

Mount Rose-area property raises access issues

By Jason Hildago, Reno Gazette-Journal

A case involving a seemingly obscure easement law is raising questions about the interpretation of public access rights through other people's property, including whether Washoe County has a bias that favors developers.

At the center of the dispute is a parcel map drawn by the Washoe County surveyor's office in 2007.

The parcel map became the basis of a suit filed by Incline Village resident Scott Spittler in 2008 against neighbors John Routsis, Christine Haberstroh – formerly Christine Routsis – and Lawrence Purdon.

Spittler filed the complaint to obtain access from his neighbors' properties to a 58-plus-acre parcel he bought near Fawn Lane, just off Mount Rose Highway. According to the parcel map from Washoe County, Spittler was allowed to use public easements through his neighbors' properties to access his parcel.

But a Washoe District Court judge ruled against Spittler in 2010 – while also delivering a stinging rebuke against the county surveyor who drew up the map.

Now Spittler is being forced to sell his land plus his Incline Village home via a court-mandated sheriff's sale to pay the \$148,366.40 judgment against him.

The case is under appeal at the Nevada Supreme Court. Spittler, who was reached by phone while packing at his Incline Village home, declined to be interviewed for this story and referred all comments to his lawyer.

“This sets a very bad precedent,” said Jeffrey Dickerson, Spittler’s lawyer. “If this precedent carries forward, it’s possible that a lot of public easements across the state will be declared void.”

Read the whole story