

REPORT OF THE BOARD OF ASSESSORS

The assessor's office is the primary generator of Wellesley's revenue with approximately 75% of the town's budget funded by property taxes and automobile excise. The office functions as part of the town government system but must comply with Massachusetts General Laws and is regulated by the Massachusetts Department of Revenue (DOR). The dependence on property taxes and the vital *new growth* component of the tax levy reinforces the importance of the assessors' office and the need for administering Massachusetts's property tax laws effectively and equitably to produce accurate, fair assessment of all taxably property.

Prior to mailing actual tax bills for fiscal year 2009, the department must be certified by the DOR. This is an intensive process that begins early in 2008. In order to meet the standards established by the DOR we must collect, record and analyze a great deal of information about each property and produce statistical and comparative analysis. A necessary component is an extensive assessment-sale ratio study. In addition to testing assessment levels, it is used to evaluate the major coefficients used in our valuation models. Ratios are stratified by coefficients to assure horizontal and vertical equity standards amongst all properties.

The department continues to monitor changes to all property tax laws and personal exemptions. The laws affecting the telecommunications industry have recently been challenged in court. The outcome of these decisions has resulted in substantial changes. Wireless phone companies are no longer entitled to the very favorable tax exemptions previously granted to telephone companies. This changes what can be assessed and who values the property. The land-line companies have also been stripped of some of their tax exemptions. They will now be taxed for all poles and wires over public ways. Previously they were only assessed for those on private ways or underground.

The Board of Selectmen holds an annual tax classification hearing after the assessors receive preliminary certification from the DOR and prior to final certification. The assessors provide data and information for tax classification hearing. Public input is sought by the selectmen prior to their decision to continue with a single tax rate for all properties or to tax different classes of properties at different rates. The vote *does not* increase the town's tax levy but merely shifts the tax burden from one group of taxpayers to another.

In March of this year, David Livingston was elected to the Board of Assessors filling the position of David Chapin who decided not to seek reelection. Deborah Carpenter was elected as Chair. Steve Mahoney filled the other position of the three-member board. Within two years of taking office members of the board are required to complete a 20-hour course taught by the Massachusetts Department of Revenue. This is the only elected board that must successfully complete such a course and examination. Failure to do so jeopardizes the DOR approval of the town's tax rate.

Total assessed values for each major class of properties, the number of parcels, and their share of the Tax Levy are shown below:

Class	Parcel Count	Valuation	Percentage of Levy
Residential	8,177	\$8,069,347,000	87.94%
Commercial	244	1,034,416,000	11.27
Personal Property	923	71,884,000	.79
TOTAL	9,344	\$9,175,647,000	100.00%

The tax rate for fiscal year 2008 was \$9.18/1,000 of valuation. The levy limit was \$84,261,644 and the Town levied \$84,232,439. The levy included payments towards four exclusions totaling \$5,543,001 and new growth of \$1,308,582. There were 164 real and personal property tax abatement applications for the fiscal year and 77 were granted some adjustment in their assessed value and corresponding abatement.

The total statutory exemptions for fiscal year 2008 were:

Exemption Type	Count	Total Tax Amount
Clause 22 – Veterans	104	\$65,675
Clause 37 – Blind	18	\$9,000
Clause 41A – Deferral	52	\$321,360
Clause 41C – Elderly	51	\$38,250
Community Preservation Exemption	72	\$3,199
Senior Work Program	17	\$10,883

Taxpayers experiencing financial hardship are encouraged to consult with the assessors' office to determine eligibility for deferrals and exemptions as options to allow them to remain in their homes.

The total number of Motor Vehicle Excise Bills issued during fiscal 2008 was, 24,115 that generated \$4,785,380 in tax receivables.

Office Staff:

Donna McCabe, AAS	Chief Assessor
Lauren O'Sullivan	Assistant Administrator
Tara Damiano	Assessor Technician
Louise Burns	Secretary
Judy Keefe	Assistant Secretary

Respectfully submitted,
 Board of Assessors
 L. Deborah Carpenter, Chair
 Stephen D. Mahoney
 David Livingston