

Supervisor's Column
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Revaluation Ensures Fairness and Equity of Property Taxes

The Town of Brighton is committed to ensuring that its property taxpayers pay only their fair share of property taxes. To that end, Brighton will undertake a town-wide revaluation project in 2008, in order to restore fairness and equity to the Assessment Roll.

The Town Board developed objective criteria to guide the need for updates. Based upon the data, a revaluation is necessary.

Changes in the real estate market can mean changes in value for individual properties and among categories of properties, such as residential, commercial and open space. If the roll does not reflect full market value, then some taxpayers may pay more than their fair share of taxes; some may pay an appropriate amount; and others may pay less than their market value warrants. Fairness depends on the uniform treatment of similar properties. By bringing the Assessment Roll to full market value, property owners will pay only their fair share.

Through data verification, field inspection and expert guidance, the revaluation aims to correct inequities that have developed over time. The revaluation does not increase the size of the tax revenue pie; it merely re-adjusts the size of the "slice" each property owner is responsible for paying.

The Assessor's Office has sent out Data Mailers for every parcel in the Town of Brighton, and is reviewing all received information.

To begin the revaluation process this summer, staff from the Town Assessor's office will be conducting a field review of residential properties, which entails a physical

inspection of property exteriors. You may see Elaine Ainsworth, Town Assessor, and her dedicated staff in your neighborhood this summer, taking pictures of the homes on your block in order to update their database this year. Though we have recently contracted services with GAR Associates, an Amherst-based firm, for expert support throughout the revaluation project, the work performed by Town staff represents a prudent cost-cutting measure.

Together, the Town and GAR Associates will study and analyze recent market sales to gain a fuller understanding of the real estate market, establish parameters to estimate the value of property, and apply parameters to all non-sale properties to approximate their market value.

The 2008 school tax bill and the 2009 town and county tax bill will reflect the changes in the Assessment Roll.

In 1994, two years after I took office, the Town of Brighton launched the first town-wide revaluation in over 40 years, restoring fairness and equity to the Assessment Roll. The town board also established a policy of regular reviews and periodic updates based upon objective criteria to prevent the imbalance that had built up over the prior decades. A second revaluation followed in 2002.

If property owners have questions about the revaluation project, they can contact the Assessor's Office at 784-5215.