

Town of Brunswick, Maine
Finance Committee Meeting
Thursday, August 31, 2023
Assessing Revaluation Notes from Public Comment

Agenda Item 3: Plan for public outreach and communication around property revaluation.

- **How to structure public forums**
 1. Round table discussion formats.
 2. Focused meetings around specific topic points.
- **When and where to hold them**
 1. Micro informational sessions held at various public locations in town.
- **What specific topics will be discussed**
 1. Understanding the methods of assessment that are available and what methods of assessment are used by Brunswick to establish values.
 2. Process for crosschecking assessment valuations.
 - a. Outside firm review.
 - b. Verification that outliers are not influencing data.
 - c. Size of market sale dataset.
 - d. Review of property cards for potential errors.
 3. Discussions around relationship between market values and assessed values.
 - a. What if the market “bubble” pops and market values decrease?
 - b. Can multi-year sales data samples be used?
 - c. Commercial vs residential development trends (historic).
 - d. New construction assessed values vs existing structure assessed values.
 4. Regularity of changes in assessed values going forward.
 - a. Timing and communication between changes in tax bills due to:
 - i. Changes in assessed value.
 - ii. Budgetary changes.
 - iii. Budget review & landscape for FY25 budget.
 5. Is a phased-in approach to the change in tax possible?
 6. Vacancy and/or short term-rentals.
 - a. Can the town apply different fees to these types of properties?
 - b. What are the assessed classifications of short-term rentals?

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- What specific topics will be discussed (cont'd)
 - 7. Tax relief options available to taxpayers
 - a. All taxpayers
 - i. Homestead exemption
 - ii. Veteran exemption
 - iii. Paraplegic veteran exemption
 - iv. Blind exemption
 - v. Renewable energy investment exemption
 - b. Retired and/or individuals on fixed incomes.
 - i. Property Tax Fairness Credit on State of Maine Income tax return
 - ii. Senior tax assistance program
 - iii. Tax deferral program
 - c. Communication around any upcoming state legislation and its impact on local communities.
 - i. Working waterfronts.
 - ii. State law re: assessment
- What other ideas are there around improved communication from the Town to the citizens and in reverse?
 - 1. Passive communication:
 - a. Utilization of quasi-municipal organizations for outreach (library, People Plus, etc).
 - b. Bulletin boards around town.
 - c. Offer to subscribe to town communications when visiting town offices.
 - 2. Active communication:
 - a. Public relations position?
 - b. Roaming forums.
 - c. Town Hall open door policy to the public.
 - d. Interactive discussion board on the town website.

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QUESTIONS FROM CITIZENS

Market value and assessed value

- What if the market “bubble” pops and market values decrease?
- Can multi-year sales data samples be used?
- How are commercial and residential values determined?

Phasing-in and different formulas

- Is a phased-in approach to valuation possible?
- Can different formulas be used to assess different types of property?
- What are the assessed classifications of short-term rentals?

Relief options

- What are available and how can information be found?

Process

- What went wrong with the recent revaluation?
- What are we going to do to validate the next revaluation?
- Is there a rush to do this?
- What are the different approaches to revaluation?
- Can we/should we do this every 5 years?

Budget

- When will we talk about next year’s budget?
- Can we have a more in-depth discussion on the Fund Balance?
- How is the budget developed and adopted?

Other

- Can a list of town-owned properties and tax exempt properties be made available to the public?
- What is happening in Augusta around this issue?
- Can tax payers get credit for living in their houses for long periods?
- What is the historic economic development pattern?
- What is the plan for the homeless?