

Assessors FAQ's

Q: When are properties revalued?

A: Assessors annually review sales data and if warranted make corresponding value adjustments to the assessed values. This process is referred to as an “interim year adjustment”. However, every fifth year Assessors are required to have their values recertified by the Department of Revenue’s Bureau of Local Assessment. This recertification process involves a more rigorous, in-depth analysis of sales data to ensure values reflect current market conditions. A goal of the Assessors is to value all real and personal property at its “full fair cash value”.

Q: How are properties assessed?

A: Properties are valued based on what comparable properties are selling for in the community. The valuation methodology used is known as the “Mass Appraisal” approach, a process by which large groups of properties are valued for ad valorem tax purposes, using statistical models of arms-length sales to arrive at a value as of a given point in time.

Q: What is the date of assessment?

A: The date of assessment is January 1 in the year preceding the fiscal year. For example, the date of assessment for FY 2018 which begins on July 1, 2017 is January 1, 2017. All assessed values are as of January 1.

Q: How do I find what my assessed value is?

A: Determining your assessed value can be done in a number of ways. You can visit the Assessor’s web page and click on the link, “Look up Property Valuation” or you can call the Assessor’s office at 413.528.1619 x 2300. You will always find the assessed value of your property printed on your tax bill.

Q: If my assessment increases will my property taxes increase?

A: An increase in property values does not cause higher taxes. Taxes are determined by the money needed to be raised to fund the town’s budget. This is referred to as the Tax Levy. To compute the tax rate we divide the proposed Tax Levy by the town’s Total Taxable Value. That value is multiplied by 1000 to move the decimal so the tax rate can be expressed as a dollar amount. (Tax Levy ÷ Total Taxable Value x 1000 = Tax Rate). Your tax bill and not your assessed value is a direct result of the town’s budget voted at the annual town meeting.

Q: Doesn’t Proposition 2 ½ mean that my taxes cannot increase more than 2 1/2 % per year?

A: The short answer is, No. Proposition 2 ½ sets a limit on the entire tax levy of a municipality. It establishes a limit on the revenue a municipality can raise from property taxes. For example, if a municipality is valued at \$100 million, it can only raise \$2.5 million from property taxes. Refer to the link “Proposition 2 ½ Primer” for further details.

Q: What is New Growth and how does it impact my taxes?

A: New growth is the creation of taxable value resulting from new homes, additions, substantial remodels, lot splits or the acquisition of new personal property assets. New growth value can be added to a municipality's levy limit thereby increasing taxing capacity. Over time, a community's fiscal well-being relies on new growth to mitigate the effects rising costs have on municipal budgets as it grows spreads the tax levy over a broader base.

Q: Why is the former owner's name still on my tax bill?

A: MA General Law Ch. 59, Sec. 11 states, "taxes on real estate shall be assessed, in the town where it lies, to the person who is the owner on January first..." The tax bill will carry the January first owners name throughout the entire subsequent fiscal year but will be sent to the new owner once the deed has been processed. The former owner's name will be replaced by the new owner(s) name after the fiscal year has run its cycle.

Q: What is real estate, real property, and personal property?

A: Real estate is an identified parcel or tract of land, including improvements, if any. Real property is the interests, benefits and rights inherent in the ownership of real estate. Personal property is portable tangible objects not firmly attached to land or buildings and are not specifically designed for or of such size and bulk to be considered real estate. This includes merchandise, furnishings & effects, machinery, tools, animals and equipment. Such personal property will be taxable unless a specific exemption provision applies.

Q: What are the key dates taxpayers should be aware of?

A: **July 1 – New** fiscal year begins

- Preliminary bills are mailed out
 - o First quarter bill is due August 1st
 - o Second quarter bill is due November 1st
- **October 1** - Deadline for filing Chapter Land Application.
- **January 1** – The date of Assessments for upcoming fiscal year.
- Actual bill are mailed out
 - o Third quarter bill is due February 1st.
 - o Fourth quarter bill is due May 1st.
- **March 1**
 - o Deadline for tax exempt entities to file, 3ABC, Form 990 & Form PC.
 - o Deadline for business to file personal property Forms of List
- **March 15 +/-** - The first billing cycle of motor vehicle excise taxes are due.
- **April 1**
 - o Deadline for businesses to file Income & Expense forms.
 - o Deadline for senior, veteran and blind exemption application (*Filing can begin after July 1st of the new fiscal year*)
- **June 30** – End fiscal year