BOARD OF ASSESSORS ANNUAL REPORT

Annual Revaluation Update

The revaluation of all real and personal property in the Town of Franklin was completed Fall 2015 in preparation for Actual Fiscal Year 2016 3rd quarter tax bills. Following is a brief review of that achievement.

Data Collection

Fourteen years have now passed since we installed the real estate valuation and assessment administration software developed by Patriot Properties, Inc. Because our start-up data was from a different form of valuation system and most of our data had not been refreshed in nearly ten years, it was necessary to complete a town-wide data recollection program prior to finalizing the FY 2005 valuations. Patriot Properties was hired for this task. Over the past 11 years, our appraisal staff has performed the on-going property exterior measuring and interior inspecting for all real estate classes. Such reviews are done for the Department of Revenue (DOR) required cyclical program, as well as for building permitted changes, pre-appraisal and abatement verifications.

Field Review

In addition to individual property on-site review, field reviews are required periodically to check for obvious data accuracy and consistency. This drive-by review provides another level of assurance that when valuation schedules are applied, the results will be "Fair and Equitable".

Commercial/Industrial/Apartment Valuations

Annually there are analyses of sales data as well as income & expense market data. The Board contracted Patriot to work with our Director to establish an income approach to value for each property. All requirements of the Massachusetts Department of Revenue were met through final approval of the FY 2016 valuations.

Sales Analysis

The majority of the sales analysis was completed by September 2015, and the interpretation of sales continued through the next two stages of valuation. The town-wide program resulted in a valuation system that was applied uniformly throughout the town, while reflecting all the adjustments warranted individually and by neighborhood, to result in "Full and Fair Cash Values" as per Massachusetts General Law.

Value Generation

A system of valuation was established based on valid property sales and where applicable the income approach to value. These schedules concluded from the market were then uniformly applied to all taxable and exempt real property.

Final Value Review

Final reviews were completed in preparation for the DOR review. These include studies of various computer-generated reports to check for value consistency, final field checks required, and for DOR documentation and its analyses.

DOR Review & Final Approval

Any on-site and statistical reviews by the DOR took place from April to September 2015. The appraisal staff provided files, generated property records, answered questions and addressed any concerns. At the conclusion of the DOR review, we were granted approval authorizing public disclosure.

Public Disclosure

The DOR approved valuations were available for disclosure to the property owners. While the administrative staff provided property record cards and general data reviews, the appraisers conducted informal hearings on valuations.

Personal Property

Business assets and those of utilities are reviewed for valuation as taxable Personal Property. For fifteen fiscal years we have engaged the specialized services of Real Estate Research Consultants (RRC) in the discovery and valuation of these accounts. These services have served us well, resulting in DOR approval and consistently defendable valuations. Also, considerable new growth has been certified annually. Additionally, the RRC Personal Property Software installed in our office has benefited us. The personal property valuation formulas are very straightforward, and the administrative capabilities have met our needs.

Classification Hearing & Tax Commitment

Following some discussion and a few presentations relative to single versus split tax

rates, the Council approved a single tax rate at $14.50 per $1,000 of taxable value as calculated by the Board for all property classes. The tax commitment and mailing were timely for an actual 3rd quarter tax bill.

Abatement Reviews

Upon mailing of the tax bills and on or before the due date of the first actual bill, property owners have an opportunity to file an Abatement Application on the basis of overvaluation or misclassification. 98 abatements applications were filed of 11,520 taxable accounts, or 9/10ths of 1%. Generally those with merit were resolved through our conducting a complete on-site exterior measuring and interior inspection. Usually a valuation discrepancy is the result of a data error or as a result of an inspection appointment not being arranged and thus the data having been "estimated".

Technology Improvements

In addition to our state-of-the-art software for the valuation and administration of both real and personal property, Cartographic Associates, Inc. (CAI) of Littleton, NH has continued to maintain the digital/GIS-mapping program it first developed for us in FY 2005. Following aerial photography and planimetric (physical features) mapping, CAI constructed cadastral tax maps (depicting parcels) through the use of over 5,000 plans and over 15,000 deeds. These new maps are continuously in our process of reconciliation with our property records for consistency in both parcel inventory and land area. With the support of Town Administrator Jeff Nutting and the Town Council, we have capacity in our Patriot software to link and utilize the maps with our assessment file. In addition, for the past eleven years we have provided our tax maps on the web for the benefit of both the Town staff and the general public.

Appraisal & Administrative Staffing

The use of automation has minimized the former heavy burden of traditional data processing. Due to this and numerous other office improvements, the Town approved our Staff Restructuring Plan. We have adjusted our administrative support staff to Board Secretary Anne Covell who is responsible for continuing to improve our service to the public at the counter and by phone. She focuses her efforts on providing and reviewing public records, Motor Vehicle Excise Tax Commitments and Abatements, Exemption Applications, the general and specific support to the Appraisal Staff and any other assignments as required. She continues to train in various administrative duties and computer applications. We thank Anne for her efforts in 36 years of service to the Board. The Appraisers have made special efforts in the development and implementation of usable written instructions for the assessing office procedures and for MUNIS financial software applications. These instructions were developed consistent with all Mass. General Law and DOR requirements.

Appraisers

We thank Kevin W. Doyle, Director of Assessing for his diligence especially as Director beginning following his first two years here. He has overseen the completion of all our work these past fifteen fiscal years, five full revaluations and ten interim years of market adjustments. We are also pleased with the support work of Appraiser Peter Mooney since August 2004 and of Appraiser David Ruberti since July 2005. Our Director received his Massachusetts Accredited Assessor (MAA) in 1990. Within the past nine years both Appraisers completed their designation required education and experience, being granted their MAA designations and maintaining the periodic recertification required.

Town Revenue Enhancements

In addition to meeting all state requirements as well as daily office oversight, the Director and Appraisers have achieved many additional improvements to benefit the Town taxpayers. One such is the efficiencies built into the Motor Vehicle Excise Tax Commitment and Abatement processes in conjunction with the new MUNIS tax software installation. These excise taxes represent about 4.5 million dollars in locally raised annual revenue, or about 6.5% of locally raised tax revenue. We assure the citizens that like real and personal property, taxes on these are assessed and abated appropriately and uniformly for the maximum benefit of all. Registry of Motor Vehicles' automation aided the Director and Appraisers to further enhance revenue in assessing dealer and repair plate registrations. As well, with the automation improvements of the Environmental Police, this professional staff successfully developed a new annual revenue stream in the identification and assessment of excise taxes on boats principally situated in the Town of Franklin.

On-site Periodic Property Reviews

Because we have initiated the cyclical property re-measurement and re-inspection program acceptable to the Massachusetts DOR, we continue to make various public information efforts to assure property owners have advance information about this on-going program. Briefly, please note that the purpose of these property visits is to verify that the correct data is being used in the determination of valuations to achieve "full and fair cash value" in accordance with Mass. General Law Chapter 59. The Board appreciates the general public's cooperation in its efforts to serve all property owners in all property types to assure fair and uniform values.

Your Elected Board of Assessors

Before entering the performance of his/her duties, each Assessor upon election has taken the oath of office specific to assessors. Massachusetts General Law has provided that because the DOR Commissioner of Revenue has regulatory oversight of assessing in every city and town, the Commissioner likewise determines the training requirements for the assessors and any assistants. At this time, the Commissioner has determined Course 101, including the Classification Training Workshop, meets the minimum requirements. All three assessors have completed these and have been certified as such by the Commissioner of Revenue.

The Board looks forward to continuing education opportunities offered by the MA DOR and the professional associations, the Massachusetts Association of Assessing Officers (MAAO) and the International Association of Assessing Officers (IAAO). The assessors have attended seminars and workshops to broaden and reinforce their understanding of property tax law.

In particular, the Board has focused on current and possible future tax relief and deferral options for Franklin's elder citizens. To that goal following meetings of the Town Senior Outreach Committee, last fall the Board, its Staff and the Office of the Council on Aging continued a broad-based effort to reach seniors. This resulted in successfully providing tax relief (exemption) information to additional seniors who owned and occupied their homes. Also, with the valued assistance of Veterans Agent Bob Fahey, special efforts were made to identify veterans and their surviving spouses entitled to state exemptions, much of it reimbursable to the Town. At the close of FY 2015, Bob retired as Veterans' Agent; his dedication to veterans and his assistance to our Board and Staff in these matters is remembered and always appreciated. The Board wishes to recognize and indicate its appreciation for the dedication and efforts of new Veterans' Agent Dale Kurtz. We look forward to continuing to work with him in supporting our veterans.

All these efforts are consistent with the Board of Assessors commitment to meet its challenges as key Town Financial Team members to the benefit of all the citizens of the Town of Franklin.

As we write, the Board of Assessors and its Staff are preparing to finalize the Real and Personal Property Appraisal files for the Fiscal Year 2017 Revaluation subject to DOR review and Final Certification.

Respectfully submitted,

W. Ken Norman, Chairman of the Board
Christopher K. Feeley, Assessor, Clerk
Donna Greenwood, Assessor, Member

Franklin Board of Assessors

BOARD OF ASSESSORS - FISCAL YEAR 2016
TOWN FINANCIAL SUMMARY

VALUATION	
Taxable Real Property	4,523,590,571.00
Taxable Personal Property	143,307,330.00
TOTAL TAXABLE PROPERTY VALUATION	4,666,897,901.00
AMOUNTS TO BE RAISED	
Total Real and Personal Property Tax Levy	67,670,019.57
Total Estimated Receipts & Other Revenue Sources	60,057,379.99
TOTAL AMOUNTS TO BE RAISED/RECEIPTS - ALL SOURCES	127,727,399.56
TAX RATE - $14.50 PER $1,000 OF TAXABLE VALUATION	
TAX LEVY	
Real Property Levy	65,592,063.28
Personal Property Levy	2,077,956.29
TOTAL LEVY - ALL TAXABLE CLASSES	67,670,019.57

REAL PROPERTY EXEMPTIONS			$ EXEMPTION TOTALS	$ MA REIMBURSEMENT
Clause 17D	Widow	(61)	18,666.00	350.00
Clause 18	Hardship	(3)	5,397.65	0.00
Clause 22	Veterans	(117)	46,800.00	26,325.00
Clause 22F	Veterans	(1)	5,309.90	5,134.90
Clause 22D	Veterans	(6)	27,615.25	27,615.25
Clause 22E	Veterans	(25)	25,000.00	20,625.00
Clause 37A	Blind	(12)	6,000.00	1,050.00
Clause 41C	Elderly	(25)	18,750.00	0.00
Clause 42	Widow (police)	(1)	7,329.75	0.00
	Exemptions Totals	(251)	160,868.55	81,100.15
	Senior Work Prog.	(89)	72,225.00	0.00