

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 2020. 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 2020, 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 (2,200 accounts) throughout the City, amounting to over \$36 billion in assessed value.
- Valued new growth due to new construction that resulted in \$5.6 million in “new” revenue for the City. This entailed reviewing and inspecting over 3,200 properties that had building permits from calendar 2018, including renovations, additions and/or 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 71,000 motor vehicle excise bills. We met our internal goal of a 2-Day turnaround time on over 3,500 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 1,800 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.
- Upgraded our real estate database from ORACLE to Microsoft SQL and performed a 100% data verification check to have a successful and seamless transition.

The entire office is proud of all the work we accomplished, from the property valuations to the daily interactions we have with the public. 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.

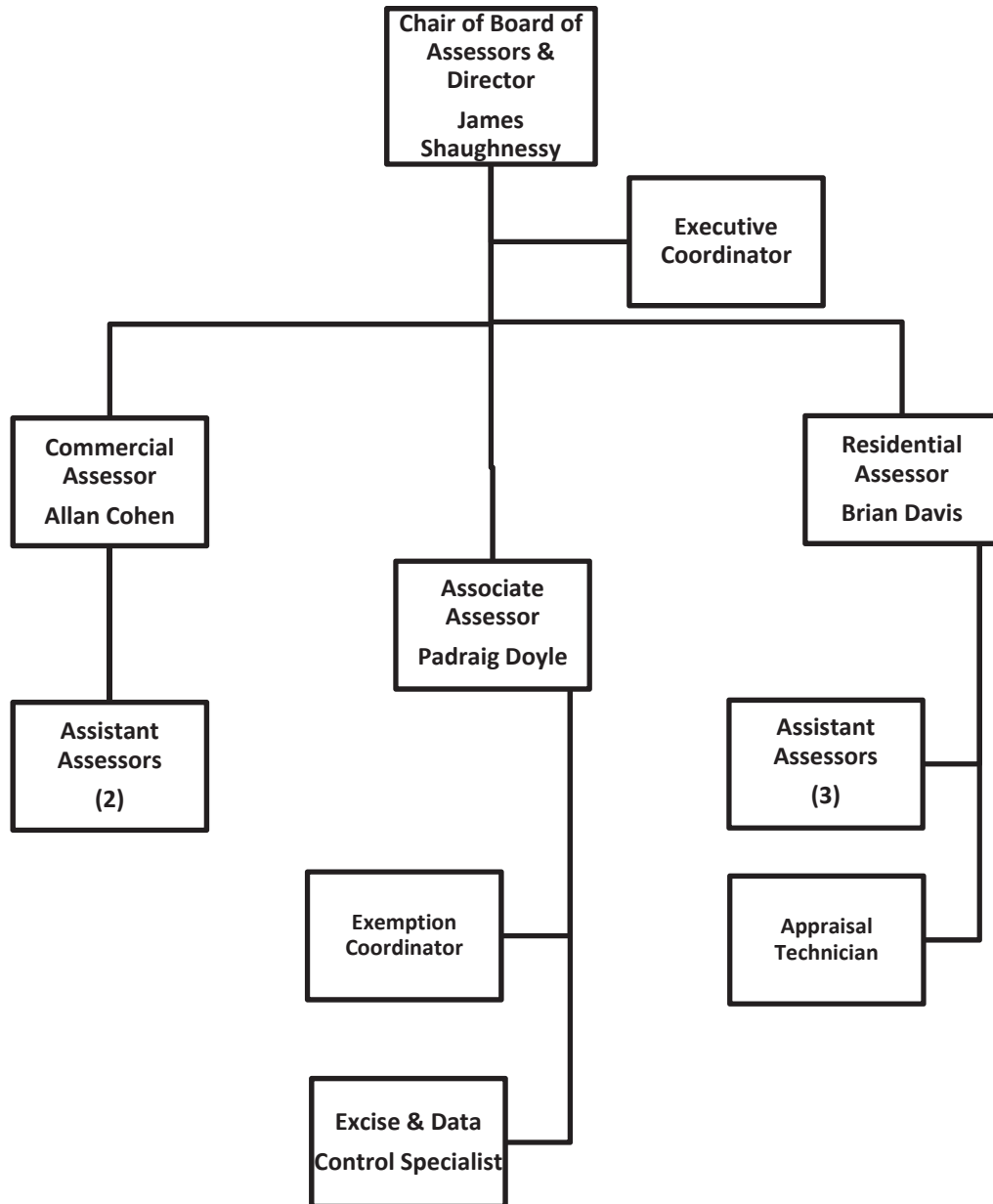
We are maintaining a mostly level-funded budget for fiscal year 2021 and we are excited to continue offering the exceptional customer service our Assessing Department provides.

James

Shaughnessy

City of Newton Assessing Department

ASSESSING



Financial and Operating Highlights

Financial Highlights

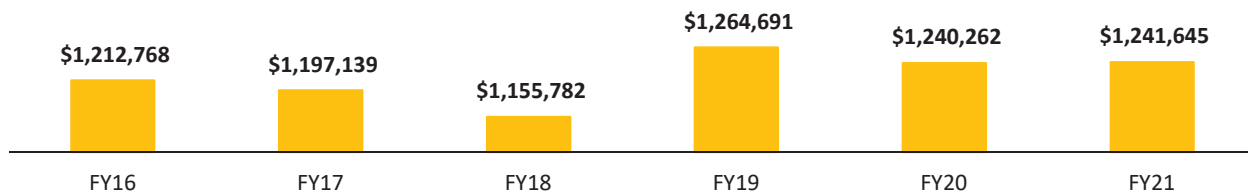
	Actual			Adj Budget		Proposed
	FY2016	FY2017	FY2018	FY2019	FY2020	FY2021
Expenditure by Department						
Assessing	\$ 1,212,768	\$ 1,197,139	\$ 1,155,782	\$ 1,264,691	\$ 1,240,262	\$ 1,241,645
Total	\$ 1,212,768	\$ 1,197,139	\$ 1,155,782	\$ 1,264,691	\$ 1,240,262	\$ 1,241,645
% Incr	1.43%	-1.29%	-3.45%	9.42%	-1.93%	0.11%

Personnel

Full-Time	13	13	13	13	13	13*
Part-Time	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total	13	13	13	13	13	13

*Excise Data Control Clerk deferred until Jan. 2, 2021

Total Assessing Expenditures



Operating Highlights

Single Family Sales			Assessing Department Activity			
Year	Sales	Avg Price	Year	Inspections	Deeds	Excise Bills
2010	590	\$875,632	2010	2,659	1,939	71,735
2011	583	\$896,858	2011	2,808	1,876	71,647
2012	694	\$946,793	2012	2,754	2,265	70,783
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

*YTD

Assessing Department Fiscal Year 2021 Outcomes and Strategies

Outcome 1

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

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 visits 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 and then analyze income and expense forms to 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 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 3rd quarter real estate and personal property tax bills to be mailed by the Treasurer/Collector on or before December 31st of the given year.

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 their 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.

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 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.

Outcome 2

Calculate Accurately New Growth Due to New Construction/Renovations

Assessing Department Fiscal Year 2021 Outcomes and Strategies

Outcome 3

Administer Tax Assistance Programs

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.

We make information about tax assistance programs available on our website and through inserts in the fiscal year 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 FY2019, the City of Newton increased the qualifying income limit for tax deferrals for seniors (41A) to \$86,000 (from \$60,000). This increase will make it easier for more low-income seniors to defer their tax liability.

The City of Newton issues over 70,000 motor vehicle excise bills in the course of a 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.

We provide a FAQ section 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 what happened 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 turn-around 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.

Outcome 4

Maintain 2-Day Turnaround of Motor Vehicle Excise Abatement Requests

FUND: 0001 - GENERAL FUND
DEPARTMENT: 106 - BOARD OF ASSESSORS

CITY OF NEWTON BUDGET
DEPARTMENT LEGAL LEVEL OF CONTROL

	ACTUAL 2017	ACTUAL 2018	ACTUAL 2019	ORIGINAL 2020	RECOMMENDED 2021	CHANGE 2020 to 2021
ASSESSING SUMMARY						
51 - PERSONAL SERVICES	1,036,748	992,895	1,056,772	1,044,264	1,032,988	-11,275
52 - EXPENSES	48,254	49,110	54,862	64,235	63,500	-735
57 - FRINGE BENEFITS	142,753	121,278	133,069	131,763	145,156	13,393
TOTAL DEPARTMENT	1,227,755	1,163,282	1,244,703	1,240,262	1,241,645	1,383
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CITY OF NEWTON BUDGET
DEPARTMENTAL DETAIL

	ACTUAL FY2017	ACTUAL FY2018	ACTUAL FY2019	ORIGINAL 2020	RECOMMENDED 2021	CHANGE 2020 to 2021
106 - ASSESSING						
0110641 - ASSESSING						
PERSONAL SERVICES						
511001 FULL TIME SALARIES	978,678	952,518	1,004,489	1,031,014	1,019,338	-11,675
511102 PART TIME > 20 HRS/WK	3,562	13,165	13,674	0	0	0
514001 LONGEVITY	8,258	11,250	13,750	11,250	11,650	400
514309 OTHER STIPENDS	30,116	7,500	0	0	0	0
515003 SPECIAL LEAVE BUY BACK	6,000	0	6,000	0	0	0
515005 BONUSES	0	1,400	1,200	0	0	0
515006 VACATION BUY BACK	7,634	5,562	15,659	0	0	0
515101 CLOTHING ALLOWANCE	500	0	0	0	0	0
515102 CLEANING ALLOWANCE	2,000	1,500	2,000	2,000	2,000	0
TOTAL PERSONAL SERVICES	1,036,748	992,895	1,056,772	1,044,264	1,032,988	-11,275
EXPENSES						
524010 OFFICE EQUIPMENT R-M	1,059	1,368	0	2,000	1,500	-500
524030 MOTOR VEHICLE R-M	500	676	782	1,200	0	-1,200
524050 COMPUTER EQUIPMT R-M	0	0	0	600	500	-100
524100 SOFTWARE MAINTENANC	18,581	18,105	25,558	28,000	30,000	2,000
531900 TRAINING EXPENSES	4,205	5,498	4,749	8,000	5,500	-2,500
534010 TELEPHONE	1,378	1,319	1,418	1,300	1,300	0
534040 INTERNET ACCESS CHAR	615	575	766	1,000	750	-250
534100 POSTAGE	9,606	10,046	9,423	5,500	10,000	4,500
534200 PRINTING	2,273	3,134	2,035	3,500	3,500	0
534300 ADVERTISING/PUBLICATIO	0	0	0	600	400	-200
542000 OFFICE SUPPLIES	4,551	4,014	4,931	5,000	5,000	0
548000 GASOLINE	589	812	559	1,200	0	-1,200
552300 PAPER GOODS & SUPPLIE	0	0	358	500	400	-100
559200 BOOKS/MANUALS/PERIODI	330	200	335	335	250	-85
571000 VEHICLE USE REIMBURSE	462	213	106	500	300	-200
571100 IN-STATE CONFERENCES	2,581	1,685	2,589	3,000	2,600	-400
573000 DUES & SUBSCRIPTIONS	1,525	1,465	1,253	2,000	1,500	-500
TOTAL EXPENSES	48,254	49,110	54,862	64,235	63,500	-735
FRINGE BENEFITS						
57DENT DENTAL INSURANCE	3,872	3,197	3,170	2,916	2,448	-468
57HLTH HEALTH INSURANCE	118,399	96,351	105,629	105,338	116,781	11,443
57LIFE BASIC LIFE INSURANCE	340	297	316	285	228	-57
57MEDA MEDICARE PAYROLL TAX	14,125	14,915	15,956	14,715	15,377	662
57OPEB OPEB CONTRIBUTION	6,017	6,518	7,997	8,509	10,322	1,813
TOTAL FRINGE BENEFITS	142,753	121,278	133,069	131,763	145,156	13,393
TOTAL ASSESSING	1,227,755	1,163,282	1,244,703	1,240,262	1,241,645	1,383
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