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Skagit Valley Herald

Editorial

Hamilton property tax assessments questionable

It certainly is an unusual situation when an entire town protests its assessed valuation.

This is the case in Hamilton this week where the town did just that. And perhaps the protest has some merit.

If you owned a lot and laws forbid you from building on that lot, then certainly the value of your piece of property has to be affected.

If you own a home which is damaged, and you are not allowed to rebuild, nor add new buildings to your property, certainly the value of your property has to be affected.

Following due course of the law, the county assessor's office has revaluated property in this small upriver town, and the assessments have soared from 50 to 75% higher. The higher assessments have taken place despite the fact that the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers has determined that most of the town of Hamilton is a "floodway". This ruling severely restricts building because if the Skagit River floods, it floods with a current present. A "floodway" must be kept open so that it doesn't unduly increase the depth of water on adjacent property.

Floodways in Hamilton include most of the town. And as one property owner stated, a lot which can't be built on, was reassessed from \$500 to \$2,000. With building restrictions like this, it seems

questionable that this is a fair assessment to the property owner.

Considering the "floodway" ruling, it is not surprising that the entire town has protest the higher assessments.

Laws allow each property owner to appear these assessments to the Board of Evaluation. In the case of Hamilton, we would hope that this board will consider lowering the new assessed valuations of each property owner who appeals, considering the fact that the "floodway" ruling is indeed a reality that can affect property prices.