

CIRCUIT COURT

# Properties face foreclosure

## Tax foreclosure process advances for 388 properties

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ADRIAN — Hundreds of properties facing tax foreclosure came up for review Monday in Lenawee County Circuit Court. Fewer than 10 owners appeared for the hearing, but no legal challenges were made to foreclosure due to unpaid 2012 property taxes.

Owners who attended the hearing had questions about the process and the steps leading to final foreclosure, said Assistant Lenawee County Prosecutor Douglas Hartung. He and county Treasurer Marilyn Woods met

with the owners outside the courtroom to answer questions.

The number of properties reaching the court hearing stage remains on a downward trend. There were 388 properties listed for Monday's hearing, 58 less than last year's 446.

The show cause hearing list peaked at 560 properties in 2011, roughly three years after the recession set in.

A foreclosure process leading to an auction sale by the county treasurer starts after taxes have gone unpaid for three years. This year's foreclosure action is for unpaid 2012 property taxes.

Judge Margaret M.S. Noe will be asked to order foreclosure next week on properties still on the list. Owners have until March 31 to pay the taxes or make payment arrangements with the treasurer's office.

Woods said a number of property owners have already gotten help from a program called A Step Forward, which is offered through the Michigan State Housing Development Authority. The Community Action Agency office in Adrian is aiding property owners with the application process.

Assistance is available to property owners who are unemployed or whose income was reduced 20

percent or more, according to information on the MSHDA website.

Woods said she expects fewer properties to reach the county's foreclosure auction in August.

"I'm always hoping it will be down, but you never know," Woods said. "Cross your fingers."

There were 36 properties offered at the auction in August 2014, including 14 residential properties in the city of Adrian that were sold as a single unit to the Lenawee County Land Bank.

There were 87 properties on the auction block in 2013 and 94 in 2012.