

## **Why Did My Taxes Increase So Much? From The Board of Assessors**

We have been receiving many calls from taxpayers upset with the increase in their property taxes; below are some reasons why they may have been so high for some this year.

1) We went to a new CAMA (Computer Assisted Mass Appraisal) software system this year; the program that stores information for all the properties in town and computes the values. The limitations in the old system often required manual "adjustments" to get values to more closely reflect market value. Since the new software's valuation system is more accurate, the adjustments were removed, but resulted in some increases.

2) We had a Certification year (Revaluation), where DOR reviews our values to ensure they reflect full and fair cash value, based on recent property sales and fall within a given ratio. The analysis of "arm's-length sales" in this period (2018-2020) resulted in sales which in most cases were higher than our assessed values and thus were adjusted, resulting in increases to some property values.

3) A full field review of the town was conducted, whereby appraisers do a drive-by and check each property for accuracy, to the extent possible. Updates were made to property cards to reflect any outbuildings, changes to grade, condition or size that may not have been reflected on our cards.

4) The tax rate increased by almost \$1.00, which can make a big difference. For this reason, the Assessors always recommend the options that keep the tax rate as low as possible at the tax rate hearing each year. Some factors contributing to an increased tax rate are less offset revenue from the State, increases in schools assessments, the amount of capital items funded, and no free cash was voted to offset the tax rate this year.

It was also brought to our attention that the tax bills generated from our new software listed a "Yard Value", which was not on previous bills. This is not a new assessment; this is simply the outbuildings; sheds, decks, etc. that are listed on the property. In the previous CAMA, this value was combined with the residence as one lump "Building Value" where now they are listed separately. This makes it clearer to see what we are valuing your residential buildings, yard items and land at.

All this being said, our office is happy to review your property card to make sure everything is accurate or discuss any changes made as a result of the field review. Our new public access system will soon be uploaded to our website so you can review and print your property cards. In the meantime, feel free to contact the office to request a copy.

For those who qualify, exemptions from real estate taxes can be applied for. Information and applications are on the Assessor's page of the Town website or you may contact the office to request one.

We greatly appreciate your patience as we all try to recover and move forward from a very difficult year.