

Headline: LA County Supes Postpone Assessor Resolution Action
Date: 5/30/2012 12:00:00 AM
Media Contact:
Media Outlet: Diamond Bar Patch
Attachment Link: <http://diamondbar.patch.com/articles/la-county-supes-postpone-assessor-resolution-action>

Supervisor Mike Antonovich has proposed a ballot initiative to gauge voter support for making the assessor post an appointment instead of an elected position.

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The Board of Supervisors confirmed today that it has the authority to appoint a new assessor if John Noguez resigns, is recalled or convicted of malfeasance, but it put off any action on a proposed ballot initiative that would gauge voter interest in making the job an appointed position, rather than an elected one.

District Attorney Steve Cooley and other officials have called on Noguez to resign in the face of allegations that his office reduced the assessed value of properties in exchange for campaign contributions.

Because Noguez is an elected official, the board has no authority to fire him. He has denied wrongdoing and shown no indication that he would resign.

An indictment without a conviction would not constitute a vacancy, but if Noguez were to stop fulfilling the duties of his office for three months, the board would have the right to appoint a replacement. The appointee would serve until a new assessor could be elected.

But Supervisor Mike Antonovich said he would like to know what voters want. He suggested that county lawyers prepare a resolution for the November ballot, asking voters if they wanted to amend the state constitution and county charter to make the assessor's office an appointed post.

When the question was last put to voters in 1986, about 85 percent rejected it.

The board postponed discussion of Antonovich's recommendation for two weeks.

So far, just one arrest has been made. Scott Schenter, 49, an appraiser who worked in the Assessor's Office from 1988 to 2011, was arrested May 21 and charged with 60 felony counts of falsifying accounts and records.

He allegedly slashed property values by about \$172 million to lower tax bills for owners of multimillion-dollar homes, condominiums and businesses in Beverly Hills, Brentwood and Pacific Palisades, in exchange for political contributions for Noguez.

If convicted, Schenter could face up to 33 years in prison.