From:	John Engen
To:	Susan Reneau
Cc:	Grp. City Council and City Web Site; Ginny Merriam; tylergernant@missoulacounty.us; Jessica Miller
Subject:	Re: Give all property taxpayers a break if the courthouse is closed to taxpayers.
Date:	Thursday, October 29, 2020 4:27:35 PM

Good afternoon, Ms. Reneau, and thanks for your note.

I've copied Tyler Gernant, Missoula County's Clerk and Recorder, who I know will appreciate hearing your concerns with regard to processing tax payments and can address them directly.

With regard to your general remarks concerning property taxes, thank you. We continue to do our best to balance increasing expectations of service, community priorities as expressed by residents and voters, increasing expenses and sensitivity to rising costs of home ownership as a function of property taxes.

John

--
John Engen
Mayor
City of Missoula
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Missoula, Montana 59801
jengen@ci.missoula.mt.us
Office: 406-552-6001

> On Oct 28, 2020, at 10:25 AM, Susan Reneau <bluemountain@montana.com> wrote:
>
> Dear City Council and Mayor Engen,
>
> I started trying to pay my half-year property taxes, which this time totals $2,381.37 for the last six months. It is due Nov. 30. First I tried to pay online. The computer option gives you messages that you can't get through to process your tax payment. I logged onto the Missoula County government website.
>
> Then I tried to call the property tax office. I learned that the phone lines can only handle 15 calls at a time before it cuts you off and disconnects your call. The voice mail system is an additional frustration to even get to the property tax office to then get disconnected. I finally reached a lovely lady in the department after calling the court system who transferred me to the property tax office to avoid the phone system that cuts me off. She explained the phone system and payment options to me so that's

how I know what's happening.

Since property taxpayers can't make an appointment to pay taxes in person and the electronic and phone systems are not working properly for the volume of people trying to pay their taxes, you as our government officials need to fix this.

Walmart and Costco are open for thousands of shoppers to mill about, but property tax payers can't walk into the government offices they pay for to pay their taxes so your government services can function. That's ironic, don't you think?

I recommend that appointments be allowed to pay their property taxes in person if they can't get onto the computer server to do this or get through on the phone. I also recommend that you do not charge 3% service fee (a penalty) if a property taxpayer wants to pay by VISA or MasterCard if their tax bill is more than $3,000.

By charging property taxpayers more money to use a credit card when the government offices are shut down, you further stress out and anger the very people that fund your government programs and services. Any property owner that has to pay $3,000 or more in taxes to Missoula County government should NOT be charged an additional 3% service fee if they use a credit card.

This doesn't impact me but it impacts many of my friends and even people I don't know. Elderly and or other people that don't have computers or know how to pay online are not able to pay by computer and need to pay by phone, but if the phones don't work, they become very stressed and angry. I know life isn't fair, but this isn't fair to them.

Next year, I am sure, I will have a tax bill much higher than my current six-month bill, so I'll be in this same boat. NOTHING is free in this world City Council, and the add-on programs and services you approve that are not the basics like roads and law and order are paid for by property owners that pay the taxes that keep going up.

You as elected officials responsible for managing the Missoula City budget and working with the Missoula County officials, efforts must continue to reduce the tax bill to ALL property owners if you truly believe in affordable housing.

Sincerely,

Susan Campbell Reneau
4 Martha's Court

Missoula, MT 59803

719-661-4037