

## Nassau lawmakers delay new higher real estate fees

By Celeste Hadrick, [celeste.hadrick@newsday.com](mailto:celeste.hadrick@newsday.com)

Faced with complaints from title companies and local real estate agents, Nassau lawmakers declared an emergency Monday to delay until January the implementation of higher real estate fees that add hundreds of dollars to buying and selling property in the county.

Robert Treuber, executive director of the New York State Land Title Association, told the county legislature at its last meeting of the year that its abrupt decision last month to more than double the fees, effective Dec. 7 with little notice, had been “devastating” to home buyers throughout Nassau.

“Transactions have been delayed, postponed, canceled or otherwise impacted as homeowners struggled to produce another \$600 or \$900 on short notice,” he said. “This disproportionately affects the lower-income and elderly.”

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*- Robert Treuber*

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He said the title industry was given 48 hours to notify homebuyers, lenders and real estate agents of the increases, despite federal and state rules that require three-day notice of fee changes before closings. Treuber said title companies have absorbed thousands of dollars in costs because of the sudden hikes. He asked for the increases to be refunded and the higher fees to become effective Jan. 4.

To avoid raising property taxes by 1.2 percent next year, lawmakers hiked the county tax map verification fee, which wasn't collected until this past April, to \$225 from \$75, and the county clerk block recording fee, only \$10 in 2009, to \$300 from \$150.

Critics say the increases likely make Nassau's closing costs the highest in the state because each fee can be imposed multiple times in a single transaction. County Clerk Maureen O'Connell had opposed the fee hikes as “unconscionable”, pointing out the costs of selling a house with a mortgage and buying a new one with a mortgage have increased 5,250 percent over five years.

Randy Kaplan, representing the Long Island Board of Realtors, called for the fee hikes to be rolled back altogether, saying the increases made homeownership on Long Island even less attainable. “The young and elderly are already fleeing,” he said.

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