

# Commonly Asked Questions

## **What is the basis for my assessment?**

RSA 75:1 states that “the selectmen shall appraise all taxable property at its full and true value in money.” The court has interpreted “true value” as “the market value or the price which the property would bring in a fair market after reasonable efforts have been made to find the purchase who will give the highest price for it.” RSA 74:1 states that “The selectmen of each town shall annually, in April, make a list of all the polls and take an inventory of all the estate liable to be taxed in such town on the first day of that month.”

Therefore, the assessment of real property is based on the market value of the property as of April 1 of the tax year.

## **Who sets my taxes?**

The amount of your tax bill depends on two factors. The first is the assessed value of your property, which is the responsibility of the Assessor’s Office. Assessments are based on market value as of April 1st of a given year. This office makes every effort to maintain assessment equity on an annual basis and to have an average ratio of between 95-100%. The second is the tax rate, which is expressed as dollars per thousand. There are four tax rates that your property is subject to: the town tax rate, the local school tax rate, the state education tax rate, and the county tax rate. Each rate is determined by dividing the amount to be collected by the total taxable value subject to corresponding rate. The sum of each of these tax rates is multiplied by your assessed value; that value is the amount of taxes you are asked to pay. If you believe your assessment is too high, contact the Assessor’s Office. If you think your taxes are too high, talk to your selectmen or to your state representatives.

## **Must taxpayers pay the bill if they disagree with the assessment?**

A disagreement with the assessed valuation does not stay the collection of the taxes. It must be paid as assessed in order to avoid interest charges that begin to accrue after the due date. Based on a timely appeal (see the Abatement Instructions tab on the Assessor’s Page), should an abatement be granted, a refund of any overpayment plus interest will occur.

## **What further recourse does a taxpayer have if they are not satisfied with the Assessor’s decision on their value?**

If dissatisfied with the Assessor’s decision, the taxpayer may exercise one of the following options:

File an appeal to the New Hampshire Board of Tax and Land Appeals by September 1st and not before July 1st, accompanied by the Board’s prevailing application fee, which is

\$65.00 at this time. An application can be obtained by selecting the "Board of Tax and Land Appeals" tab on the Assessor's front page.

File a petition to Rockingham County Superior Court by September 1st and not before July 1st. Associated costs are set by the court. Attorney's fees are the taxpayer's responsibility.

### **May I compare assessments to those of my neighbors?**

All assessments are public record. On the Assessor's website there is a list of assessed values by address or you can come into the office and there are books available. The staff will help you with any questions.

### **Why do we need to do annual assessment updates?**

Value changes on a continuous basis. However, it does not change at the same rate across property types, neighborhoods or classes. While one property may be increasing in value at a high rate, another type of property may have stable values or even be decreasing in value. The same is true for neighborhoods. A reassessment or an update will analyze each property type and each neighborhood and set values based on its true value as of April 1st of the tax year.

The last complete reassessment was conducted by Vision Appraisal Technology in 2001. A complete reassessment includes measuring and inspecting every building, setting new valuation benchmarks, and establishing new values for every property in Town. Vision also performed an update in 2003. Since 2006 updates have been performed annually in-house, with our current staff. We also have been working on a re-measure and re-list of all properties. We started on the west side of Town and are still in that area.

### **What period does the tax bill cover?**

Under State Statute, all real estate is assessed at how the property stood on April 1st of the tax year. The Town of Seabrook operates on a fiscal year from January 1st to December 31st. However, the tax year is from April 1st to March 31st of the following year. The budget that is raised at Town Meeting in March is to run the town for the year that has already started on January 1st. The tax rate is set in October to raise money for the year that's almost gone by.

The Town is on semi-annual tax billing. This means in May you are billed for an estimated half of your bill for the year using the current assessment times half of last year's tax rate, due usually by July 1st. The actual tax rate is set in October. At that time the full year tax is figured, the estimated first half bill is subtracted, leaving the balance due usually December 1st.