

Town wide assessment project to level inequities

After eight years of using the same property assessment information, town officials this year are in the midst of conducting an assessment equity project as a way to better distribute property owners' share of taxes.

David Marrano, town assessor, said the goal of the project is to ensure all taxpayers are only paying their "fair share of property taxes."

He said properties appreciate and depreciate at different rates, so the town wide reassessment returns equity to the assessment roll.

Marrano added that Amherst has been performing reassessment and equity projects since the mid-1990s, with the most recent town wide reassessment conducted in 2009. Since then, market values have changed, causing inequities in the assessment roll.

Reassessment does not create more tax dollars, nor does it create taxes; budgets and levies determine taxes to be collected through the property tax.

According to Marrano, reassessment accomplishes a redistribution of the town tax burden.

"It is the best process for a municipality like Amherst to ensure property owners are only paying their fair share of property taxes," he said in a recent presentation to the Town Board.

Supervisor Barry Weinstein said the new assessed values, officially mailed to 44,000 town property owners as of last week, should reflect what properties would sell for in the real estate market.

He said all assessments can be challenged, first with the informal review process. In-person informal review appointments will start on March 6 at Getzville Fire Hall, 630 Dodge Road, Getzville.

Whether a change is warranted or not, all informal reviews submitted will receive a decision notice in the mail in May 2017.

Weinstein said property owners seeking informal reviews should examine sales of similar properties in the area and then form an opinion of the resale value of their property. The informal review application can be downloaded from the town's website, www.amherst.ny.us.

Additionally, Weinstein said the informal review process is property owner friendly.

“We should all do our comparable research and file an appeal if we think our new assessment is too high,” he said. “We might not get what we want, but a compromise is better than nothing, and we still have the formal grievance process on May 23.”

Weinstein also said property owners who have been reassessed between 2010 and 2016 should pay special attention to the fairness of the assessed value and the 20 to 21 percent average increase since 2009 may not apply.

The formal portion of the process is led by the Board of Assessment Review, which meets on Tuesday, May 23. Appointments are required. The final assessment roll will be filed by Marrano’s office on July 1.

Weinstein added that in September, new assessments will be applied to school taxes, and in January 2018, new assessments will be applied to town and county taxes.

**Excerpts originally published in The Amherst Bee
March 1, 2017**

http://www.amherstbee.com/news/2017-03-01/Front_Page/Townwide_assessment_project_to_level_inequities.html