

Things to Consider Before Applying for a Real Estate Abatement...

following scenarios are based on the current fiscal year

1. Fiscal Year 2012 assessments are valued as of the effective date of January 1st, 2012.
 - a. What does this mean? Valuations are based on calendar year 2010 sales, so an assessment value is not current market value.
 - b. Massachusetts Department of Revenue requires that all Assessors value property at 100% of market value for the year in review currently 2010. Sales are analyzed each year by style, size, age, and location and adjusted according to the sales data for that given year. The abatement process is for contesting valuation based on errors or disproportionate valuation.
2. I purchased my property in calendar year 2011, and the purchase price is below the assessed value.
 - a. Sales that take place in calendar year 2011 will affect the assessment value for Fiscal Year 2013; we are currently in Fiscal Year 2012 (see number 1).
 - b. I purchased my property as a Short Sale, Foreclosure or Auction. These types of sales are not valid ARM's Length transactions and therefore are not considered in the abatement process. An ARM's Length transaction is a transaction in which the buyers and sellers of a product act independently and have no relationship to each other. The concept of an ARM's Length transaction is to ensure that both parties in the deal are acting in their own self-interest and are not subject to any pressure or duress from the other party.
3. I have reviewed my property record card and have questions or found errors on it.
 - a. If you have found errors on your property record card, please discuss them with the Assessors office prior to applying for Real Estate Abatement for clarification.
4. My tax bill is higher than last year. I want to file for Real Estate Abatement.
 - a. The Assessors office function is to value property at market value for the sales year in review. (FY 2012 reviews calendar year 2010 sales). The abatement process is for contesting valuation based on data errors or disproportionate valuation. Taxes are based on the town budget voted on at town meeting, which determines the tax rate. If values decline and spending rises, then the tax rate will increase to appropriate the correct amount to support the budget. Actual tax bills (3rd and 4th quarter) will almost always be higher than the preliminary bills (1st and 2nd quarter) as the preliminary bills are based on the prior years tax rate and values.
5. I cannot afford my taxes; I wish to apply for an Abatement.
 - a. The Assessors office can sympathize with many people in these hard economic times; we cannot grant Abatements based on personal matters. The abatement process is for contesting valuation based on errors or disproportionate valuation based on similar sales.
 - b. There are personal exemptions available for seniors and veterans (conditions apply for both as well as filing deadlines). Please ask someone in the Assessors office about your eligibility.
6. A full interior and exterior inspection is required to be performed by the Assessors for all abatements. If you deny entry by the Assessor then your application will be denied.