

## **Frequently Asked Questions**

### **What is an assessment?**

An assessment is the value placed on property appearing in the Grand List, the basis upon which the property tax levy is distributed among the property owners in a community. In order to determine the tax liability of a particular property, the property assessment is multiplied by the municipality's mill rate. In Connecticut, an assessment is equal to 70% of the fair market value as established by the municipal Assessor. For motor vehicles and business personal property, this assessment is recalculated annually as of October 1st. Real estate assessments are established during the town-wide revaluations, which are performed on a periodic schedule, established by State Law.

### **What is the fair market value and who determines it?**

Fair market value is a legal term defined by the courts and the state statute as the purchase price, which a property would bring on the open market, given prudent, knowledgeable and willing buyers and sellers. Fair market value is the standard by which the fairness of all assessments are judged.

The buyer and seller of real estate determine the fair market value of real estate. The appraiser or assessor analyzes real estate transactions that occur within a community and determine the factors that lead to the final sale prices.

Information developed through the analysis of these sales is used by appraisers and assessors to develop mathematical models that are utilized in estimating market values of all properties in a community. Some of the typical factors that are used by an appraiser in estimating market values include location, condition, age, size, and quality of improvements.

### **What guidelines must the assessor follow?**

Connecticut General Statutes (primary Title 12) and relevant case law (which assists in interpreting these statutes) govern assessment procedures and practices. In addition, the State of Connecticut Office of Policy & Management, Intergovernmental Policy Division, prescribes regulations and issues administrative pronouncements dealing with the administration of statutes related to assessment practices.

### **How is the tax rate established?**

The tax rate, or mill rate, is established annually by the elected Board of Finance members through the adoption of the town's budget. This process of establishing the tax rate begins with the preparation of the Town Administrative Proposed Budget and concludes with the Town's Board of Finance adoption of the budget and mill rate. The simplified formula for determining the mill rate is the Town Levy divided by the Taxable Grand List. The Town Levy (also referred to as the Grand Levy) is simply the amount of money the Town needs to generate through the property tax in order to provide town services. The Taxable Grand List is the total of all non-exempt assessments for all real estate, motor vehicles, and personal property located within the Town's boundaries.

**How can I determine if my assessment is fair?**

In order to judge the fairness of your assessment, two questions should be asked. First, does the assessment represent 70% of the probable selling price of the date of the assessment? Secondly, is my assessment similar to comparable properties in Town? The Assessor's Office maintains information that will help you answer these questions. A list of properties that have sold and lists of assessments of all properties in Town can be reviewed in the Assessor's Office.

**Whom do I contact if I have questions about my assessment?**

By telephone you can reach the Assessor's Office at (860) 258-2722.