

# Assessing Department

## Mission

*To value real and personal property efficiently, fairly and accurately, in accordance with the laws of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. In addition, we administer motor vehicle excise taxes, tax exemption programs, senior tax assistance programs and abatement requests. We strive to address all concerns of members of the public professionally, quickly and courteously.*

The Newton Assessing Department is statutorily required to assess all property, both real and personal, at its full and fair cash value as of January 1 of each year. This is required under Massachusetts General Laws, Chapter 59 Section 38.

We recently conducted and completed an interim year revaluation of all property, both real and personal, for Fiscal Year 2023. This revaluation process is governed by Massachusetts General Laws, Chapter 40 Section 56. A recent change in this law requires communities to perform a full revaluation every five years. The Massachusetts Department of Revenue applies a rigorous certification process when a community revalues its property, requiring that assessments meet strict statistical tests to ensure they accurately reflect the market and are applied consistently. In the interim years between full revaluations, the City, pursuant to state law, must adjust property assessments consistent with real estate market trends. These adjustments must also conform with the Department of Revenue statistical guidelines and reporting requirements.

This past year, Fiscal Year 2023, was a very busy and productive year for our Newton Assessing Department. Some of our noteworthy accomplishments include:

- Successfully and in a timely manner completed the Department of Revenue mandated valuation of all real (27,000 parcels) and personal property (2,000 accounts) throughout the City, amounting to over \$42 billion in assessed value.
- Valued new growth due to new construction that resulted in \$5.58 million in “new” revenue for the City. This entailed reviewing and inspecting over 3,500 properties that had building permits from calendar 2021, including renovations, additions and/or new construction. This was fueled by mostly residential development and residential improvements, along with some mixed-use new construction.
- Reviewed and granted over 600 personal exemptions, tax deferrals, tax work-off programs, water/sewer discounts and disabled tax aid grants.
- Administered over 70,000 motor vehicle excise bills. We met our internal goal of a 2-Day turnaround time on over 2,585 fully documented excise abatement applications.
- Worked effectively so that less than 1% of real and personal property assessed values were contested.
- Reviewed and analyzed over 2,690 property deeds that were filed and recorded at the Middlesex South Registry of Deeds. The corresponding ownership information was updated in our property database. The ownership changes were also provided to the Treasurer’s Office for accurate billing information.

The entire office is proud of all the work we accomplished, from the property valuations to the daily interactions we have with the public via in-person meetings, telephone calls and ZOOM meetings. The COVID-19 pandemic has impacted a small number of our property inspections, due to health and safety concerns for our property owners and for our appraisal staff. Our appraisal staff has taken appropriate safety measures when visiting properties to make the property owner feel comfortable and to keep them safe. The property owners have been very grateful for our concerns and thankful for our safety measures.

We have all our property information available to the public on our on-line Assessing database. This database is the most widely viewed information on our City’s website.

We will continue to administer the statutory and local responsibilities that are placed upon our Assessing Department with the utmost professionalism.

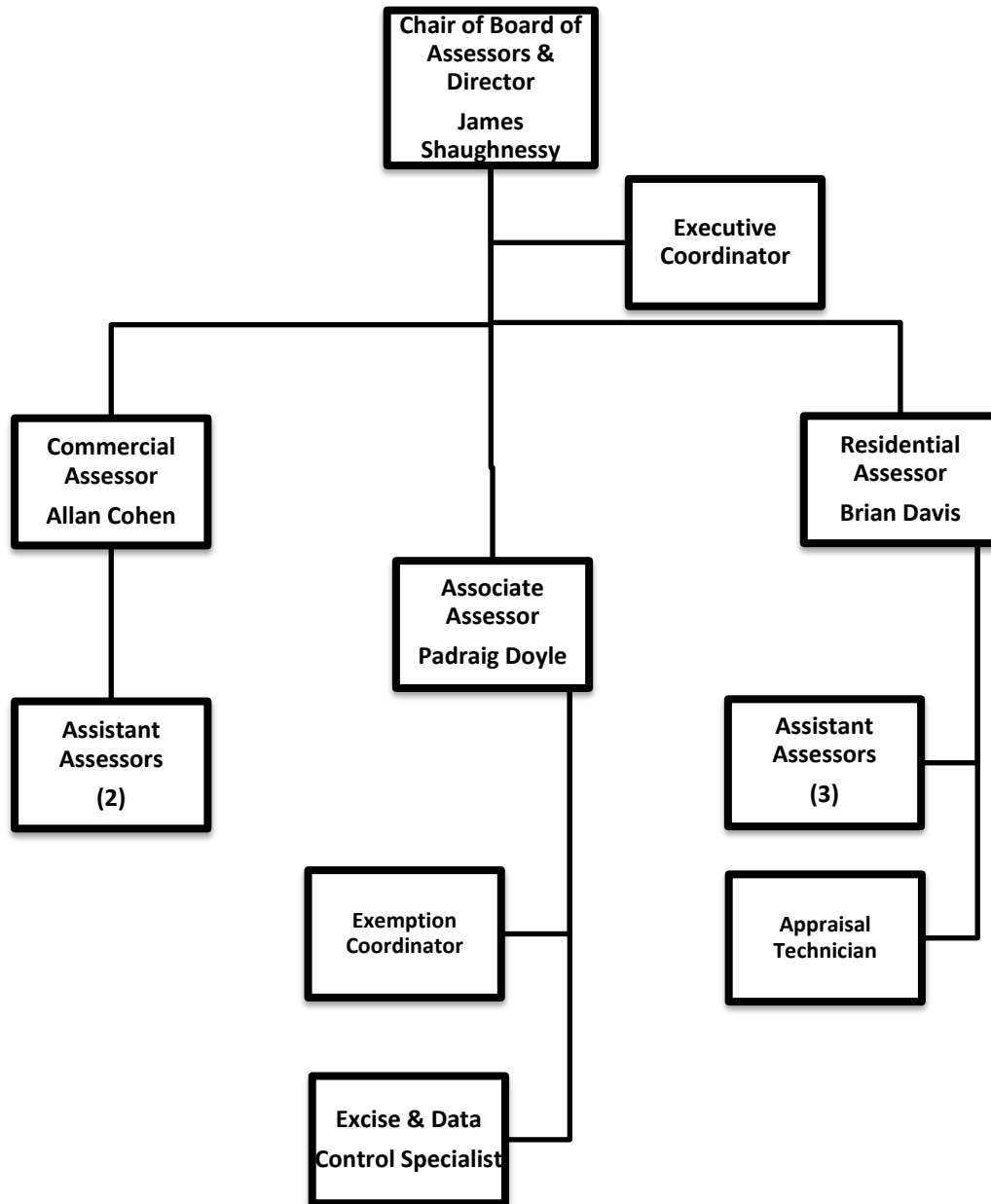
We are maintaining a mostly level-funded budget for fiscal year 2024 and we are excited to continue offering the exceptional customer service our Assessing Department provides. We enjoy being available in City Hall during working hours to help residents whenever they need information from our office.

*James*

*Shaughnessy*

City of Newton Assessing Department

# ASSESSING



# Financial and Operating Highlights

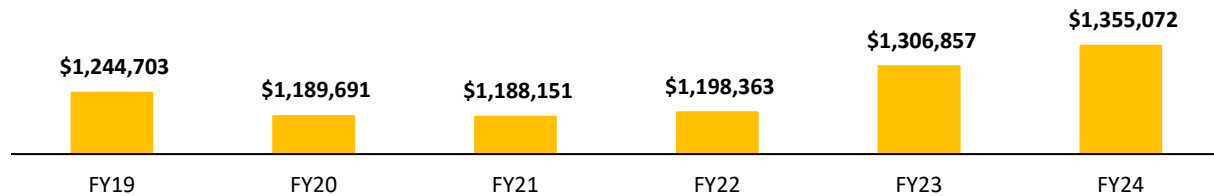
## Financial Highlights

	< -----Actual ----->				Original	Proposed
	FY2019	FY2020	FY2021	FY2022	FY2023	FY2024
<b>Expenditure by Department</b>						
Assessing	\$ 1,244,703	\$ 1,189,691	\$ 1,188,151	\$ 1,198,363	\$ 1,306,857	\$ 1,355,072
<b>Total</b>	\$ 1,244,703	\$ 1,189,691	\$ 1,188,151	\$ 1,198,363	\$ 1,306,857	\$ 1,355,072
<b>% Incr</b>	3.11%	-4.42%	-0.13%	0.86%	9.05%	<b>3.69%</b>

## Personnel

Full-Time	13	13	13	13	13	13
Part-Time	0	0	0	0	0	0
<b>Total</b>	13	13	13	13	13	13

## Total Assessing Expenditures



## Operating Highlights

<u>Single Family Sales</u>			<u>Assessing Department Activity</u>			
Year	Sales	Avg Price	Year	Inspections	Deeds	Excise Bills
2013	740	\$1,045,810	2013	3,222	2,303	71,609
2014	671	\$1,107,486	2014	3,371	2,179	72,066
2015	745	\$1,200,567	2015	4,085	2,223	72,246
2016	660	\$1,245,840	2016	3,648	2,196	72,353
2017	701	\$1,312,866	2017	3,095	2,128	72,785
2018	710	\$1,391,520	2018	3,230	1,974	72,816
2019	653	\$1,408,727	2019	3,234	1,885	70,934
2020	664	\$1,480,386	2020	3,734	2,123	69,565
2021	795	\$1,739,791	2021	3,495	2,698	70,176
2022*	710	\$1,881,469	2022*	3,622	2,184	67,934*

\*CY2022 Sales

\*CY2022 Excise count is not final as of this printing.

# Assessing Department Fiscal Year 2024 Outcomes and Strategies

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## Outcome 1

### Provide Timely, Full and Fair Cash Valuations of all Real and Personal Property

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The Newton Assessing Department assesses all property, both real and personal, at its full and fair cash value as of January 1 of each year.

Our office will visit all properties sold to help us understand in detail changes in the real estate market. We will review all the

property transfer deeds to determine if the transfer was a market value transaction. We will mail to and then analyze income and expense forms from the owners of commercial, industrial and apartment properties to help us determine changes in the rental market. We will mail and then analyze Forms of List to all business owners to keep the personal property database current for valuation. We will conduct cyclical property inspections throughout the City to keep our property database current.

The Massachusetts Department of Revenue (DOR) applies a rigorous certification process when a community's Assessing Department values its property, requiring that assessments meet strict statistical tests to ensure they accurately reflect the market and are applied consistently. The goal of our office is to get our valuations certified by the DOR in a timely manner so the Newton City Council can set the corresponding fiscal year tax rate. This timely certification enables the fiscal year 3<sup>rd</sup> quarter real estate and personal property tax bills to be mailed by the Treasurer/Collector on or before December 31<sup>st</sup> of the given year.

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New growth comes from a variety of sources. New growth can be new construction, additions and/or alterations that result in increases in assessed value not due to changes in market conditions. New growth can be new business personal property, such as new machinery, furniture and equipment used to conduct business. New growth can also occur when a tax-exempt property is returned to the tax roll. This new growth results in an increase in the annual City-wide tax levy over the limits of Proposition 2 ½.

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## Outcome 2

### Calculate Accurately New Growth Due to New Construction/Renovations

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Our office will physically inspect all properties with building permits to see if the work performed increased the market value of the property. We will calculate the City's new growth based upon the Department of Revenue's (DOR) guidelines for determining new growth. DOR guidelines require us to report all new growth activity to the DOR. This new growth calculation needs to be certified by the DOR by late October so the Tax Classification hearing can be held by the City Council for timely setting of the fiscal year tax rate.

# Assessing Department Fiscal Year 2024 Outcomes and Strategies

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## Outcome 3

### Administer Tax Assistance Programs

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There are numerous tax assistance programs in Newton for eligible property owners. Some programs are income and asset based. Some are income-only based; others are asset-only based. There are also tax exemptions available for disabled veterans and blind property owners. Beginning in FY2024, most exemption programs will have their assistance amounts increased significantly.

We make information about tax assistance programs available on our website and through inserts in tax bills. Our goal is to have most prior year exemption recipients approved by the time the third quarter real estate tax bills are issued in December. The approval process requires the applicant to submit various documents to confirm their eligibility. Approval prior to December enables the property owner to receive their exemption credit on their third and fourth quarter tax bills. We have a statutory deadline for accepting applications of April 1 of the fiscal year. Beginning in FY2024, the City of Newton increased the qualifying income limit for tax deferrals for seniors (41A) to \$93,000 (from \$86,000). This increase will make it easier for more low-income seniors to defer their tax liability. We strive to administer these tax assistance programs in a timely and helpful manner.

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The City of Newton issues over 70,000 motor vehicle excise bills each calendar year. Many times, a vehicle is sold, traded, donated, registered in another state or totaled in an accident. Motor vehicle excise is paid on a calendar year basis and if any of the above situations occur, the vehicle owner may be entitled to a partial abatement of their motor vehicle excise tax.

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## Outcome 4

### Maintain 2-Day Turnaround of Motor Vehicle Excise Abatement Requests

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We provide answers to frequently asked questions on our website to answer many of the common motor vehicle excise questions. We also make the abatement application for motor vehicle excise available on-line for vehicle owners to access easily. In most cases, we need to know what happened to the vehicle and to the license plate. We are consistently able to provide a 2-day turnaround time on timely filed and documented excise abatement requests; in some instances, we provide same day turnaround time. Our staff is cross-trained, so this 2-day turnaround time is met even during high demand and low staffing periods. Once approved, we also supply the Treasurer/Collector with abatement information within this 2-day period.

FUND: 0001 - GENERAL FUND  
 DEPARTMENT: 106 - ASSESSING

CITY OF NEWTON BUDGET  
 DEPARTMENT LEGAL LEVEL OF CONTROL

	ACTUAL 2020	ACTUAL 2021	ACTUAL 2022	ORIGINAL 2023	RECOMMENDED 2024	CHANGE 2023 to 2024
<b>ASSESSING SUMMARY</b>						
51 - PERSONNEL SERVICES	1,002,237	1,012,188	1,042,029	1,101,144	1,136,305	35,161
52 - EXPENSES	45,214	39,725	35,580	68,364	57,100	-11,264
57 - FRINGE BENEFITS	134,903	136,237	120,754	137,349	161,667	24,318
<b>TOTAL DEPARTMENT</b>	<b>1,182,354</b>	<b>1,188,151</b>	<b>1,198,363</b>	<b>1,306,857</b>	<b>1,355,072</b>	<b>48,215</b>
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DEPARTMENT: 106 - ASSESSING

CITY OF NEWTON BUDGET  
DEPARTMENTAL DETAIL

	ACTUAL 2020	ACTUAL 2021	ACTUAL 2022	ORIGINAL 2023	RECOMMENDED 2024	CHANGE 2023 to 2024
<b>106 - ASSESSING</b>						
<b>0110641 - ASSESSING</b>						
<b>PERSONNEL SERVICES</b>						
511001 FULL TIME SALARIES	988,487	994,122	1,014,326	1,087,244	1,122,405	35,161
511102 PART TIME > 20 HRS/WK	7,338	0	0	0	0	0
514001 LONGEVITY	11,750	12,400	13,067	11,900	11,900	0
515003 SPECIAL LEAVE BUY BACK	0	0	5,000	0	0	0
515006 VACATION BUY BACK	0	4,166	7,636	0	0	0
515102 CLEANING ALLOWANCE	2,000	1,500	2,000	2,000	2,000	0
<b>TOTAL PERSONNEL SERVICES</b>	<b>1,009,574</b>	<b>1,012,188</b>	<b>1,042,029</b>	<b>1,101,144</b>	<b>1,136,305</b>	<b>35,161</b>
<b>EXPENSES</b>						
524010 OFFICE EQUIPMENT R-M	22	696	1,512	3,000	3,000	0
524100 SOFTWARE MAINTENANC	24,496	25,597	24,929	33,000	31,000	-2,000
531900 TRAINING EXPENSES	2,498	5,061	1,128	7,500	7,500	0
534010 TELEPHONE	1,060	1,146	1,058	1,000	1,100	100
534040 INTERNET ACCESS CHAR	280	0	0	500	0	-500
534100 POSTAGE	6,927	3,645	3,212	9,000	5,000	-4,000
534200 PRINTING	2,747	506	776	2,500	1,500	-1,000
534300 ADVERTISING/PUBLICATIO	0	0	0	400	0	-400
542000 OFFICE SUPPLIES	4,583	1,492	1,322	5,000	4,000	-1,000
548000 GASOLINE	71	0	0	1,414	0	-1,414
548400 VEHICLE REPAIR PARTS		39	0	0	0	0
552300 PAPER GOODS & SUPPLIE	410	0	0	400	0	-400
559200 BOOKS/MANUALS/PERIODI	0	0	0	250	0	-250
571000 VEHICLE USE REIMBURSE	146	3	0	300	0	-300
571100 IN-STATE CONFERENCES	605	0	700	2,600	2,500	-100
573000 DUES & SUBSCRIPTIONS	1,370	1,540	943	1,500	1,500	0
<b>TOTAL EXPENSES</b>	<b>45,214</b>	<b>39,725</b>	<b>35,580</b>	<b>68,364</b>	<b>57,100</b>	<b>-11,264</b>
<b>FRINGE BENEFITS</b>						
57DENT DENTAL INSURANCE	2,869	2,628	2,034	2,010	2,647	637
57HLTH HEALTH INSURANCE	106,996	109,050	94,784	103,635	122,890	19,255
57LIFE BASIC LIFE INSURANCE	283	284	227	285	298	13
57MEDA MEDICARE PAYROLL TAX	15,123	14,995	14,939	15,968	16,546	578
57OPEB OPEB CONTRIBUTION	9,633	9,280	8,771	15,451	19,286	3,835
<b>TOTAL FRINGE BENEFITS</b>	<b>134,903</b>	<b>136,237</b>	<b>120,754</b>	<b>137,349</b>	<b>161,667</b>	<b>24,318</b>
<b>TOTAL ASSESSING</b>	<b>1,189,691</b>	<b>1,188,151</b>	<b>1,198,363</b>	<b>1,306,857</b>	<b>1,355,072</b>	<b>48,215</b>
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