

## **Equalization Rate, Level of Assessment and Residential Ratio**

The equalization rate and level of assessment are interchangeable terms, calculated annually to measure the relationship of assessed value to current market value for all property within the municipality. Per State Law the level of assessment is determined by the assessor while the official equalization rate is set by the New York State Department of Taxation and Finance. If the local level assessment is within +-5% of the level of assessment determined by the State, the State will adopt the locally determined level of assessment as the official equalization rate.

The equalization rate is derived in large part from the real estate market. This is an imperfect market, driven by many motivations and influences, some unique to a property, a buyer or seller, while other conditions are relative to general market. Since sales play such a large part in development of the rate it is important that attempts are made to verify each sale and determine if it is arms length transaction prior to it's use in analysis. After this is done various statistical measures are applied to the data to determine the rate. Due to the imperfections in the market the equalization rate is not a guarantee of an exact rate at which all property is assessed within a municipality. It is more of a measure of the center around which most property in a municipality will range.

The equalization rate is use to apportion state aid to school districts, apportion school and county taxes across town boundaries, as evidence in assessment litigation, establish tax and debt limits, determining ceilings for railroad and agricultural land values and to determine ceilings for some-property tax exemptions. For a more in depth explanation of Equalization Rates visit the New York State Department of Taxation and Finance website: <http://www.tax.ny.gov/research/property/assess/eqratescounty.htm>

## **Residential Assessment Ratio**

The residential assessment ratio (RAR) examines the ratio of assessed value to sale price for residential property over a twelve month period. Again it is important to use arms length transactions that are indicative of the market in the analysis. The residential assessment ratio may be used in Board of Assessment Review hearing or in Small Claims Assessment Review proceedings.

## **Assessment Calendar**

All towns within Erie County are on the same assessment calendar. The assessment calendar is not synchronized with calendar year nor is the assessment calendar used in Erie County the same as used by the majority of New York State,-which can be a source of confusion.

**Taxable Status Date is March 1<sup>st</sup>.** This is the most important date in the assessment calendar. First this is the valuation date used to set assessments on the tentative roll. Second this is the cut off date for making application for a new property tax exemption

within the current assessment cycle. Persons applying for property tax exemptions must also have title to the property as of taxable status date to qualify for an exemption.

Prior to or shortly after taxable status date, change of assessment notices are mailed to property owners were a change in assessed value or assessment status has been made on the tentative roll.

**Filing of the Tentative Assessment Roll is May 1<sup>st</sup>.** By this date the Assessor has made all changes to the roll and files a tentative roll. After the tentative roll is filled the Assessor no longer has the ability to change an assessment without authorization from Board of Assessment Review, or by Court Order.

**Grievance Day is held on the Fourth Tuesday in May.** The Board of Assessment Review holds formal assessment complaint hearings on this date. The Board is an independent panel composed of town residents who are familiar with local real estate values. In Evans appointments are made through the Assessor's Office for those persons who wish to appear in person before the Board. Anyone without an appointment will be put to the end of the schedule. For those not appearing before the Board complaint forms can be filled with our office on or before this date and will be presented to the Board for their review. The Board of Assessment Review must make it's decision based on the evidence provided and while the Board can request additional information, it is strongly suggested that supporting evidence be provided with the complaint. For more on filing a formal complaint please go to New York State Department of Taxation and Finance website:<http://www.tax.ny.gov/pit/property/contest/contestasmt.htm> or contact our office at (716) 549-5752.

Persons who have filed complaints with the Board of Assessment Review have 30 days from this date to file Small Claims Assessment Review proceedings or Article 7 litigation to continue challenging an assessment.

**Filing of the Final Assessment Roll is July 1<sup>st</sup>.** This is the final point in the assessment cycle for the year. All changes directed by the Board of Assessment Review have been made to the roll and the final roll is now ready to be used to produce tax bills. Unless directed by Court Order or through a petition to correct the roll the Assessor cannot change assessments or exemptions on the final roll. The assessments on the final roll produce the school tax bills in September of the current calendar year, and the January Town/County. The June Village tax bills are in the next calendar year.

**After the Final Roll.** The next assessment cycle begins and the assessor starts preparing the tentative assessment roll for the next taxable status date. The assessment roll and property data are open for inspection during normal business hours year around. If you have questions regarding assessments or exemptions in the Town of Evans call our office at (716) 549-5752. Also see our web page with links to information from the New York State Department of Taxation and Finance.

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