

## **2009 Amherst Reassessment - *Press Release***

### **Preliminary Assessments**

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Over the last three years, since 2006, the town's total real estate assessments have increased by \$2.0 billion, from \$9.4 billion in 2006, to \$11.4 billion in 2009. Included in these numbers are the wholly-exempt properties. In 2006, the exempt properties were valued at \$2.0 billion that grew by \$500 million by 2009 to \$2.5 billion.

### **Taxable Real Estate**

During the three years since 2006, the town's taxable real estate has increased by 21% or \$1.6 billion, from \$7.4 billion in 2006 to \$8.9 billion in 2009. This 21% overall increase has varied widely between major property classes: single-family residences, condominiums, and commercial properties.

The residential properties assessments increased by 16% from \$5.3 billion to \$6.2 billion; the condominiums appreciated by 38% from an earlier value of \$284 million to \$390 million; and the commercial properties appreciated by 37% from \$1.4 billion to a value of \$1.9 billion.

For assessment purpose, the town has been divided into 71 zones or neighborhoods. During the past several years, many of the neighborhoods were not re-assessed during the town wide re-assessment programs due to insufficient sales in those neighborhoods. For the same reason, all of the commercial properties were also not fully re-assessed during the past several years. However, this past year, our assessment contractor, KLW, has reassessed all of the parcels in the town by using sale data where available, and using comparable neighborhoods where sufficient sale data did not exist.

### **Property Tax Implications**

Now, since our taxable assessed value went up by 21%, does it mean that the town's property taxes will also go up by 21%? The answer is NO. Today, I want to clearly explain the implications in very simple terms.

The town's property taxes on individual homes, condos, or businesses depend on the total tax levy for the year. I have been able to keep the tax levy for 2007, 2008, and 2009, without any increase, at approximately \$73 million; and my 2010 budget will also keep the total tax levy at \$73 million or less, but not more. Thus, since the total taxable assessed value has gone up, the overall tax rate will go down from \$9.90 per \$1000 of assessed value, and the total taxes on properties will not rise.

The tax levy will be re-distributed to the various property classes differently, for some property classes their tax share may go up. For instance, the tax levy share of residential properties will decrease by approximately \$2.3 million, the share of condominiums will increase by approximately \$0.3 million and the share of commercial properties will increase by approximately \$2.0 million.

Within the same property class, the increase has not been uniformly distributed due to any one of the following reasons:

- (i) Earlier valuations may have only included partially completed property or vacant land;
- (ii) Additions or improvements might have been completed since the previous assessment;
- (iii) Property was under valued, or not adjusted for several years; or
- (iv) Properties in the neighborhood have been steadily selling at prices substantially higher than their assessed values.

For this reason, while a majority of the residential properties will see their town property taxes go down, some of the residential properties will see increases.

In summary, the good news is that our town's real estate has appreciated; and the total town taxes will not rise.

### **Why Re-assessments ?**

Full assessment (100%) values are used by the county for allocating sales tax revenues between the towns, cities, and villages. The town uses 100% assessed values for distributing the total tax levy equitably and fairly to all property owners. This necessitates that the town's assessed values be based on a uniform formula for equity and also be updated regularly to maintain fair market values for ensuring a fair sales tax distribution within the county.

## Review Process

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At this time, the Contractor has given out Preliminary assessments based on the information they had. The assessment notices that have been mailed out are subject to a well regulated review process. Those citizens who feel that their assessments are high may do the following:

**(i) Informal Hearing with the Contractor, KLW.**

Please call **631-7061** to make an appointment with KLW for an informal meeting, to have your specific property reviewed by them. These appointments can be made from **February 23 thru March 27, 2009, from 9:00 AM to 3:00 PM.**

The Informal Hearings will be conducted from March 3, 2009 to April 10, 2009, at the Getzville Fire Hall, located at 630 Dodge Road.

**(ii) Formal Grievance with the Board of Assessment Review (BAR).**

If you decide not to call for an informal hearing, or if you have an informal meeting but are not satisfied with the results of the informal meeting, you may file a grievance with the Amherst Board of Assessment Review by completing the Property Challenge Form (RP 524) and **filing it with the Assessor's Office on or before May 26, 2009.**

**(iii) Small Claims Assessment Review (SCAR) Hearing.**

Only those Residential Property owners who filed for Formal Grievance but still disagree with the results can file for a SCAR hearing. Those have **to be filed with the Erie County Clerk's office on or before July 30, 2009.**

**(iv) Article-7 Hearing.**

Only those Commercial Property owners who filed for Formal Grievance but still disagree with the results can file for a Title-7 hearing. Those also have **to be filed with the Erie County Clerk's office on or before July 30, 2009.**