
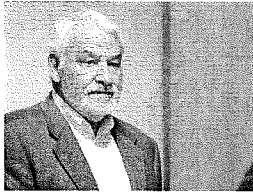


Golisano gets Mendon assessment cut to \$1.89M

 Steve Orr, Staff writer 11:56 p.m. EDT September 16, 2014



(Photo: TINA MACINTYRE-YEE, @tyee23/staff file photo 2014)

As B. Thomas Golisano shouted a protest from the rear of the courtroom, a Rochester judge ruled Tuesday that the assessment on Golisano's Mendon estate should be reduced — but not as much as the billionaire had wanted.

State Supreme Court Justice John Ark, presiding over the Paychex Inc. founder's second legal action to slash the assessment of the 38-acre Mendon property, directed that the valuation be lowered to \$1,892,070. He based his decision on data he culled from dueling appraisals commissioned by the Mendon assessor and Golisano.

Ark's decision represents a 37 percent reduction of the property's current valuation, \$2,989,450. The new value will be applied retroactively to the tax bills for last year and this year, and must remain in place for the next three years.



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[Golisano: 'I'm happy for Terry Pegula'](#)

<http://www.democratandchronicle.com/story/sports/football/nfl/bills/2014/09/15/buffalo-bills-b-thomas-golisano-terry-pegula/15676311/?from=global&sessionKey=&autologin=>

An assessment is used in combination with property tax rates set by elected officials to determine an owner's property tax bill. Before the assessment reduction, Golisano owed about \$106,000 in school, town and Monroe County taxes this year.

Golisano and his lawyer had sought a new assessment of \$1.55 million, the value placed on the property by the appraiser they hired. The town's appraiser had valued the property at \$2.2 million, town attorney Sheldon Boyce said.

Golisano might be able to take some satisfaction from the fact that Ark's decision at least caused the Mendon manse to fall from first to sixth on the list of most valuable single-family homes in Monroe County. The others are in Webster, Brighton and Pittsford, with the highest assessment now being \$2,475,000, according to county data.

Ark walked lawyers and spectators through his calculations, explaining how he came up with his base valuation and the adjustments he then made to it — a \$12,500 reduction because Golisano's garage had "only" five bays, one fewer than the comparable houses Ark examined.

The judge said he added \$80,000 to the assessment for a barn, but chose not to tack on value for the pond, the partially heated driveway, the covering on a bridge over Irondequoit Creek and the 5,200-square-foot finished basement.

The judge also explained that he had planned to add \$250,000 to account for the large amount of land Golisano owned, but changed his mind after seeing the photos and hearing testimony about flooding problems from David Still, Golisano's family office manager.

But that savings didn't assuage Golisano, who watched proceedings from the front row of the spectator's gallery in the small Hall of Justice courtroom. As was the case Monday, when the hearing commenced, Golisano's fiancée, Monica Seles, sat in the back row by herself, fiddling discreetly with a smartphone.

As Ark explained his reasoning, Golisano loudly interjected that the judge shouldn't have compared his property to two similar mansions because those homeowners don't have to cope with the flooding problems that Golisano does.

"Are they both in the flood plain? Who's going to make an offer on 470 Main (his address) after they see those pictures?" Golisano yelled, referring to photographs shot this May, when parts of his property were submerged by floodwaters from the creek, which bisects it.

After Golisano's outburst, Ark smiled slightly and directed Golisano's lawyer, Glenn Pezzulo, to prepare an order executing the judge's decision.

Ark told the lawyers they had 30 days to appeal his decision, and then laughingly told Golisano that if he wasn't pleased with the new assessment, the law allowed him to sue again in 2018. Golisano initially sued the Mendon assessor in 2009; Ark got that case too, and lowered Golisano's assessment from \$6 million to just under \$3 million.

"I look forward to trying it a third time," the judge said.

"What percentage will it be next time?" Golisano retorted.

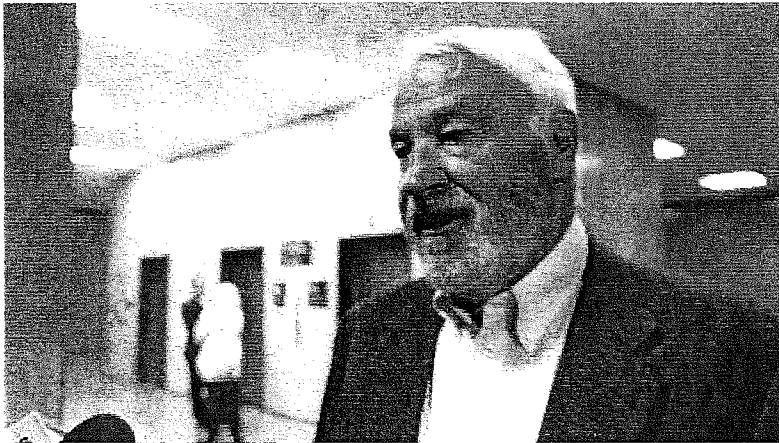
"Mr. Golisano, it's a pleasure seeing you again," Ark responded.

After the proceeding was adjourned, Pezzuolo pulled Golisano up to the judge's bench, where the jurist and the billionaire shook hands.

Then the pair laughed and, in a voice too muted to be heard clearly at the rear of the courtroom, Golisano seemed to argue some more.

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B. Thomas Golisano was in Rochester Monday to fight the \$3 million tax assessment on his home in Mendon.
Video by Tina Yee