

(916) 445-5047

November 9, 1979

Mr. Loyal E. Kier
Deputy County Counsel
County of Riverside
3535 Tenth Street, Suite 300
Riverside, CA 92501

Dear Mr. Kier:

You asked if the owner of the Cable TV property, classified as a trade fixtures, has the right to have the assessment of his property placed upon the secured role and be secured thereon by a possessory interest in real property.

We understand that some of the company's properties is a possessory interesting (PI) in land, some is a PI in improvements to land, some is improvements to real property as trade fixtures, that all of the assesses trade fixtures and personal property was assessed on the unsecured role, and all the assesses possessory interests were assessed on secured roll.

The assessee's opportunity to be assessed for PI's upon secured role established by Assembly Bill 2463 (Stats 1978, Ch. 576) for the tax year 1978-79 and by Senate Bill 239 (Stats. 1979, Ch. 4) for all subsequent years. These two bills amend Sections 107 of the Revenue and Taxation Code to permit the county Board of Supervisors to declare that a PI may be sufficient security for taxes owed. I will presume your Board of Supervisors has made such an election.

The operative word of Section 107(b) empowering the board a supervisor to declare a PI to be sufficient security for taxes owed are:

“ All possessory interest may, in the discretion of the county board of supervisors, be considered as sufficient security for the payment of any taxes levied they're on and may be placed on the secured role.”

We interpret this section to have embodied power in the board of supervisors to place any one or all PI's on the secured role. The PI May be in land or improvements to land, including trade fixtures. The statute does not provide any discretionary choice by the assessor as to which role a PI is to be assessed. Our interpretation is supported by the actions of Los Angeles County were all PI's are placed upon the secured role. The assessor is acting in furtherance, including trade fixtures. The statue does not provide any discretionary choice by the assessor as to which role a PI is to be assessed. Our interpretation is supported by the actions of Los Angeles County were all PI's are placed upon the secured role. The assessor is acting in furtherance of resolution by the county board of supervisor that declares a PI shall be its own security for taxes owed. (Copies of the resolution and county board letters to the County assessors are enclosed.)

We do not find a local assessment appeals board to have the power to place a PI on the secured role, even if that body is the board of supervisors sitting in the capacity of an appeals board. The statute specifically limits the power to place a PI on a secured roll to the board of supervisors sitting as a board of supervisors.

Personal property may, at the discretion of the county assessor, be secured to a PI that is assessed on the secured role. We reach the conclusion by noting that a PI is real property (see Rev. and Tax Code 104 and 107) and that personal property may be secured to real property if the assessor issues a certificate of security (See Rev. Tax Code 2189.3)

Trade fixtures owned by the assessee may be placed upon the secured roll and unsecured roll, at the discretion of the assessor. (see Rev. Tax Code 109, which defines the secured and unsecured rolls and the assessor's discretionary power of selection, and 2188.1, which permits assessment of improvements on the secured roll to other than the landowner.) Poles and lines owned by assesses or on lines of another would be examples of such trade fixtures. Fixtures publicly owned in which the assessee has a right to use may be treated as a possessory right owned by the assessee and assessed the same as any other PI. If the board of supervisors so elects, the assessment of a PI and fixtures must be placed upon the secured roll, otherwise it must be placed upon the unsecured roll.

Generally, the assessor has a sole discretion as to the election of the roll upon which an assessment is placed. (See San Mateo County v. Maloney (1886) 71 Cal. 205, in which it was held that the assessor's judgment was not reviewable once he collected and paid over the taxes to the county treasurer.) Several other Revenue and Taxation Code Sections afford the assessor discretionary power to classify property as to the roll upon which it is please (See Rev and Taxation Code SS 134, 4840, and 2189.3.)

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Section 1613 of Revenue Taxation Code subjects the assessor to review and to the authority of the local assessment appeals board. But I interpret the appeals board's authority to be limited to the power to correct assessor's clerical errors and errors in judgment as to value. the section leaves the assessors an unreviewable power to exercise judgment and discretion as to the role upon which property is assessed.

I conclude that after the roll is complete and transmit it to the county auditor, there is no provisions of law that permits trade fixtures or personal property assessments placed by the assessor upon unsecured roll to be moved to the secured role.

Very Truly Yours,

Robert E. Keeling
Tax Counsel

RRK:fr
Enclosures

cc: Mr. Frank C. Steely
Riverside County Assessor

bc: Mr. Verne Walton
Legal Section



MINUTES OF THE BOARD OF SUPERVISORS
County of Los Angeles, State of California

James S. Mize, Executive Officer
Clerk of the Board of Supervisors
383 Hall of Administration
Los Angeles, California, 90012

Assessor

At a meeting held March 20, 1973, the Board took the following action:

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On motion of Supervisor Hayes, second by Supervisor Hahn, unanimously carried, the Board made a finding that possessory interest insufficient security for payment of property taxes levies on these assessments.

In further action, it was ordered that the assessments, commencing in the 1973 – 74 fiscal year, be placed on the secured property tax roll, allowing the payment on a twice-yearly basis, rather than once a year as is now required.

Copies distributed:

Each supervisor
Chief administrative officer
County council
Treasure tax collector

In 1972, the Board sponsored legislation to allow unsecured possessory interest property taxes to be collected in two installments. The governor has signed a bill which gives the Board discretion to make the necessary finding to implement the program.

I THEREFORE MOVE:

1. That the Board find possessory interest are sufficient security for the payment of property taxes levies on these assessments.
2. That these assessments commencing in 1973-74 fiscal year be placed on the secured property tax roll, allowing them to pay their taxes twice a year rather than once a year as now required.

MOTION

Hahn _____
Debs _____
Hayes _____
Ward _____
Schabarum _____