

2020 REASSESSMENT

NOTICES WILL BE MAILED June 26, 2020.

- About 151,000 real property notices will be mailed at one time.
- Encourage your constituents to read the back of the notice.

ON LINE INFORMATION

- The reassessment notice will be on the website. If your constituent loses the one they were sent - they can print another one.
- The website banner under "2020 Reassessment" will have information and provide links.
- The **On-line Services** portion of the county website under **Property Tax-Data Search** will have information on ownership and property values. 2020 Tax bills will be posted in October.

QUESTIONS YOUR CONSTITUENTS WILL ASK US (and you)

1) Is this notice a tax bill? Is the Assessment the amount of the taxes?

- NO to both. Tax bills are usually mailed in October by the Auditor. The top of the reassessment notice says "this is not a tax bill". Similarly the notice says the total assessment is "not tax amount."

2) If the Assessment is not the tax, what does "assessment" mean?

- Your constituents may come from states that define the word assessment differently. Many South Carolinians also do not understand the term "assessment".
- We appraise property at market value, but property may be taxed on capped value. See 3) for explanation of capped value.
- The assessment is at either 4% or 6% of the market value or the capped value. This is shown on the notice as VALUE x RATIO = ASSESSMENT. In addition, Agricultural Use can affect the assessment (again at 4% or 6%).

3) What is the Taxable (Capped) Value/Assessment shown on the notice?

- The property's taxable value cannot go up more than 15% at reassessment- this is known as the 15% CAP.
- Remember the cap is an increase in value. It is not a cap on taxes and it is based on the total prior value.
- If a property has not changed since last year, and if its value has gone up more than 15%, it will be capped.
- If a property's fair market value has not gone up more than 15%, it will increase to full market value.
- **IF** the value increases enough to be capped, the TAXABLE VALUE is shown in a block on the notice. If the taxable value and the market value are the same then the property value did not go up more than 15%. If the value went up more than 15% then the property transferred in 2019, new construction was completed in 2019, or the parcel was new for 2019.

4) How do taxpayers appeal? Can they appeal after tax bills go out?

- Tell them to file a written objection. Use the easy tear off informal appeal form that is attached to the bottom of the assessment notice.
- Send it to the Assessor's Office, not anywhere else. Tell them to file very early, definitely in the first few weeks. Appeal volume doubles about two weeks before the deadline.
- The deadline to object is on the notice; it is September 24, 2020. Tax bills normally go out in October which is past the 90 appeal period. It is a legal deadline and cannot be extended.
- Tell them to read the back of the notice for more details.

5) Will the tax bill go up this fall as a result of reassessment?

- Some property owners may see a decrease in taxes, others may see little to no change and some may see an increase. As you know, the county cannot gain revenue through the reassessment, as the purpose is to equalize valuations in the county.
- Tax bills will be mailed in October 2020.

6) What has happened to values since the last reassessment?

- By law, the values for the previous reassessment were based on real estate market conditions at the end of 2014.
- Property values are rising so most properties are worth more now – in 2020 - than they were at the end of 2014.
- The 2020 Reassessment was completed December 31, 2019. Property sales from 2016 through 2019 were collected and analyzed.

7) **Why does the Assessor ask to inspect the property interior when it is appealed?**

- If an owner appeals, we want to make sure the measurements, features, quality and condition are accurately portrayed in our records. This information is critical to value. We are not interested in furniture, artwork, rugs or other personal items.

8) **Why is the owner's property assessed at 6% instead of 4%?**

- The owner may need to apply for the 4% Legal Residence exemption. If they sent an application recently, their application may have been received too late for processing prior to the notice being sent to the printers. If their application has been denied they will be notified in writing. If the owner has not applied for the 4% Legal Residence exemption or for Agricultural use, the Lexington County Assessor's Office will be glad to mail them one.
- If the owner has applied, tell the owner to wait a week or so until call volume is lower, then call 803-785-8190.

9) **Should owners hire someone to handle their appeal?**

- Many taxpayers handle their own appeals and do so easily. The first step in the appeal process is one-on-one with an appraiser or staff member, not before a Board or tribunal. The process is not intimidating.
- Representatives that do mass marketing tend to wait until the last day to file. This will slow the owner's appeal. Some "representatives" are not legally qualified. If an unqualified representative files an appeal at the last minute, it will create problems. Owners need to make sure the representative is legally qualified to handle an appeal.
- If owners want to hire a representative, restrictions apply. Refer them to the reverse side of the notice, the bottom two items.
- Owners need to make sure representatives are qualified and they must supply the representative with a Power of Attorney (POA).

CAPPED PROPERTY VALUES AND APPEALS

Since properties that are capped will be taxed on the capped value and not market value, owners who are thinking about appealing will want to consider the following:

- If what the owner believes the property is worth (market value) is higher than the capped value – an appeal will make no difference in the tax amount. The owner may not want to take the time to appeal if it will not impact taxes – but the owner is still welcome to appeal.

REMEMBER THESE IMPORTANT FACTS

- A phone call does not protect appeal rights.
- All objections, protests & appeals must be filed in writing.
- Deadlines apply that cannot be waived. Filing all forms as early as possible is recommended, in the first few weeks.