

MONTROSE DAILY PRESS

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Going up: Property valuations soar

- **2019 reappraisal complete**
- **Hotel, rental unit-sales among those spur-
ring increase**
- **Assessor: Biggest rise in 10 years**

By KATHARHYN HEIDELBERG

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It's not the biggest jump Montrose County property valuations have seen — but it's quite a climb.

The market data used to set property valuations show strong sales in commercial and residential properties, and vacant land, leading to valuation increases between 10 and 30 percent, depending on property type.

"It's definitely one of the larger increases we've had," Montrose County Assessor Brad Hughes said Tuesday.

Hughes' office began mailing out notice of revaluations today.

By law, assessors conduct revaluation of properties every two years, based on appraisal dates and market data collection periods set by the Legislature. Assessed values — the market value multiplied by the assessment rate — are used with applicable mill levies to determine property tax. The assessor's role is to establish valuations.

The current revaluations are based on the June 30, 2018 level of value and were set by using market sales data from Jan. 1, 2017 - June 30, 2018.

These valuations will be used for tax years 2019 and 2020. Taxes for those years are payable in 2020 and 2021.

Vacant land valuations increased 20 percent overall,

with vacant lands within city limits rising by about 25 percent. Residential improved properties, including multi-family housing and rentals, saw valuations rise by 15 to 30 percent, while commercial and industrial properties fluctuated between a 10-percent rise on the low end and a 25-percent increase on the high end.

"It depends on the class of property," Hughes said. "We did have some sales at this time. I know hotel/motel (sales) increased substantially."

Within the revaluation period, four hotels sold, indicating a strong market for these types of properties.

"We set our valuations based on sales activity; therefore, these lodging properties did increase based on those sales," Hughes said.

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Mike Johnston speaks in the living room of Montrose County Democratic Party chair Kevin Kuns Monday evening. About 50 people packed into the room. (Justin Tubbs/ Montrose Daily Press)

Senate candidate wants to focus on issues, not Trump and Gardner

- **Johnston wants zero emissions by 2040**
- **Also public option for healthcare**
- **Wants to focus on how to build country**

By JUSTIN TUBBS

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Mike Johnston wants to be the next Colorado U.S. senator.

The 44-year-old former state legislator ran in the 2018 Democratic gubernatorial primary against eventual governor Jared Polis. He is one of many in a crowded race to try to unseat Republican Cory Gardner, who has been U.S. senator since 2015.

And though the election is more than a year away, more than 50 people showed up to a get-together at Montrose Democratic Party

chair Kevin Kuns' home Monday evening to meet Johnston and hear about his policies.

At first glance, it might be difficult to see what sets him apart from other candidates. Like many Democrats, he is for an easier pathway to citizenship for immigrants, tough on carbon emissions and wants to see schools

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What it takes for a successful chamber

By JUSTIN TUBBS

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It's been more than a week since the Montrose Chamber of Commerce announced it would close its doors for good, effective May 24, and to some, it's still a shock. A Montrose without a chamber of commerce is something business owners haven't seen in 130 years.

Montrose Chamber Executive Director Juliet Carr cited a decline in membership as a reason for the closing as well as a decline in success for chambers of commerce in general.

At least one business owner thinks it's just a sign of changing times.

"The value just wasn't there," said Scott Stryker, owner of Stryker & Company, a construction contracting business in Montrose. "Twenty years ago, it was there. But technology has changed things. It's just a sign of the times, and everybody just has to adjust to the new normal. It will be tough to replace, but I think something else will be there to replace it."

Grand Junction Area Chamber President and CEO Diane Schwenke doesn't think there's anything to suggest chambers of commerce are losing relevance.

"In our view, there's no truth to that," she said. "Our chamber has been around since 1884. Generations have come and gone, and we're still here."

She believes if a chamber of commerce is promoting economic growth and is able to show how it's promoting that growth, it will remain relevant.

From a practical standpoint, chambers of commerce go to battle with government entities for businesses. They fight laws and rules that may not benefit commerce, and they advocate on behalf of businesses with government — local, state and sometimes federal, Schwenke said.

"One (example) is our city is looking at imposing increased impact fees," she said. "We look at what that means for businesses."

She said the chamber will

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JOHNSTON

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funded better. At the same time, his idea about public university education strays from the policies like presidential candidate Elizabeth Warren's, who proposed making college free to everyone.

His ideas are what he hopes gets him elected. Johnston said he knows he is going to need more than simply being the blue candidate for Colorado.

"It's easy to just say, 'Here are why Trump and Gardner are terrible,'" Johnston said to those at the meet-and-greet. "By the way, it's hard because they give you a lot of ammunition — they do lots of stupid things over and over again, which are hard to ignore. But I do think what people fundamentally want is, 'What are we actually going to build? What is going to be possible for us to do again in this country if we're in control?' I think (saying), 'We're not Trump,' is not enough."

Zero emissions

Johnston said he would like to see the economy be an entirely carbon-free economy. He said he's been a proponent of the "Green New Deal" but would propose his own version of it.

"My belief is you can do that — I think technology supports that — by the year 2040," he said.

Johnston said he would propose mandating that every energy source the country uses would have to produce zero carbon

emissions, meaning more renewable energy sources. And if oil and gas companies wanted to continue to drill, they would have to find ways to get to zero emissions.

Serve to learn

Johnston calls his policy on higher education "The American Promise."

"What I believe is you should get up to two years of debt-free college in exchange for service to your country," he said. "The idea is that it is a civilian form of national service."

He said one wouldn't be required to join the military but could work doing things like building trails, or working on flood mitigation or intervening in the event of a national disaster. He said it would be a civilian form of the Reserves.

"It also means it puts you back shoulder-to-shoulder with people you might not agree with on all issues, actually serving your country," Johnston said. "One of the things the military has done well is created a real sense of camaraderie.

There are no partisans in foxholes."

Path to citizenship

Johnston believes in creating a path to citizenship, regulating visas to allow migrant workers to cross the border and enforcing legal immigration at the point of employment.

"(After granting) that path, we are going to make sure everyone who came over to work have done the right steps," he said. "If you give people the chance to go through the right steps, I believe they will. Right now, they have no path to go through those steps, then they're held accountable for not going through them."

Public option for healthcare

Johnston supports a public option for healthcare that would make it affordable and equitable. Rather than a "Medicare for All," it would be a "Medicare for all who want it."

Justin Tubbs is the managing editor at the Montrose Daily Press.



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