CITY OF NISSWA
AND CROW WING COUNTY
BOARD OF APPEALS
FRIDAY, APRIL 17, 2026 – 1:00 P.M.
NISSWA CITY HALL

Members present: Jennifer Carnahan, Bruce London, Joe Hall, Mark Froehle
Crow Wing County officials present: Gary Griffin Land Services Director and County Assessor, Jason Budnick and Trevor Courneya County Staff
Members absent: Jesse Zahn
Other Members Present: Interim City Administrator Maggi Wentler

1. Call to Order

Mayor Carnahan called the City of Nisswa Local Board of Appeal and Equalization meeting to order at 1:00 PM on Friday, April 17, 2026. The Mayor explained that the local board of appeal and equalization provides a fair and objective forum for property owners to appeal their valuation or classification, emphasizing that this meeting was specifically to discuss 2026 assessment values and classifications only, with no consideration of property tax or previous years' valuations.

The Mayor outlined the five options available to the board: no change, lower the value (noting the city value cannot be reduced by more than 1% of the city's total valuation of $1,540,818,700, with 1% equaling $15,408,187), raise the value, change the classification, or have the assessor inspect the property and report to the local board within 20 days. The Mayor noted that appellants with appointments would be heard first, followed by first-come, first-served basis from the sign-in sheet.

Gary Griffin, Crow Wing County Land Services Director and County Assessor, introduced himself and his staff, Jason Budnick and Trevor Courneya, explaining they were present to provide information to the city council who would make the decisions. Griffin reported that the city had 40 improved residential or seasonal sales this year, resulting in a median sale ratio of 97.85%, which falls within the state-mandated range of 90-105%.

2. Individual Property Appeals

Joe with PELLFABFIVE HOLDINGS LLC - Fairway Pines Property Appeal

Joe presented an appeal for his property in the Fairway Pines development within Grand View. He explained that these small lots without garages were initially purchased for under $500,000 in 2021 but had experienced significant valuation increases. His current 2026 assessment was approximately $1.2 million, which he argued was unrealistic given market conditions.

Joe noted that this niche development had not seen a sale in the last two years, with the previous sale in 2023 being under $900,000 (ranging from $829,000 to $879,000). He had consulted with

two realtors who indicated they would market his property at $925,000-$930,000 and expect around $900,000 in an actual sale. He referenced a pending sale on Grand View's golf course at $949,000 for a larger lot with a garage, emphasizing the quality difference between developments.

Gary Griffin confirmed that the property value actually decreased from $1,102,400 in 2025 to $1,088,900 in 2026, making it one of the few properties in Nisswa that received a reduction. Griffin acknowledged the challenge of valuing this niche development without recent sales, explaining they had relied more heavily on sales from the newer, higher-quality Grand View development to the north, though he agreed the gap between the developments might need to be wider.

Joe clarified that his major jump had occurred from 2024 to 2025, which he attributed to the new Grand View development behind his property featuring very different quality homes with Andersen and Marvin windows versus his builder-grade vinyl windows, larger lots, garages, and different rental pool restrictions.

Council Member Hall supported no change, noting familiarity with both developments and acknowledging the quality differences but stating the big jump had occurred in previous years. Council Members Froehle and London concurred with no change.

Motion: Council Member Froehle moved to have no change on parcel number 281505331. Council Member Hall seconded. Motion passed with Mayor voting no but acknowledging being in the minority.

Dayna and Richard Gustafson - Channel Property Appeal

Dayna and Richard Gustafson appealed their property valuation at 4530 Birchridge Drive on a channel off Nisswa Lake. They had owned the property since 2022, purchasing it for approximately $200,000, but the valuation had increased from $421,000 in 2021 to the current proposed $772,400 in 2026.

Dayna explained their navigation challenges, describing how they must go under a bridge to access the lake, with the channel becoming increasingly shallow and muddy. She noted that only four houses are affected by these conditions, and they recently had to repair their pontoon motor due to the shallow, murky conditions. She emphasized they don't consider their property true "lakeshore" since grandchildren can't jump off the dock and guests struggle to access the water.

Gary Griffin explained that Nisswa Lake increased $1,500 per foot this year, with main lake properties at $7,500 per foot while channel properties receive a significant discount at $3,000 per foot - over 50% reduction recognizing the less desirable location. He provided a comparable sale in a similar channel between Roy and Nisswa lakes that sold for $725,000.

Council Member Hall, acknowledging his familiarity with the area as deputy fire chief, confirmed the channel is navigable though tight, noting that decreased boat traffic from residents

who have moved away has contributed to increased vegetation. He observed that a family with younger children who frequently used boats and jet skis had moved away, creating noticeable changes in channel maintenance.

The Mayor noted the property taxes had actually decreased from $5,738 in 2022 to $5,412 in 2026 despite the valuation increases. Gary Griffin confirmed this, explaining that while values increased, the actual tax burden had decreased by over $300 from four years ago.

Council Members Hall and London supported no change, with the Mayor acknowledging the decreased tax burden despite increased valuation.

Motion: Council Member Hall moved to leave the property value as is for parcel ID 281106995. Council Member London seconded. Motion passed.

Mark Reardon - East Cullen Road Property Appeal

Mark Reardon appealed his property at parcel 28010501 on 26310 East Cullen Road, expressing concern about exponential tax increases. He reported a 16% increase in 2023-2024, a 52% increase in 2024-2025 (from $953 to $1,453), a 117% increase in 2025-2026 due to adding a three-car garage with living space above, and now a proposed 17% increase for 2026.

Gary Griffin explained that this 10-acre wooded property had experienced increases for different reasons. The major jump in 2025 was due to the new construction being added to the assessment, while the current year's increase reflected both land value increases countywide and the property catching up to full assessed value of the new construction. The property went from $444,900 to $513,800.

Griffin acknowledged the increases seemed significant but noted that for a new home with additional cabins on 10 acres of wooded property in Nisswa, the current valuation of $513,800 was reasonable, suggesting comparable properties of 3-4 acres with similar homes would sell for $400,000-$500,000.

When Reardon expressed frustration about the assessment process seeming to miss important factors and creating incentives to split property, Griffin recommended he investigate the property tax refund program, explaining both income-based qualifications and special refunds available when taxes increase by $100 and 12% due to factors like new construction.

Council Members Froehle and London supported no change, with the Mayor acknowledging the council's efforts to deliver a negative property tax levy for 2026 while noting other factors (county and school board) also impact total property taxes.

Motion: Council Member Froehle moved for no change on parcel 28010501. Council Member London seconded. Motion passed.

Bernie and Linda Roberts - Water Retention Property Appeal

Bernie Roberts appealed the valuation of parcel 28360584, a property he purchased from the county approximately one year ago for $3,000. The county had acquired the property for water retention related to the new road around Round Lake. The valuation had increased from the exempt status to $12,300, and he questioned whether this was due to classification change from exempt to residential homestead or a value increase.

Roberts explained the property has significant easement restrictions requiring everything to remain the same for water retention purposes, making it essentially non-buildable. He noted he purchased it to address neighbor complaints about public access to Bass Lake through the county-owned land.

Gary Griffin acknowledged that when the county engineer and attorney wrote the easement, they estimated the property was worth perhaps slightly more than $3,000 but not significantly more, given that the stormwater easement covers almost the entire property. He explained that when acres were input into the system after it was no longer exempt, the system generated the $12,000 value, which he didn't believe was accurate.

Griffin recommended bringing the value back down to the purchase price or slightly higher, with the county handling future assessments.

Motion: Council Member Hall moved to lower the value to the purchase price of $3,000 for parcel 283605584. Council Member Froehle seconded. Motion passed.

Nancy Loper - County Road 13 Property Appeal

Nancy Thomas Loper appealed parcel 28240592 at 6405 County Road 13, describing it as a non-buildable dirt road property that extends from County Road 13 to the old ice road or logging road. The property accommodates only one car, requiring vehicles to back up if meeting oncoming traffic.

Loper questioned how land value could increase substantially for this unusable property, noting taxes increased from $263 in 2025 to a proposed $396 in 2026, despite no changes to the property since her parents purchased it in 1988. She emphasized the property cannot be developed or used for anything other than access.

Gary Griffin clarified that the property actually decreased in value from $32,200 to $26,300 for 2026 taxes, helping reduce taxes to $180 (down from $236 the previous year), but then increased to $396 with citywide land value increases. He challenged the "non-buildable" assertion, noting that at 75 feet wide with 10-foot side yard setbacks, a structure could potentially be built, though it might require moving the driveway.

Council Member Hall noted that while theoretically buildable, construction would eliminate access to their lake property. Griffin acknowledged this would be challenging but explained that

many similar back-lot properties throughout the city are valued for their potential additional building capacity, which many property owners find desirable for storage or garage space.

Julie Krause (neighbor) confirmed the property serves as their driveway access, making any development impractical since it would eliminate their ability to reach their lake home.

Motion: Council Member Hall moved to leave the property value as is. Council Member London seconded. Motion passed.

3. Public Comment

Julie Krause from Round Lake attended primarily for trend analysis, asking about current lake valuations. Gary Griffin provided current assessments per foot: Gull Lake at $12,000 (up $1,000), Round Lake at $7,200 (down $100), Roy Lake at $8,200, Nisswa Lake at $7,500, Lower Cullen at $4,400, Hubert at $6,600, Thor at $4,700, and North Long at $4,200.

Griffin discussed market trends, noting that Gull Lake increased $1,000 per foot while the Whitefish chain decreased $1,000 per foot, creating a gap between the two premier lake systems. He indicated early data suggests Gull Lake may see another significant increase for 2027, with Whitefish potentially rebounding as well.

Griffin explained the relationship between property values and taxes, emphasizing that increased valuations don't automatically mean increased taxes if government spending remains constant. He noted that Crow Wing County ranks 84th out of 87 counties for lowest per capita county taxes, with Nisswa also being among the lowest in the county for municipal taxes.

4. Written Appeals

Good Old Days Resort - Tom Stephens

Gary Griffin presented a written appeal from Good Old Days Resort represented by Tom Stephens for multiple parcels. The county recommended no change, explaining that Tom Stephens would meet with Trevor for interior inspections of townhomes, and any necessary adjustments would be processed through the county board.

Motion: Council Member Hall moved for no change on parcels 28020514, 28020514, 28020515, 28020516, 28020517, 28020518, 28020519, 28020520, 28020521, 28020522, 28020523, 28020524, 28020671, 28020672, 28020673, 28020674, 28020675, 28020676, 28020677, and 28020678. Council Member Froehle seconded. Motion passed.

Mike Tiffany - Roy Lake Property

Gary Griffin presented a written appeal from Mike Tiffany for parcel 28100642 on Roy Lake, purchased in October 2024 for $925,000 and currently valued at $1,044,000. Griffin explained the increase reflected market appreciation on Roy Lake ($200 per foot increase) and countywide building value increases over the year and a half since purchase.

The appeal included a comparative market analysis from a realtor, though Griffin noted concerns about the analysis including properties from less valuable lakes like Little Pelican and Little Hubert, which artificially lowered the average values used in the comparison.

Council Member Hall noted improvements made to the property after purchase, which would justify increased valuation beyond market appreciation.

Motion: Council Member Froehle moved for no change on parcel 28100642. Council Member London seconded. Motion passed.

5. Adjournment

Motion: Council Member Hall moved to adjourn. Second by Council Member London. Motion passed unanimously.

The meeting was adjourned with Gary Griffin noting that all appellants would receive letters stating the board's actions and information about appealing to the county Board of Appeal and Equalization if desired.

Respectfully submitted,

Jennifer Carnahan, Mayor

Maggi Wentler, Interim City Administrator