

ASSESSMENT & REVALUATION

Dear Barkhamsted Property Owners,

This booklet, prepared by the Assessor's Office, has been designed to answer your questions concerning the 2018 revaluation and its effects. We encourage you to read it and save for future reference.

REVALUATION: Facts, Questions, Answers and Property Assessment

The Assessor is a Town employee, professionally educated and state certified as a municipal assessment officer.

The Assessment

Connecticut law requires all real estate, motor vehicles, and certain types of personal property to be assessed at 70% of fair market value. Fair market value is defined as the price established between a willing buyer and a willing seller taking into consideration all the uses to which a property is adapted. Connecticut courts have established criteria, which assessors must use to establish fair market value.

Revaluation

Connecticut law requires all real estate to be revalued for assessment purposes every five years. Towns and cities that do not adhere to the revaluation requirements will be penalized 10% of their state grants. Revaluations are required to ensure uniformity in property valuations. A complete revaluation program includes modernizing the assessment system, taking a complete description and inventory of all property, and setting new assessed values on a current basis. Because regular assessment work must be carried on along with the revaluation program, most assessors find it necessary to seek the assistance of a private appraisal company in conducting a complete revaluation. Responsibility for final determination of value, however, remains with the assessor.

The Grand List

After individual property assessments have been determined the assessor compiles listing of all property. The total assessment of all listed properties is called the grand list.

The Mill Rate (Property Tax Rate)

The annual budget determines the amount of property taxes needed to operate the town. The mill rate is determined by dividing the amount of property taxes needed to operate the town by the taxable grand list as prepared by the Assessor.

The Tax Bill

Your property tax pays for the major part of town services including public education, resident trooper and fire protection, street maintenance, recreation and many other services. The tax bill is your property assessment (which is 70% of value) multiplied by the mill rate.

QUESTIONS & ANSWERS

What is meant by “Revaluation”?

The revaluation process involves the reappraisal of all real estate in town, in order to bring about uniformity in property valuations and to assure all property owners that they are paying only their fair share of the cost for community services. Revaluation is NOT intended to raise revenues; its purpose is to value all properties by the same standards at the same point in time.

Why Conduct a Revaluation?

There is a growing awareness that local property taxes have become a significant part of the expenses in owning property. Keeping that in mind, the State of Connecticut now requires a revaluation of all real estate every five (5) years. A successful program requires a significant effort be spent on careful research to assure new values are accurate and that all property owners pay ONLY their FAIR SHARE of the property tax burden. Revaluations previously occurred every 10 years in Connecticut.

Why is Revaluation Needed?

It has been five years since the last complete revaluation of all real estate. Meanwhile, a constantly changing local real estate market has caused inequities to develop not only in general but by neighborhood and/or individually. Some properties decrease or increase at a faster rate than others. The solution of this problem is to reappraise all real estate based upon current market values.

What Kind of Inequities Exist Now?

Changes in value occur in any community over a period of time. Neighborhoods change and the desirability of some properties change, meaning that some properties have become over-valued or under-valued when compared to similar properties. Revaluation returns all properties to current market values and to the fair-share basis.

Who Determines the Value of My Property?

People make the market, a willing buyer and the willing seller. It is the responsibility of the Assessor to research and determine fair market value in a particular area. The most significant part of the appraisal process is accomplished by gathering sales data occurring between October 2016 through October 1, 2018 and comparing those sales to your property. From a study of sales of similar properties in like neighborhoods, the average sale price of properties can be ascertained.

Isn't Fair Market Value What I Paid For My Property?

Not always. You may have purchased your property years ago when prices and value were considerably different. The true test is what your property would sell for in today's real estate market.

When and How Will I Receive My New Assessment?

All notices should be mailed out by the first week of December 2018.

When Will The New Assessments Be Effective?

The revalued assessments will create the October 1, 2018 Grand List. The tax bill you receive for July 1 of 2019 will be based on your new assessment.

How Are Tax Rates Established?

The tax rate (mill rate) is established by dividing the approved Town budget by the net taxable grand list. ($\text{Budget/Grand List} = \text{Tax Rate}$). The tax rate usually changes each year because the budget and grand list change each year.

When Can I Learn What My Taxes Will Be?

Until a total grand list including all new values (real estate, motor vehicles, and certain personal property) is completed AND a new budget is adopted, the tax rate cannot be determined. When you receive your new assessment notice (December 2018) the motor vehicle and personal property portions of the grand list will not be completed yet. In addition, the new Town budget and the mill rate are not adopted until May 2019. Do not use last year's mill rate to calculate the new taxes. The mill rate for 2017GL has been set at 31.52 (Town & Fire). Because the total amount of tax dollars needed to run the Town does not decrease; yet motor vehicle and personal property taxes do decrease when the mill rate is lowered in a year of Revaluation, based on past years, real estate taxes normally increase. How much they increase or decrease for each property will vary. Each value change, and thus tax change, will be unique. This is the purpose of a Revaluation – to correct and shift the tax burden.

What about Motor Vehicles Taxes?

Motor vehicles are assessed at 70% of their current market value each year. After revaluation the property tax rate (mill rate) normally will be reduced. Because of these factors motor vehicle taxes will decrease. All these factors will depend on the current market.

Who Sets My Assessment And What Can I Do If I Think It Is Wrong?

The Assessor determines the market value. If you believe your appraisal is in excess of current fair market value, the first step is to contact the Assessor for an informal hearing following the instructions included with your revaluation notice. This is the proper time and place to correct any errors. The Assessor will review your property card with you. Adjustments will be made if justified. If a discrepancy exists which requires an inspection, office personnel will schedule a

review of your property. In some cases, where factual evidence is presented, adjustments can be made without further review.

What If I Don't Agree With The Value On My Property?

You should show evidence supporting what you feel is fair market value, such as recent sales of comparable properties in your area. You may schedule an informal hearing, and then if necessary, a formal hearing, to insure the value established is fair and equitable.

What If I Still Disagree With the Assessment?

There are 3 steps available to all property owners, including the right to appeal in court. In the first 2 steps there is an opportunity to resolve your appraisal disagreement without hiring professional assistance. The 3 steps are: 1) An informal hearing held with the Assessor or a representative.

2) A formal hearing before the Board of Assessment Appeals. At these meetings legal counsel is not required. Any evidence you have that may affect your Assessment should be presented. The meeting dates of the Board of Assessment Appeals will be announced after the informal hearings are completed. 3) The final step in the appeals process, should you disagree with the assessed value, is to appeal to the courts under section 12-117a of the Connecticut General Statutes (provided you made an appeal to the Board of Assessment Appeals.)

Must I Pay My Taxes If I Choose to Appeal?

Yes. You should pay your taxes to avoid interest being added and to avoid court costs, including attorney's fees, if your non-payment is referred to collection. Keep in mind that any overpayment found by the court in your appeal will be refunded.

What about the Elderly Who May Be On Fixed Incomes or Situations Where Special Exemptions Might Occur?

The Assessor is required by law to assess property and not the people who own it. As sympathetic as the Assessor may be, State law does not permit the Assessor to take matters of hardship into consideration. All property is appraised at fair market value and assessed at 70% of that value. There are, however, 2 Statutes (12-129b & 12-170d), which provide tax relief for qualifying low-income residents over the age of 65 or totally disabled. Other statutes provide exemptions for those who are veterans, active duty, disabled, or blind. If you are now receiving an exemption it will be automatically deducted at tax billing time. You may consult with the Assessor about your qualification for tax relief.