

FISCAL YEAR 2022 REVALUATION

What's a Revaluation? ... What does a Revaluation look like?

For local cities and towns in Massachusetts, most revenue is raised through local "ad valorem" taxation, that is taxation on local real and personal (primarily business assets) property "according to value". Since valuation is the basis for taxation, about 40 years ago court decisions and legislation resulted in state mandates to assure "Full and Fair Taxation" with every community revaluing all property every 3 years. Previously, while assessors recognized the importance of updating property records and values, there was often a perceived or real local government concern that once revalued, the city or town may appear to the state to be wealthier relative to its need to receive state aid. Thus, the state made it clear that this was a new mandate for uniformity statewide, thus state aid at least as value is concerned should be fairer. During this same time, Proposition 2 ½ was passed to place controls on the level and future growth of overall local property tax revenue.

Massachusetts residents got used to every 3rd year being a Revaluation Year. The expectation was that there would be a significant increase in the number of assessing agents, mostly data collectors, during the time leading up to revaluation. There was concern that with a revaluation, there was a greater chance that both valuations and tax bills would increase quite a bit. However, right from the start the intention was to create a system to equalize values to achieve uniform full and fair cash values. For properties that appreciated at a higher rate than others, there would be greater tax increases over time, which was to be expected, since these taxes were to be levied on property "according to value". Valuation schedules have to be tested on specific market or sales data and adjusted accordingly to reflect the changes that have taken place since the last revaluation. While to revalue property doesn't necessarily require recollecting all property data every 3 years, a periodic recollection every 5 to 10 years is state mandated and necessary to achieve appropriate property valuations.

Now a Revaluation takes place every 5th year, why does my tax bill usually have a different value every year? Over the past 4 decades, there have been both market increases and decreases, and these of course don't wait to happen for your next Revaluation. Thus, assessors began to make value adjustments more frequently as needed, until finally in this last decade it was recognized and mandated by the state that valuations needed to be tested annually and adjusted if and as needed. For the property owners and for the assessors, this really means that every year is a revaluation year. Annual updates provide greater assurance that valuations are being equalized townwide annually and generally lessen the chance for greater tax bill sticker-shock. However, even if the market is flat, property changes such as improvements are included in property record annual updates and thus may result in a property value change. Also, most cities and towns will be sure to levy the 2 ½ % annually allowable overall limit increase, thus a minimum tax increase of 2 ½ % should be anticipated for every property.

The assessors recommend you familiarize yourself with the records and data they maintain on your property. Please inquire if you believe the data may be inaccurate. Errors on your property record can often best be reviewed and corrected proactively before the start of the next fiscal year's actual tax.