

Nevada, Washoe County looking to settle property tax dispute

By Sean Whaley, Nevada News Bureau

CARSON CITY – The state Board of Examiners on Tuesday will consider settling a dispute with Washoe County over \$21.5 million in local property tax revenue taken by the 2009 Legislature to balance the state budget.

The proposed settlement would provide an immediate payment of \$1.25 million to the county, with another \$6 million being allocated later for major road maintenance projects.

Washoe County submitted the claim to the Board of Examiners in September 2011, citing a Nevada Supreme Court ruling in May 2011 that said the Nevada Legislature improperly took \$62 million in 2010 from the Clark County Clean Water Coalition fund to balance the state budget. That ruling forced Gov. Brian Sandoval to reconfigure his proposed 2012-13 state budget by extending a set of taxes that had been scheduled to expire on June 30, 2011.

The county argued the court ruling applied to the funds taken by lawmakers in 2009 as well.

Clark County also submitted a claim, seeking \$102.5 million in property taxes also taken by the 2009 Legislature. But the county in June opted to sue rather than continue settlement negotiations with state officials.

Sandoval said in June he was disappointed at the decision of the Clark County Commission to take the matter to court and he questioned whether the amount of the claim was accurate.

“We’ve been trying to work with Clark County, again, for

months," he said in an interview on the Nevada NewsMakers television program. "And I was extremely disappointed that they weren't willing to come to the table to try and resolve this. And those chose to litigate rather than try to work it out."

The Legislature in 2009 required the state's two largest counties, Clark and Washoe, to give up 9 cents per \$100 in assessed valuation collected in property taxes to the state. The actions by lawmakers in 2009 occurred before Sandoval became governor.

The Board of Examiners is composed of Sandoval, Attorney General Catherine Cortez Masto and Secretary of State Ross Miller. The agenda for the meeting indicates that the state and Washoe County want to settle the matter.