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**Subject:**

Coryell residents organizing to oppose appraisal increases

By Jacqueline Brown  
Killeen Daily Herald

GATESVILLE - Coryell County residents are organizing to oppose recent appraisal increases and prevent future increases, and organization leaders are hoping for increased participation from Copperas Cove.

"Of the 800 members that we have now, only about 10 percent are from Copperas Cove," Gatesville resident Dick Butler said. "We really would like to have Copperas Cove represented."

The Coryell County Citizens for Fair and Equal Property Assessment are planning to host their first official meeting in the Gatesville High School Auditorium at 7 p.m. Thursday.

"We're in the process of selecting an attorney," Butler said. "We're really after the appraisal district's methodology, and when we get into court that's where we're going."

Butler said he thinks the current appraisal process is flawed, and he wants to reset appraisals to the 2005 level while the Coryell County Appraisal District goes back to fix the model. The group plans to elect a board of governors and start raising funds for legal fees Thursday.

Butler said the group is also working on a Web page to inform people about the appraisal process.

"We've explained the tax process so that folks can understand it," he said.

"The idea is to bring the taxing process out of the dark."

Meanwhile, the group is choosing from three possible petitions to limit appraisal increases in the future and plans to submit one to Rep. Sid Miller, R-Stephenville, to be considered in the upcoming legislative session.

"I think they're on the right track," Miller said in an interview. "People are always upset when their appraisals go up, but I've never seen the proportions that they're increasing in Coryell County."

Miller said he had not been invited to the meeting in Gatesville, but he would be willing to attend if he was asked.

"It's frustrating as a legislator to lower the tax rate by a third and have the appraisal district gobble it all back up," he said. "The Legislature has lowered school taxes, and now we have to deal with appraisal districts."

However, Miller said there will be some relief for taxpayers in the future. As a part of the school funding bill, the Legislature approved a provision that will limit school tax increases to 4 percent starting in 2007.

"In other words, if appraisals go up and generate new revenue, it will create an automatic rollback on your property tax rate," he said. "The most they could ever go up is 4 percent."

Miller said he also supports capping appraisal increases at 5 percent on all properties, requiring at least two members of the appraisal district board of directors to be elected by the public and relaxing requirements placed on districts by the state comptroller's office to prevent tax increases from property appraisals.

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