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SCAM Alert for Contra Costa County Taxpayers

By Vera Kochan

Scammers are using every form of media in order to bilk an unsuspecting public out of their hard-earned cash. Whether it's by text, a phone call, an email or a letter delivered inadvertently via the United States Postal Service, consumers must be ever vigilant when receiving "it's too good to be true" news, because more often than not, it is.

The latest scam to make the news targets taxpayers, more specifically, property owners. The Contra Costa County Assessor, Gus S. Kramer, issued a July 28 press release, warning taxpayers of the latest consumer scam alert after several residents reported receiving documents in the mail with regards to having their property's taxes reassessed.

The press release stated, "These mailers have the appearance of an official government document. However, the correspondence is not from the Contra Costa County Assessor. Nor does it come from any other Contra Costa County Office."

Kramer's office went on to state that "current scam mailers are requiring both a \$40 county filing fee with the Clerk of the Assessment Appeals Board for a formal appeal, and a contingent fee of 30% of any tax savings as a result of filing the application. Property owners should know that the Contra Costa County Assessor's Office does not charge a fee to complete an informal value review."

Any property owners who believe that the current market value of their property is less than the assessed value can file a "Request for Value Review" form with the county assessor's office for free. Visit: <http://www.cccounty.us/assessor> and select "Review Your Value" for a downloadable application.

California Attorney General Rob Bonta has also posted additional warnings on his office's State Department of California -- Department of Justice website: https://oag.ca.gov/consumers/general/prop_tax_scam.

"Companies using official-sounding names like "Tax Review," "Tax Adjusters" and "Tax Reassessment" seek to scam homeowners who are worried about their property taxes and declining property values. They send misleading mailers that look like official government agency documents to trick you into sending them money to try to lower your property taxes. They also use addresses like "Regional Processing Center" to make you think the mail is coming from a government agency. Sometimes, they threaten to impose a late fee if you don't send them money by a certain date."

If anyone believes that they have been a victim of this scam, file a complaint with the Attorney General's Public Inquiry Unit, or write to: Attorney General's Public Inquiry Unit, P.O. Box 944255, Sacramento, CA 94244.

Reach the reporter at: vera@lamorindaweekly.com

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