told me that.

Greg Skrepenak: Well, that was said to us in the work session on Monday. Then someone said that, um, that, ah, he was, he felt so much pressure to get this done that, ya know, he just--. (Screaming) That, that was, that was an individual one. We don't know his name. And that was a data collector. That was a data collector.

Joe Godluski: All these two homes in Mountaintop, on 8th Street (inaudible). We should be (inaudible). \$6, 7,000,000 to generate this. Where's taxes going besides credit cards and all that other stuff?

(Laughter)

Greg Skrepenak: The other issue, and I think Tim could answer this, is: What do they have the millage rate at? That's what we don't, I don't know if the millage rate is. 'Cause that millage is a very, a key factor in this whole process. And maybe Tim, when he talks, at length, ya know, at the end, could tell us what was, what millage was factored in, because that rate might go down, because that's exactly what's supposed to happen here from our perspective, is that, uh, the millage rate, um, ya know, will go down, and, ya know, considerably, ya, ya know, when this is all said and done. However, I want to tell you this as well. The biggest chunk of your taxes are school board taxes. Recently, within the, uh, last couple months, the state legislature had legislation before it to eliminate the property tax, ya know, for your school district tax, and it was voted down. Okay, it was voted down. So, ya know, we need to put a little more pressure on the state legislator to give us those options to, uh, to, ah. And I appreciate Karen for coming today, and, and learning a little bit. But we need to have more options, because simply--. You know what? The problem doesn't go away if reassessment goes away with property values, your property, and property tax.

Maryanne Petrilla: William James. William James, Dorrance.

William James: Yes, ma'am. Kingston. I, uh, went to the informal process with eight appeals. Uh, six land, and (inaudible). And one land was (inaudible) I had just purchased it (inaudible) fair market value was established. However, 21st Century couldn't cite that and increased that value by \$93,000. (Gasps) But we got it corrected. They got it corrected (inaudible). The second property is on North Street. It's assessed \$104,000 more than the appraisal I had in my hand. (Inaudible) --one of your certified appraisers that are registered with Luzerne County (inaudible) two appraisers that are registered in the courthouse (inaudible). Why isn't his appraisal accepted at the informal when their values, measurements, and all of the information they had did not match the deed that's on file? (Applause) --on the computer screen (inaudible). Now, I'm told you have to take that down for a formal appeal because they have measured it so improperly and we'll have to go take a look at it again. Is that (inaudible)? I went and paid for the appraisal up front, and pictures, and measurements. They said I had a full cellar. I have seventy-five, less than seventy-five (inaudible). The home was built in the middle of 1892. It's the old

(inaudible) post office (inaudible). That's how old it is. It was not remodeled at the flood. It was repaired because you couldn't get good material in 1972. You took what you got and fixed the home. The gentleman that (inaudible) walked around the creek and left. There's a (inaudible). There's one foot of stuff out here. Eighteen feet and back and forth. They come up with almost 600 feet more living space than actually is. That's no big things. 600 or 6,000 feet of living space doesn't make a difference when you have a certified appraiser. Why weren't they able to do it (inaudible)? When they (inaudible) my lands (inaudible) in 1978 when I retired from the service (inaudible). You have to have an acre of agricultural land to build on, or 100 feet (inaudible). Neither of these two lots qualify. Yet the reassessment (inaudible). They're worth \$2,000, maybe in that area. That's what I put down on the, uh, appeal (inaudible), because there were local area (inaudible) in Huntsville Manor that have sold for \$2,000. (Inaudible) Now this girl re-subdivided four lots (inaudible) so they could build a home on it. (Inaudible) And you can see that that's an (inaudible).

Maryanne Petrilla: Thank you, sir.

William James: Thank you for your time.

Maryanne Petrilla: Jim Nelligan, Harvey's Lake.

Jim Nelligan: Thank you, Madam Chairlady. As an American citizen, I always thought the American (inaudible) that you are innocent until proven guilty. Not so in Century, 21 Century Appraisals, because in 21 Century Appraisals, you are guilty until you spend the money to prove you're innocent! (Applause) Now I'm requesting for the county commissioners and Mr. Barr. Incidentally, I called for Mr. Barr today, and a young man by the name of Joel, do you know who Joel is? He answers the phone, and I said, "I'm from Harvey's Lake." He said, "Harvey's Lake?" I said, "Where you from?" He said (inaudible). I said, "You're not from this area? You don't know Harvey's Lake?" He said, "I'm sorry, sir." So, I said, "May I talk with Mr. Tim Barr." "Just a minute, sir." I waited three minutes. He came back and he said, "Well, Mr. Barr's busy. You know, Mr. Barr is a very busy man." (Laughter) He's counting his \$8,000,000, that's what he's doing. I've a question for the, uh, county commissioners and Mr. Barr. Why are out of state absentee non-resident landowners having their values reduced to 0 while residents are having their taxes doubled, tripled, and quadrupled? (Inaudible) That's what you told me, sir. (Chattering) Steve, I left this message with your secretary, on Monday, was it? Did you have a chance to check it?

Steve Urban: We pulled, um, Tim, what this is--. Mr. Nelligan gave me two pin numbers for parcels that there are homes on, but they don't reflect it in his database that there's actually homes on them. So, we're in the county. We operate off of a 1965 database. That's what your assessments are based on right now, 1965. And as properties are built, they're put into that database. He started from scratch with own database. He didn't use the '65 database, because they wanted to do the work. They wanted to go out and measure things and get things done right. (Shouts) In this case, the two properties that you gave me are not in his database. So what Renee did today was send him an email

with the PIN numbers, saying there's houses on there and he needs to go out and assess them and pick them up.

Someone: Why are you doing his work?

(Chatter)

Jim Nelligan: Let me, if I might, answer the question I asked. When I (inaudible) in 2006 when those kids were crawling around my property, and I said, "Hi." This little girl said, "Hi." And I just kind of went back in and they were still moving around the property, and I came out, and she said, "Sir, that wire, that telephone wire that goes from the lakefront all the way up that hill, to the top of the mountain," which incidentally is, is, called, in my assessment, a series of little rolling pins. And I said, "Well," I said, "if you just follow that wire up, you'll find two houses up there and a big maintenance shed." And she said, "Sir, how do I get up there?" I said, "Sell all that thick brush and that mountain? You just crawl right through it." They never went. They never went, Stephen. And so far as the database is concerned, I don't know that you remember this, but in February of 2006, I was down in the document room and you were in there. And you and I talked. And I said, and you said, "Jim, we have all of this on computers, which I could bring up your home, and you'll see the photo and the whole bit." I said, "Sure. Please." And then he said, "Anybody else?" I says, "Yeah, there's two homes up in the top of that hill. Would you check those out?" And you gave me the documents that said they're up there. So, I don't care about '65. It was in your computer. The heck with '65. It was in your computer.

Steve Urban: That's the database, the '65.

Jim Nelligan: Whatever. So, pardon me? Well, if I'm way over my time, then I have one more question. (Shouts) Steve, Steve knows about this, too. Why, on earth, does my property, which is .46 of an acre, valued at 18.2 cents a square foot and I have fifty feet of waterfront, and properties with two and 250 feet of waterfront with an acre and ½ and an acre and three quarters, are valued less than \$5 and less than \$6 an acre. Where is that justice? Where is that equity? Where is that fairness? Busy, Tim Barr!

(Applause)

Maryanne Petrilla: Anna Marie Columbo, Rice Township.

Woman: She had to leave. My brother had a heart attack a little while ago, and he's diabetic (inaudible).

Maryanne Petrilla: Okay.

Woman: (Inaudible) Um, we're here for Rice Township and Nuangola. Ah, she said that "My house started out as an old country cottage with my father (inaudible) hard work (inaudible). We had our own well and a septic tank (inaudible). Century 21 did not take this into account. This is because (inaudible) and does not mean our property is worth

that extreme price that they purchased it at. They also (inaudible) water supply. Anyone who had had a water supply put in their home, having their own well (inaudible) water is terrible and undrinkable. They have to then buy bottled water. How they can justify the high increase in taxes to people who are just about getting by on the limited fixed income? Also, do they know the difference between a paved road and a dirt road? (Laughter) Also, a close resident received his taxes in the mail, went online, and it was his neighbor's house. Um, where, what happened to the money from the casino that was supposed to bring our taxes down? (Shouts of agreement) –heard from the very beginning that it was just, it was common that we should only see about a 10 percent tax increase. How could you think two houses next door to one another, about the same land, same size house, they're both about the same size, should be graded differently? One is an A and one is a B.” Yeah, oh, and just one comment I have to make. This is about county wide assessment and, I'm hearing a couple comments. We all need to stick together, ya know. Harvey's Lake. People are trying to organize group meetings. They're trying to get--. Nanticoke had a group meeting. Slocum had a group meeting. Mountaintop had a group meeting. Other, people who are at those meetings are trying to get in touch with the organizers at the other meetings to form a group of their own. So we need, we need to keep together on this against them.

(Applause)

Maryanne Petrilla: Grace Griffin, Larksville.

Grace Griffin: I was wondering, in the beginning of this process of the reassessment, how much time and effort was given to developing a plan (inaudible)? Was there any consideration given? Had they sold their property (inaudible)? And they can't afford it. People are (inaudible), and I'm wondering why (inaudible)? And why wasn't that (inaudible)? Was there any thought given to that (inaudible)?

(Murmuring)

Greg Skrepenak: I, I, I can't answer that question for ya because I've known--. Steve, maybe, you could ask because he was the one that was around when that first, when that ya know, when the contract was engaged.

Grace Griffin: The other thing, the other thing is this. When you rush this in like this, people are getting (inaudible). You're devastating them. They can't sleep at night, don't know what they're going to eat tomorrow. (Inaudible) The thing is this. Even if a person wants to go for a reverse mortgage on their property (inaudible). We wouldn't have enough time to accumulate the money to even do that. So, to rush this like this makes no sense. And I, I, beg the commissioners, if they do this, please sit down, even if you get a citizens' group together, to have them form something to give answers to (inaudible), these different things and options that are provided for the senior citizens and to the homeowners. I'm sure that there's people here who (inaudible).

Maryanne Petrilla: Thank you. (Applause) Judith Spagnuolo, Harvey's Lake.

Judith Spagnuolo: Okay, I'm not gonna go on about Harvey's Lake, because I think enough's been said. And I just wanted to say to my community, Dallas, Shavertown, Wilkes-Barre, Kingston, it's about all of us. It's not about just us. (Applause) An astronomical amount of \$500 and some odd thousand for anybody who has a lakefront home is why we're so outraged, but everybody should be outraged. I'm a person who works hard for my money. I wasn't here on my behalf; I'm said, I'm here on behalf of my mother, whose property's out there. She's eighty-one years old. She's in a wheelchair. I couldn't bring her here today, 'cause it's not accessible, thank you very much, for letting me drive all the way here. And I must leave to go to work. I have to take time from my job to sit here to get no answers, to get faces looking at us who don't care a damn about us, and--. (Applause) --Mr. Urban, who already gave them \$8,000,000 of whose money? His? No. Ours. Our money. He wants to give them another million a year until they fix it. Who would pay me a million a year to fix my job? Any of you? Well, you're all paying him. You're all paying him. You want to take a million out of your pocket and pay them to do a stupid job.

Steve Urban: I didn't vote for the \$8,000,000.

Judith Spagnuolo: Who voted for this people to come in? Did anybody get a (inaudible) answer?

Steve Urban: Vonderheid, Makowski, and I did.

Judith Spagnuolo: Oh, so ya were (inaudible)?

Steve Urban: I didn't vote for the million.

Judith Spagnuolo: Well, where did the million come in? They did a shoddy job at \$8,000,000. Now we're trying to prove otherwise, you're gonna give 'em another million. Who voted? I didn't vote for it. Okay, Mr. Urban didn't vote for the million. We have asked, we have asked tonight to take a vote, because if they don't vote to get rid of them, I vote we get rid of them.

(Applause)

Maryanne Petrilla: John Newman, Dallas Township.

John Newman: I live in Dallas Township. Ah, we have a fairly nice house located on a half acre of ground, 0.47, little bit less than a half acre. Ah, the assessed valuation of the house, of the house, is approximately right, within couple thousand dollars. Maybe we could sell it for that. Maybe we'd have to take a little bit less, maybe a little bit more. But, I can't sell the house without selling the land. And therein lies the problem. My half acre was assessed at \$68,000. We bought it in 1993 for \$34,000. Simple math tells you they doubled it. They took it and doubled it. That was my plea at the informal assessment. Now, the young man that interviewed me, in all due respect, didn't know

what he was doing, had no idea what I was talking about. And I had mounds of paper, and he excused himself, and he went out of the room, and he came back, and he said, "I'm sorry. We're not talking about land values. We're not talking about land values." I said, "Well, wait a minute. Let me give you a real time situation." And I pulled out the June/July issue of *Target Shopper*, also had the July/August issue of *Target Shopper*. Now, Ms. Petrilla and Mr. Urban, you may not know where Goodley Manor is; you may know where it is. Mr. Skrepenak, I know you know where it is. Quite valuable real estate. Quite valuable. They call themselves the "jewel of the Back Mountain" and it probably is. Now remember, my half acre, \$68,000, projected out as an acre \$136,000. *Target Shopper*: "Goodley Manor, 2.3 acres, \$59,500." Please! (Inaudible) I'll give you this. And the young man went into Rob, or Bob, whatever his name is. Rob or Bob wouldn't come out. I asked to speak to him. He said, I could almost quote it verbatim, "We're not dealing with land assessment. That is for the Board of Assessment Appeals. And if you're not happy, file a formal appeal," which I did. Now, I thought that was very unprofessional that Rob or Bob wouldn't come out and speak with me because the young man that was interviewing me didn't know what he was talking about. I thought it was very unprofessional that he wouldn't take this or make a copy of it, because this is real time. Now, I could walk over to Goodley Manor and plunk down \$60,000 and get 2.3 acres of land. But ya know what, I don't want 2.3 acres of land; I only want my half acre with my house on it. And I want to pay reasonable taxes. So my first question to the Board of Assessment Appeals, can answer it now or ya can answer it later: Are you going to consider land values when I come in for my appeal? You don't have to answer it now. Somewhere along the line-- (Shouts) I don't want to hear from him. He's not in the Board of Assessment Appeals. Board of Assessment Appeals is sitting back there.

Someone: (Inaudible)—the answer is yes. That informal review is about property description and things we don't know about the property. The formal appeal is about value. That's why the appraisal information is submitted. So the answer is yes.

John Newman: Thank you. Next issue, and this is scary. This is scary for the three of you. I'll hurry. The 10 percent increase after the first year, very scary, because it's on the tax base in the community, in the municipality. Now, many people are under the impression, "Oh, my taxes'll only go up 10 percent." Wrong! Wrong! Just, just to give you an example, and, and Mr. Tony Alu, who I think has a pretty good idea what he's doing, estimated county taxes at five mills. Five mills. I take five mills on my new assessment, my county taxes will be some \$1,863. They are now \$1,249. So I'm going up \$600 on county taxes alone at five mills, at five mills, yep. 10 percent would only be 125 mills. Big difference. Excuse me, \$125. Big difference between 125 bucks and 614 bucks. So, any of you have not looked at the millage, the projected millage, the dollars and cents, it's scary, folks, it's scary. That's the first year. Then the second year, they can do what they want to do. And the school districts can do what they want to do. So, is very scary. So I will close with this. In 1990, don't throw tomatoes at me, President George H. W. Bush stood in front of the joint session of House and said, and said, "Ladies and gentlemen, no new taxes!" And he repeated it. He said, "No new taxes!" And you know what, they blinked. They blinked. Mr. Urban, Ms. Petrilla, Mr. Skrepenak, you need to blink at this situation. You need to blink, you need to make a motion that this be put on

the table, the backburner, until we can get these assessments corrected. I'm not poor yet. Yet! But I feel--.

John Wich: --same thing, but, um, I wear one when I first came in. I wanted to fit in with these guys. I didn't want to feel out of place. Uh, I got my assessment right here. Okay. I'm not a rich guy. I'm scratching my rear just to get by and pay my taxes when I have to. I don't even own land. I have a trailer, okay. I don't know what kind of people these people sent out to do all these assessments, whether they're teenagers, or they're paying them minimum wage, I, I heard all kind of rumors. Quite frankly, they sent out people that aren't qualified to do the job, and they didn't do the job. But they accepted the money. Quite frankly, if they accepted the \$8,000,000, and they did not do the job, they don't deserve the money, and this county should sue them and take the money back. Why should I have to go and, and get an appeal in front of them when they screwed up to begin with? (Applause) --an appeal with certified assessors and work for the county, I'll go against them. You people represent us, not them. Number one, the first thing you people need to do, you people need to step up and stop this unfairness, tax. You all know it's unfair. You know! This ain't one little "Oh, Harvey's Lake is bad"; this is everybody. I live up in a trailer court up here, alright. I live in a trailer. It's just like, it's just like a car, okay. I don't own no land. The older the trailer it gets, the more usage it has, the less it's worth. I own the oldest trailer in Cooney Trailer Park. My assessment used to be \$1,300. Ya know what they say it's worth? \$38,700. (Boos) Now, I'm willing to offer, I'm willing to offer anyone of them to buy it right now. And I'll give them 25 percent off. It's a deal. What do ya think? (Applause) I think you people need to, need to make a motion. You got to put this on the backburner, and (inaudible). And quite frankly, don't let them screw the job up again. I think you need to fire these people. (Applause) I think, I think you need to sue these people, get our \$8,000,000 back, and hire a reputable firm, but at least, God, at least put this, make a motion to put this on the backburner because you're, we spent \$8,000,000 of our money now. I don't need to be spending another \$111 to get this in. And then another \$300 for this. And then after that to go to a formal hearing, I'm going to have to pay \$600 to \$1,000 for a law firm, and another \$2, \$300 for a, a regular, certified assessor. I don't have that kind of money to throw around, and I shouldn't have to throw that money around. That's why you people need to, you really people need to stop this, and stop it now until there's a fair assessment. I don't mind paying my taxes. Pay them all the time. As a matter of fact, they were always wrong until I really start digging into it. Then, there's like a fourteen inch by seven inch trailer. I have a twelve by sixteen trailer. Still, (inaudible). --it sure the hell ain't worth no \$40,000. (Laughter, applause) --fair assessment. That's all I'm asking. That's what everybody's asking. We don't need to spend another \$600, er, er \$1,000 to a law firm for something that they screwed up. It's not fair. It, it, it's just not fair.

Maryanne Petrilla: Gerald Rusinko, Sand Springs Road, Bear Creek Township.

Gerald Rusinko: Oh, um, I'm just gonna repeat a number of facts. Um, my development's the, uh, space is divided in, it's over two acres. It's ah, or, a development. My base acre's, uh, reached around fifty-four, up to \$168,000 for a base acre. Why? What's the difference? It's all wooded. No explanation. But I wanna go back to that (inaudible). --

Looking with great amusement to, uh, Mr. Barr's spin on a daily basis in the papers in this area. We went down to our informal review, okay. Got our house, and we were able to get that down. Then I discussed the land. "Oh, we don't discuss land." Well, I said, "What's this tillable base acre that's (inaudible)? Because the description doesn't match my property. It's all wooded. And you're telling me it's tillable. It's forest land." "Well, you have to go to the county office, uh, mapping office, because they're the ones that made this designation." Alright. Well, we took a ride down to the mapping office. Walk in, they look at me like I'm crazy. "Why don't you go over to the Assessors Office? They, maybe, can help you." I said, "The Assessors Office? That's not our designation. That's 21st Century's." So out of courtesy, I said, "I'll go back up to Claims and tell these people, ya know, let's get the answers straight here and don't send anybody down to the, uh, courthouse." Get the same person again. "Oh no, the county, that's a county designation. They don't know what they're talking about." "Oh, okay." "Ya gotta go to a formal hearing." So the next day, I decide, let me call the 1-800-number on the reassessment. I finally get through to a young lady. I said, "I got a problem with the land. "Oh, no problem. I have a number you can just (inaudible) land issues." Great, I call it up. What do I get? The mapping office. (Laughter) Alright. So, the lady on the other end remembers me. She's chuckling. I'm chuckling. So she tried to transfer me over there to the, uh, Tony Alu's office. I get dropped. So I try calling the number that's in the phone book. Go through the whole menu and the usual stupid menus that give you forty options. Then finally it says, "Hold on and we'll connect you with somebody." All of a sudden I get "Beep, beep. This call cannot be completed this time. Please call back at a later date." A later date. Not later. I said, "Okay, let me call mapping office." I call the mapping office, got the lady. I said, "Can you give me another number." She was kind enough. Make a long story short, I'm there, I got somebody that finally called me back, a young lady named Kate, who Mr. Alu should compliment; she was very professional. She says, "Ah, do you mind if I take care of this?" I said, "Fine." So, she, ah, said, ah, "You don't hear anything in twenty-four hours, call me back." So I gave her until, that was a Thursday, I gave her until Friday afternoon. I haven't heard any response. She mumbled something under her breath. So, she said, "Can you give it two more days? If you don't hear anything, uh, call me back." I did that. She said, "Okay, I'm going to have to ask (inaudible)." The next day I finally got a call from an individual named Sarah Garner. We were out, uh, a round robin on this. And, uh, ya know, to no resolution. It just said, ah, that was 21st Century's title for any parcels under ten acres. And I said, "Okay, fine." But, you know, there are interesting thing is, now, again, like I said, I love the spin on a daily basis that Mr. Barr puts in the paper. Now, he's saying tonight that property isn't being reviewed. Well, I have two neighbors that just went and had their property reduced. Now who's that? No, no, ya don't. That's the problem. (Chatter) Houses up there, they, ya know, you're supposed to be assessing them based on their value. Okay. Brick fronts, they have them as vinyl. They, uh, (inaudible) they have as vinyl. That one house that was under construction. You know what they put down for the--? G1-11 siding, which is (inaudible). So, I, eh, just the mistakes are just (inaudible). I mean, I was in business for forty years in a Fortune 500 company, and it is ridiculous and ludicrous the mistakes that have been made. I mean, pools are missed, and, uh, I, I extended a house (inaudible) 600 square foot porch. Thank you.

Maryanne Petrilla: John Frank, Harvey's Lake.

(Applause)

John Frank: I know everybody's tired of hearing about Harvey's Lake. They say about land and this girl over here just had that (inaudible) property (inaudible) whatever (inaudible). 2.5 acres is \$43,000--.

Someone: Fifty-nine.

John Frank: Fifty-nine. Well, I have here on a little, there's a lot mapped out here. I don't know if you can see it. A lot mapped out here and this spot here that looks like a pin dropped on it, it's seventeen feet by, by thirty feet, by fifty feet. That means (inaudible). This fella says that that is worth \$15,200. But the lot that is fifty feet by 100 feet is worth (inaudible) thousand dollars. Now, I also (inaudible) like to go on. I have numerous properties in the county, and they're all screwed up. I have property at Harvey's Lake, fifty feet of lakefront with absolutely nothing on it – not a dock in the water. There is nothing in the water. Nothing on the land. Period. There's a deck on the ground, but nothing in the water, no building or anything. \$181,000. There is nothing on it. So you go to the thing, punch up the number, and it says this and they're showing me a garage on a house across the street, which is my garage. Yes, that's fine and dandy. But it doesn't belong there. (Inaudible) So comes (inaudible) comes up. Nothing on it. Name, address, nothing. three days later, it comes up. Honest to goodness, I have my neighbor's boathouse. (Inaudible) He has (inaudible) lakefront. I said, "How's your taxes?" "Great!" I know why they're great. I'm not (inaudible). That's your problem. Go look! It's there! There's my house. There's the lakefront. There's his house. There's the lakefront. It went like this. (Inaudible) the boathouse. (Inaudible) Fifteen mistakes! Fifteen properties! Fifteen properties; fifteen mistakes. I came up with (inaudible). This is gonna cost me probably on, some of these are, these fifteen properties, the four of them are land that are absolutely worthless, which is minimal taxes. (Inaudible) gonna cost me eighteen grand. This is my limit. I've done this since 1990, fixed up for my retirement so I can retire. Yes, I'm a landlord. People think I'm horrible. Pass it on to your tenant. They're maxed out. I have nice stuff. I don't have junk. I just bought a place from (inaudible) in September, paid thirty grand for it. It is on a dirt road, not in the borough (inaudible) area. It's undedicated. They said that is now worth ninety grand. (Chatter) Except I put a furnace in the house, so it has heat now. It has running water now. It was done. (Chatter) (Inaudible) And I, but land is like a joke at the informal thing, ya say. (Inaudible) wasted time, so that's twenty bucks. Get an appraiser. The things from the borough that say the land is unbuildable (inaudible). It didn't cost me. Thank goodness. (Inaudible) Thank goodness the borough did it for me for nothing; they didn't have to. But, it's silly. How can you do this? Do your job. I'm a contractor. Roof leaks? I fix it. (Inaudible) --out of my pocket. Send the guys back out. Nope, that's my problem. I don't come back and say, "Oh, well, you put a nail up there, so you gotta fix it." Somebody else pays for it. It's not right.

Maryanne Petrilla: Jerry O'Hara. (Applause) Jerry O'Hara, Sugarloaf. Paul, I cannot read the name, Lake Township.

Paul: Talking about 21st Century. I got a piece of property I own out in Back Mountain. They say I have road frontage. (Inaudible) in the middle of a bunch of fields, untellable, and it's fairly wooded. They're saying I got road land, er, road frontage, and it's flat level. They took a picture of the field that's in front of it, instead of looked at a map and seen exactly where the field is. It's landlocked. (Inaudible) Yup, they (inaudible) put forth a lot of money. (Inaudible) road frontage when it's landlocked. (Inaudible) –your data collectors don't wanna check stuff out that's off roads. And with taxes, (inaudible) making payments nobody can afford. My taxes on my house went up three times. I can't afford it. I, my parents lived there since 1963. I make \$12 an hour. Your average pay in this community is (inaudible) in this valley anywhere from \$8 to \$12, \$14 an hour. I don't make \$40,000 a year. \$25,000, \$28,000 is how much.

Maryanne Petrilla: Thank you. Dave, uh, Probsker. I can't really see-- (Chatter) Uh, there is no town.

Dave Balaker: Dave Balaker. (Murmuring) Uh, basically I've been sitting here and fuming, but I want to congratulate Harvey's Lake (inaudible). –we should all organize because it's not our right, it's actually, it's actually our duty. Something's not being done right (inaudible). But, uh, I, I, I'm just listening and I'm saying “Oh, man, yo, listen to this.” You know what? You should hear this. I wish you could hear every single person's complaint. Now what that would tell me is that the person that I hired to do the job, they have people, does have people that aren't doing their job. Shame on them. The other problem is, Mr. Barr, is that if you're getting this influx and, ya know, you're looking at it, it, it's normal. You just say, “Oh, these people (inaudible) for fifty years. That's why they're complaining.” Guess what? A house that's 100 years old doesn't increase that much in value, buddy. It's falling apart. People are trying to make ends meet. Uh, nuh, uh, remember the American Dream? Does anybody here remember that? (Chatter) Well, I'll tell ya what. Ya get people that work hard all their life, like these senior citizens here, that's the American Nightmare! Being a truckster – don't smirk! You've been smirking through the whole meeting! And then you (chatter). –goes against you. Listen to me.

Maryanne Petrilla: My heart is breaking.

Dave Balaker: I know what it's like. (Applause) I know what it's like. (Inaudible) I was over at the Rite-Aid and ya see their hands shaking while they're going through that money envelope. (Inaudible) –or do I eat? Who don't I pay? Ya know, all these people can't pay their taxes and fix up their houses. You're gonna have a ghost town. Sugar Notch is a good town. We work hard. We try to do things in town. We don't do a lot of complaining. But you know what? It's a heavy burden. It, it, it, ya know, ya come out and ya watch the *Three Stooges*. Even Larry, Moe, and Curly sometimes would do the job right. (Laughter) Right, right now, right now, this is a representative government, and I'm imagining that you've heard this at every meeting that you've had. By the way, I think this is a good idea. However, out of respect for the voters, I think you oughta plans

your site better. I knew this place would be crowded. I'm surprised there's nobody passing out water. I'm really surprised. How 'bout, can, can't you use the high school auditorium? I don't know. Someplace where you can, everyone can sit.

Someone: LCC.

Dave Balaker: There ya go. Okay?

Maryanne Petrilla: I agree with you, sir.

Dave Balaker: Now--.

Maryanne Petrilla: These, these meetings are planned a year in advance with the municipality.

Dave Balaker: I think you should--.

(Chatter)

Maryanne Petrilla: Can I explain something?

Dave Balaker: --more meetings out here, because you know what? There are a lot of people that don't know how to respond. We've got a lot of elderly in the county. And ya know what? They'll go under, because they don't know, or they don't have the money to appeal. That's wrong! To be elected, you handled this. I hear that in my position. But ya know what? We did. This was not well thought out. And now you see the problems with that. If you do not take some sort of legal action to get our money back from these crackpots that don't know what they're doing (applause), then I think that we oughta get together and we all oughta take legal action. Period. That's right. Really, we ought to. (Applause) --legal action and get things done right, and get the local realtors come in where they know when they go into the Patch in Ashley, that, that, uh, uh, forty by 110 acre lot isn't worth \$60,000. When you know that, ya know, come on. Step up to the plate. (Applause) These houses, these houses should not (inaudible). That's *Animal House*. Great. Some people have the money. They wanna have it. Fine. Don't take it out on us. We're the ones that are paying all the other taxes. We're the ones that are bearing the brunt of everything, but you know what? We're slowly becoming the poor, because we can't afford anything anymore. I'll tell ya what. Stay organized. Let's get together. Stay organized, not because of (inaudible), not because of (inaudible). Let's find out what's going on. People should be held accountable. It should be in a larger building, not in a small room. And by the way, I will say one thing. Every time I have been to the county courthouse, the people that are there now seem to remember that their payroll is being paid by (inaudible). They've been very nice. They have been very helpful. I, I'm sorry. (Inaudible)

(Applause)

Maryanne Petrilla: Edward Chesnovitch.

Edward Chesnovitch: Thank you. I'm no stranger to this board. Uh, I wanted to just, I don't know if Walter Griffith's still here, but I wanna verify what he said and the statement you made, and I think it'd be, it could be verified here by a reporter she put it in the paper when--. (Chatter) Okay, thank you. When I asked about putting this off, I'm the person who said, "Stand up and have some, uh, intestinal fortitude and put this off." And I was told then by madam Chairperson that we will let it go through awhile, and then we'll do--. And I said, "And what happens to me? I have, I have a meeting scheduled. I have to pay money for this. Who's gonna pay me back after I spend this money?" "Well, we'll let it go through." What does it do for all the people that had the formals already? They paid for assessments, they put it off. Then what happens? Then next year, if it's done again, and we're not satisfied, we have to go back and do it all over again, right. Now another point. I brought up a figure last, at the meeting, I brought up a figure that the cost of commencing an action was \$375. (Inaudible) council said, "Do you have that figure with you?" I said, "No, but it was given to me by a reliable source." He went out and came back in, (inaudible) as I think Walter said. He came back and said, "If we (inaudible) red," he says, "No, that's, it's 111.75." That is (inaudible). Then, that is to, ah, commencement of action. Then ya go from there, and there's another figure of arbitration. And that's a figure where arbitration proceedings are for (inaudible) prothonotary. This for you to pay to (inaudible) assessment, arbitrating board. That's \$375. And there's a, an appellate fee of \$51. And then we have, as we go to a master, it's \$125. Add them all up -- those in addition to your \$5, come to six hundred, and uh, sixty-two, \$667 in fees that you have to pay. Now, am I correct or are you correct?

Jim Blaum: Mr. Chesnovitch, your request yesterday, I don't represent the prothonotary's office--.

Edward Chesnovitch: Well, you represent the county! You don't know a damn thing about it!

Jim Blaum: Please, sir. Sir! If you, if you would.

Edward Chesnovitch: Go 'head.

Jim Blaum: I represent the county commissioners.

Edward Chesnovitch: Right.

Jim Blaum: The county commissioners have no involvement in the operation of the prothonotary's office other than budgetary matters.

Edward Chesnovitch: Fine.

Jim Blaum: Okay?

Edward Chesnovitch: Fine.

Jim Blaum: So the cost of filing a petition for appeal, I wasn't aware of that. But I left the meeting at, to go insist and get the fee schedule for you. (Inaudible) I have a meeting this morning, the, the cost to institute the appeal is \$111.75.

Edward Chesnovitch: I agree.

Jim Blaum: This afternoon, just before we came here, I had a meeting with the deputy prothonotary. They're not sure about the costs, how to approach the arbitration costs chart. They're not sure. They want to have a meeting with the presiding judge and I sent an email--.

(Shouts)

Someone: Who's the presiding judge?

Jim Blaum: Uh, uh, uh, understandably. Understand, understandable. The arbitration process, which was created by the court on June 25, the arbitration process is brand new. The court created that. The masters process that is in the new local rule was created by the court. We have serious questions with that because of budgetary matters. The country was not aware of a new rule change coming down on June 25. We, I, uh, I sent an email today inquiring: Do we have money budgeted for this? So this is new to us. I, but, I met with the deputy prothonotary and they're not sure how to handle the arbitration aspect, whether or not it's supposed to be the same manner as civil actions less than \$50,000, which is three lawyers just selected to sit and hear the case, and if you're not satisfied, then you get to appeal with this court. So, the deputy prothonotary is not certain about that either. I emailed Chairman Petrilla this afternoon with a recommendation that we should sit down with the court and discuss where's the money coming from for this.

(Chatter)

Edward Chesnovitch: From each and every taxpayer with \$660.

Someone: It shouldn't come from us.

Edward Chesnovitch: No, that's where it's coming from. Here's the schedule--.

(Chatter)

Jim Blaum: Just, just, just a second.

Edward Chesnovitch: Go 'head.

Jim Blaum: Should it come from the court's budget? I don't know. But that's something we have to discuss and get clear, but I just wanted, I just wanted to point out--. (Chatter) I just want to point out to you Mr. Chesnovitch--.

Edward Chesnovitch: Ed is fine.

Jim Blaum: The numbers are not etched in stone right now, other, other than the \$111.75.

(Chatter)

Edward Chesnovitch: I'm not done.

Maryanne Petrilla: Your time's up, sir.

Edward Chesnovitch: Oh, no. I'm on my (inaudible). Put it on his nickel. I'm not done. In addition now, I want to point something else out where this whole (inaudible) started. It said that if you went to the formal appeal and you failed there, you had a denoble hearing. A denoble hearing means it starts out fresh, and you (inaudible) the Court of Common Pleas. Now, the court juror has changed that and said, "Now, you don't go to the Common Pleas. You now go to the Appeal Board thing arbitrators of three people. And after those three people, you go to a master. They, they, ru-, then they changed another thing in midstream. Before it was a denoble hearing; that's gone now. I read the law. I read it out at the meeting. How it works then is, after the master decides, and if you pay off the master. It doesn't say a denoble hearing anymore. It says now (inaudible) right for a, for a (inaudible) argument. Then you go to the judge, and the judge looks at what the master decided, and he rubberstamps that. And you lost. And it's gonna take you two to three years to go there, and all the while, you gotta pay your taxes. I called (inaudible), I called for someone with the intestinal fortitude to stand up and put this on hold. I talked to Steve Urban and Steve Urban said--. And you Maryanne, I am correct, and Walter was correct, and you said, "We have to let it run its course. Maybe we'll stop it a little later on." I said, "What about me? Are you gonna pay me back what I paid \$1,000 for an attorney and an appraiser. Is it fair to me?" Is it fair to anybody else?

Audience: No!

Edward Chesnovitch: Right, somebody, I can tell you (inaudible). Okay, Harvey's Lake. I had a place at Harvey's Lake. I sold it.

Maryanne Petrilla: Mr. Chesnovitch, we have got to get on.

Edward Chesnovitch: You've gotta get on? Well, I got, you left people rattled a lot more than I did. I, the people want me to speak or not? (Applause) Thank you. Thank you. Who assesses a property that was just, uh, that was just sold in April at Harvey's Lake? Who assesses that? You? Because it's on your database. Or, is it the county. Let's stop pointing fingers. Who did it? You, I could ask you. A property was just sold at Harvey's Lake. Where did the figure come from at the new value for the new owner?

Tim Barr: All the values there are on record. The values that were mailed prior to July 1 were based upon the sales from '04, '05, '06, and '07. We put values on the values on all the properties, and, uh, worked with the Assessment Office.

Edward Chesnovitch: This was '08. Sold this, in August of, in April of this year. Eight! Where does the figure come from?

Tim Barr: The value would have already been placed on it based--.

Edward Chesnovitch: No it wasn't! Well, how can this be if a property sold for \$300,000, and now it's assessed for \$145,000? (Laughter) Oh, how 'bout that? You put a value on from whenever? Oh. Talk about values, Harvey's Lake, ideal for Harvey's Lake. I'm glad I got the hell outta there. I, I live in Jackson Township. Jackson Township is gonna take the brunt next to Harvey's Lake, and I'll tell ya why Harvey's Lake got mailed last. Because it was a, it was, it was figured there Harvey's Lake has been under-assessed for years and years. They held it out till the last minute to give it to them then. That's why they held it back.

Someone: That's right.

Someone: Absolutely.

Edward Chesnovitch: You know that. Everybody knows that. In Jackson Township, the land values in Jackson Township, vary some \$38,000 per acre for the first acre, to \$135,000 per acre. Talk about, brrwooo! There's one house, the one address is twenty-five different in numerical on a street. The one is, is, uh \$70,000 per acre. The other one's \$135,000 per acre. Now, I talked to one of your people. Sarah, what's her name? Sarah? Barr, what's her name? Sarah?

Tim Barr: (inaudible)

Edward Chesnovitch: Well, Sarah, who's one of your upper, upper echelon people, Steve, Steve'll know her name. He told her to call me. I didn't call her. She didn't call me. I happened to be sitting in on a, on a friend of mine's, and I was talking to some people. And she said, "Oh, Ed Chesnovitch? I was told to call you." I want to tell ya how in-tuned they are with where we are. We talked about it and I told her with this was. I said, "You got people, a person at half an acre. A half an acre, and because the deed said .17 and .41, they're charging her \$90,000. Right next door there's a lot that's \$62,000 for a full acre. There are two adjoining properties--.

Someone: I got it.

Edward Chesnovitch: There are two adjoining properties. One is (inaudible) twenty-five and twenty-seventh. The one, the first acre is sixty. The next one is 102. She said, "Well would ya like me to come fix those for ya?" I said, "No, I want them thrown out." And

here's what she said: "Luzerne County is one of the fastest growing counties in the state." (Laughter) Steve can tell ya who the person he is. He doesn't know who it was. It's somebody, but he doesn't know who Sarah is. But, uh, you know who she is, Steve. Well, why don't tell him who it is? Because he don't know she's on a payroll. (Laughter)

Maryanne Petrilla: Mr. Chesnovitch.

Edward Chesnovitch: Am I over? Well, well, hey, would anybody, would anybody cede their time to me?

Someone: Yes.

Edward Chesnovitch: You will? Thank you, sir. Thank you, sir.

Steve Urban: Let me, let me clarify. The reason why I--.

Maryanne Petrilla: What's your name, sir?

Someone: (inaudible)

Edward Chesnovitch: Okay.

Steve Urban: --contact you--.

Maryanne Petrilla: You're not on the list.

Steve Urban: You asked Tim Barr (inaudible). You said he wouldn't call you.

Edward Chesnovitch: Okay.

Steve Urban: I wanted them to--.

Edward Chesnovitch: Okay. That's a, that's a whole 'nother story. That's a whole 'nother story. But she said, I told her there's a property in the Back Mountain that was just built, and the building permit was \$34,000 for this permit. And I said, "The roof costs \$3,000,000." And ya know what she said? And you've got it assessed at \$1.8. She said, "We're not interested in what it costs. We're interested in what he could sell it for." Well, I'll be damned if I put \$3,000,000 in a roof if I'm gonna sell the place \$1.8." And it's brand new. So, where, where, there's no, there's no rhyme. There's no reason. I can show you, I can show you properties that there's a house right near me that the person bought it in 2005. It was assessed at, for \$3,800, \$200 for the land. Now it's assessed for six, sixty-two for what happened. The picture show there's big logs there like it was out in the middle of the woods somewhere. And there's no house there anymore. The neighbor with the, the .17 and .41, they went out and they took a new picture. Now, lets point the fingers. Who took the picture now in June? Did you take it or did county take it?

Tim Barr: It could've been either.

Edward Chesnovitch: Couldda been either? Well either doesn't know, because either took the hou-, the wrong, the wrong lot. They took (inaudible) from my driveway looking at another house, and the property that they're talking was on the other side of the street. Hey, somebody, as I've said before, somebody's gotta stand up. Greg, ya know I'm not your greatest fan, but I mean at least you have, it seems like you're gonna say, "Let's do something about this." I told Steve, I said, "Steve, people are gonna lose their homes. People are gonna lose their homes." A doctor told me, a year ago, she said, "I give, I give pills to seniors because it comes to a choice of they need a pill or eating and they can't afford to buy a medicine." Now, fuel has gone up. Fuel is \$4.49. Gas is \$4.00. And I said, "Steve, they're gonna lose." Steve said, "No they won't." I said, "Then the slumlords'll be out buyin' all a these, and who are we gonna put in? Maybe the illegals then." They're gonna destroy this community. And I told, we talked an hour last night. And I said, "If you don't have the guts to stand up and do this and make a motion to put it on hold, have it corrected, you're toast. You'll never get elected." And I voted for him. I'm a Democrat. I went to the Republican Christmas Party because I vote for the person. Not anymore! You have to have the guts. And you, Maryanne, you, Skrep, I hope it, I hope at least I can get somebody to second it. I'm looking for a majority. Not a majority. I'm looking for everybody to vote to do the right thing. And you, your job, you did a job that's terrible.

Someone: Fraudulent! Fraudulent!

Ed Chesnovitch: Thank you.

(Applause)

Maryanne Petrilla: Pugh, Louis Pugh.

Louis Pugh: I'd like to ask everybody just not to even interrupt until I finish, 'cause I have a lot to say. Make it very short. First of all, Tim Barr, I have to tell ya, I'm a state certified appraiser. You are not. If you had appraised a house for yourself, you wouldn't have a license. The appraisal is so bad. I have some appraisals that I did today. I won't go into Harvey's Lake. They're atrocious. But, I can give you a few of them. There is a house that was sold last year at a tax sale for \$4,000. It's a dump on Lake Road at Harvey's Lake, you appraised at \$149,000. (Boos) I, I have another one here that your firm appraised at \$67,000 and it just sold for \$135,000. So the opposite. It's 'cause you don't know what you're doing. You gave a spin on land values. I'm a tell ya somethin.' You should go to appraisal school because you have no idea how to appraise land. If you say that, when you have vacant lots, it means vacant. I have two lots, side by side. One is \$40,000. One's \$20,000. Identical sized lots. That's in three or four cases. I've appraised houses of people that were crying today. And I felt so bad I couldn't do anything. And your land value is mostly where it's at. You do not have any idea what lakefront property's worth. You don't have any idea what property is worth anywhere in this valley, because you're not from here. And I can tell ya that you're gonna take some heat. Your gonna have a lawsuit filed. I pay to represent five people at (inaudible). And I just

wanna tell ya something. I have another property. I did five appraisals. None of 'em were right. \$100,000 over. \$150,000 over. There was one I did today in Plains Township. The lady didn't want to tell me. She said, "Well, go next door. They're related to me." You appraised her house at \$273,000. The house next door was appraised at \$150,000. Your people appraised my house in West Pittston on the river \$480,000. There are two houses down there, for sale now for over a year. They can't sell 'em. They're nice for \$270. They just dropped it down \$210,000. You did not use any comparables. I don't know where you got your figures, but I'm gonna tell ya somethin.' Nothing that you people have did is right. And, Greg, I hope you have enough fortitude to stand up. Ya gotta kill this. I have a good idea. What should happen with this appraisal should be put off until next year, first of all. Secondly, Greg had a great idea that you put some realtors on the board, state certified appraisers. Let them read all these values and come up with some real figures, because, Maryanne, they are brutal. You're lucky you have some good people on the Assessment Board, and when Shiner and (inaudible) and those people see it, they're gonna know. I've worked with them many times on different things. And, Steve, I don't know where you're coming from on this, but I know you started the assessment. They got it with no bid. It was a no bid. Tommy Makowski, who destroyed this county, seconded it. And you're gonna pay for it. Somebody's gonna pay for it.

Someone: -- you're state certified appraiser, and he's doin' the whole county and he's not?

Louis Pugh: I work independent.

Someone: What gives him the legality?

Louis Pugh: No, I, I, I'm sorry. I just said, Tim, and I didn't mean to take a shot at ya. But you gave a spin the other day on land value. I wanna tell ya about land value, that you don't know as an appraiser. When you have vacant land, that's exactly what it means, vacant land. You gave a little song and dance, how you appraise the values that include the sewer, the water, 'lectricity. Lemmie tell you somethin.' I dunno the 'lectric company that doesn't, uh, charge to bring the 'lectric into the house. The sewer and water's at the curb. That seventy cents a square foot, you drew that out of the air to cover your butt. And I'm tell ya something.' Like these gentlemen said, I, I did a job at Harvey's Lake yesterday. I could tell ya what. Not only did you not inspect it, included in the appraisal was the road that the state owned, both right-a-ways, the guy has two parkin' spots, twenty by forty, and a little piece of lakefront with a dock. \$400,000. (Boos) I don't have anything else to say, Tim. But I think the commissioners, you'd better (inaudible). And Maryanne, you wanna be a commissioner, Jen. I'll tell ya what, you'd better dooze, and Greg, you'd better step out. I know Urban won't go along wit it, but somebody betta step out, and ya betta end this thing if you get somebody to review all the appraisals.

(Applause)

Maryanne Petrilla: Henry Zelinski.

(Chatter)

Henry Zelinski: I have properties in Plains. I have properties in Harvey's Lake, and properties in Dallas. Uh, today I thought I started off on a lucky day when I called the Assessment Office for appeals, and I got through on the first call.

Someone: Wow!

Henry Zelinski: Um, I only appealed on eleven out of thirteen properties, because they don't even know the other two exist. (Laughter) So, uh, what was repeated here, I heard for the first time over, what I had, my situation, I, I heard repeated here time and time again: land values. \$700 I paid taxes on my property. It's \$7,000. There's no sense. A lot that's fifty feet by 150 feet is appraised at a half of two lots that are twenty-five by 150 (inaudible). It comes out the same. It should be the same. But a 25 or 50 percent raise in these properties doesn't make any sense. It's a mistake. It's, it's errors. It's incompetence. If I (inaudible) or any of you people here, your businesses, your, your working place, made as many mistakes as this people have made, the commissioners, you have to take light of this, because I would lose my business. I would not be in business; I'd be out of business. They have to be held accountable for what they did, the mistakes they made. We should not have to pay for their mistakes (chatter) and hire appraisers, attorneys, spend a lot of money to defend what their mistakes are. So I agree with the rest of the people that are here tonight. Fire them, start all over again, and, and take a loss. (Applause) (Inaudible) –and nobody seems to be talking about it. In the *Times Leader*, if you read the *Times Leader* each and every day, you'll learn a lot. The *Times Leader* makes some really, really good assessments, and they think, they just print what's there. But two days, a couple weeks ago, we talked about this five mills and ten mills that it's coming down. I'm an educated person. I still couldn't understand. "Well," I said, "even though everything is going up, millage is going down. We're gonna end up paying less taxes." And yet no one except Greg brought that up today. I don't understand it. I wish someone would explain it to me a little bit more. Uh, I've never seen taxes really go down. I was promised taxes would go down when Mohegan Sun came (inaudible) and we said that "Oh, this is gonna be great." Uh, it never happened. It's not gonna happen. I don't believe our taxes will go down five mills and ten mills. I understand that there's a state law (inaudible) could explain this to me. (Inaudible) There's a state law that says that you're limited in the amount of, of money, that you're not allowed to have windfall profit taxes, Luzerne County. (Inaudible) Luzerne County. Well, what's, is it, where's all gonna go? Where is it gonna go? How are you gonna spend it? And, uh, I wanna know how all these other, these other issues, they're only brought up in the *Times Leader*. They're only brought up for a day or two and then, boom! They're pushed under the rug. So, we need to have more answers, the public, before we could either go along with the assessment or go against the assessment. And I don't know if it's Mr. Barr, or Century 21, but somebody really screwed this all up. You people (inaudible) take the charge, do what you have to do, sue them, do whatever. The, the public will be with you. We'll be with you. Thank you.

(Applause)

Tim Barr: Do you want me to do it now? Um, um, let me, let me explain the millage issue now, because that, that's frankly. (Chatter) The, the gentleman has a question. (Chatter) If you trust me enough--. (Boos) Some of you would like to know the answer, so lemmie, lemmie finish. (Chatter) When, when any county does a complete reassessment, of all the properties in the county, all the values are brought from 1965 formulas to today's values. And, and we can argue about what today's value is. That's a different issue. All the values come up to something at today's value. The tax base has gone up. Okay? The, the commissioners, the county, the county, the school district, the cities, the municipalities, are not allowed to collect more than 10 percent more money than this year's budget. So, if \$80,000,000 is the levy, I forget, uh, I don't know what Commissioner Skrepenak says. Something like that. For real estate taxes, then \$88,000,000 is the most they can collect. This is not a revenue producing (chatter). There's no additional money that can be made from a reassessment process. How is it possible? I'll tell you, sir. The answer is that for every dollar that one of you might pay more, 'specially those folks at Harvey's Lake, that, that have properties that have gone up a lot since '65, maybe not as much as what's on your notice. We'll talk about that. But the point is, they're worth more than they were in '65, and frankly they've gone up faster than certain other areas like, uh, downtown Wilkes-Barre and, and maybe (inaudible). Some of those properties are gonna pay more. So if one person's gonna pay \$10 more, where's that money gonna go? And the answer is, it goes to another Luzerne County taxpayer who is paying more than their fair share right now. They probably don't realize it. They're probably struggling to pay the bills, and worrying about where they're gonna buy groceries or gas, same as the rest of us, but somebody is gonna save that money. It has to balance out. Reassessments can't be any other way. Ultimately, we try to get the right value in the end, and when we do that, then we spread it out as accurately as possible. (Chatter) –five mills. That's exactly correct. The county's mills is 94.9. After the reassessment, you're (inaudible) less than five mills. (Chatter)

Someone: You defrauded the county by saying (inaudible).

(Chatter)

Maryanne Petrilla: We are, we are, ah, we're now finished with public comment, but we're going to, uh, go on with the communications portion of the meeting.

Public Comment was transcribed by Renee Butts.

