

Frequently Asked Questions Concerning Property Reassessment and Impact on Property Taxes

1. My assessment DOES reflect the fair market value, but my taxes are too high. Why?

Please be mindful that the assessment function is focused on the **uniformity and accuracy of the assessments** NOT the resulting tax responsibility. When the assessments are set to the same standard (market value) in a uniform way, the tax levy will be distributed fairly municipal and countywide in accordance with the NJ Constitution.

The Tax Assessor does not have control of the tax levy. County, municipal and school budget costs determine the amount of property tax to be collected. A municipality's general tax rate is calculated by dividing the total dollar amount it needs to meet local budget expenses by the net valuation of all its taxable property. An individual's property taxes are directly correlated to that property's proportionate share ownership of the municipality. To put it simply, if a property was worth 5% of the municipality, it would be assigned to pay 5% of the tax levy.

Below is the breakdown of the Borough of Rumson's Tax Levy for 2017, 2018, 2019 & 2020:

Tax Levy Component	2017 Tax Levy	2018 Tax Levy	2019 Tax Levy	2020 Tax Levy	Percent of Bill	Contact
County Budget	\$ 8,813,226	\$ 8,999,865	\$ 8,865,086	\$ 9,273,390	16%	732-431-7000
County Library	\$ 617,595	\$ 637,924	\$ 634,189	\$ 674,967	1%	732-431-7220
Local Elementary School Budget	\$ 16,059,502	\$ 16,899,627	\$ 17,332,020	\$ 18,103,124	32%	732-842-0354
Regional High School Budget	\$ 12,989,474	\$ 13,534,345	\$ 13,898,869	\$ 14,451,437	26%	732-842-1597
Local Municipal Purposes	\$ 10,514,109	\$ 10,849,768	\$ 11,157,169	\$ 11,376,795	20%	732-842-3300
Reserve for Uncollected Taxes	\$ 1,016,115	\$ 1,050,634	\$ 1,087,578	\$ 1,409,296	2%	732-842-3300
County Open Space Fund	\$ 517,809	\$ 999,527	\$ 1,023,753	\$ 1,082,820	2%	732-431-7000
Excess for Rate Rounding	\$ 22,994	\$ 26,173	\$ 29,725	\$ 15,147		
Total Tax Levy	\$ 50,550,825	\$ 52,997,862	\$ 54,028,387	\$ 56,386,976		

2. How is the Tax Rate Calculated?

The tax rate is calculated by dividing the total tax levy by the net valuation of the Borough (total of all assessments). Each property then pays taxes based off that rate times their assessment so that the tax levy is distributed fairly.

Year	Total Tax Levy	Net Value of Borough	Tax Rate
2017	\$ 50,550,825	\$ 3,441,172,574	1.469%
2018	\$ 52,997,862	\$ 3,576,104,047	1.482%
2019	\$ 54,028,387	\$ 3,677,902,471	1.469%
2020	\$ 56,386,976	\$ 3,934,890,180	1.433%

3. I usually get the 3rd and 4th quarter bills around this time of year. Why does this bill only have the 3rd quarter... and why does it say "estimated"?

Typically, the annual tax rate is certified by the state and the county in the middle of the tax year. The 1st and 2nd quarter bills are always estimations and the reconciliation is usually done in the 3rd and 4th quarters. Due to state budgetary delays related to the COVID-19 crisis, the 2020 tax levy, rate and taxes must be estimated for the 3rd quarter bill. The state will certify tax levies and rates at some point prior to the 4th quarter billing this year. Once the tax rate is certified, the tax collector will multiply your assessment by the certified rate. The collector will then reduce the total amount due by any payments that were made in the first three quarters. The resulting balance will be mailed to you for your 4th quarter bill.

DO NOT MULTIPLY YOUR 3rd QUARTER ESTIMATED BILL BY FOUR TO DETERMINE YOUR ANNUAL TAXES!

The tax quarters are never split into equal 25% distributions (particularly this year where three quarters are being estimated). You will not know your actual annual taxes until the 4th quarter. At that time, your account will be reconciled.

4. I understand that we are reassessing every year, does that mean my assessment will change for next year?

Yes. Every year the market will be analyzed to ensure fair distribution of the tax levy. Monmouth County is engaged in the *Assessment Demonstration Program (ADP)*. The overarching intent of the *Assessment Demonstration Program (ADP)* is to institute a revised assessment function that provides systemic cost savings and enhanced public service. At the core of the program is the ability to establish and annually maintain individual property assessments at 100% of current market value. This is accomplished by the County and the towns working collaboratively to employ enhanced education, advanced appraisal techniques and modern technology. The fundamental goal of the ADP is to ensure that each taxpayer pays their fair share of the annual tax levy (no more or no less).

5. How did/does the COVID-19 crisis affect my assessment?

Since the 2020 assessment valuation date was 10/1/19, the COVID-19 crisis played no part in the 2020 assessment. The COVID-19 crisis was not a real estate market influencing factor as of October 2019. Assessments are always set during the prior year based on market data at that time. Later this year, the 2021 assessments will be established and sent to property owners. The 2021 assessments will be based on sales activity that would have occurred in 2019 and 2020. As a result, market data used in the 2021 reassessment analysis will include activity from a "post-COVID market". It is currently unclear if/how the crisis has/will affect our real estate markets since little market data has presented itself this early on. The assessment office will continue to monitor markets and will make appropriate adjustments to assessments for the 2021 tax list.

6. If my assessment goes up, does that mean I will pay even MORE taxes?

Not necessarily. The assessment function does not *create* revenue for the municipality. The Assessment function is only a distribution mechanism of the separately determined tax levy. In strict adherence with the NJ Constitution, this apportionment is to be based on the value of property.

7. My house was recently inspected. What was the purpose of that inspection?

The purpose of the inspection is to gather proper information on each property so that the appraisal process (and resulting tax distribution) is fair and uniform. Please note: the inspectors are not appraisers and are not appraising your home. The inspectors are simply data collectors and return the data to this office where the reassessment process is done. The Division of Taxation requires that an inspection is done every five to eight years on each property.

8. I was not home for the inspection. What should I do?

If the inspector did not gain access to the interior of your property, they likely estimated the interior room counts and conditions. You should contact the assessor's office (eaguiar@rumsonnj.gov) and request a copy of your Property Record Card (PRC) to be sure that all of the physical characteristics listed on the record are accurate. If you find any issues on the PRC, you should consult with the assessor immediately to determine what remedies are available. Remember in the future to make sure the inspector has proper identification before allowing them in your house. If there is any question, please do not hesitate to call this office to verify.

9. How is the appraisal process done?

The Assessor reviews all recent sales data and synchronizes the mass appraisal modeling in each market and submarket to target current market value. When the assessments are set to the same standard (market value) in a uniform way, the tax levy will be distributed fairly. Remember, the assessment function is focused on the uniformity and accuracy of the assessments NOT the resulting tax responsibility.

10. What do I do if I feel my 2021 assessment DOES NOT reflect the fair market value?

Please be on the lookout for the postcard* with your 2021 assessment. This postcard is mailed in late November of 2020. If you believe the 2021 assessed value does not reflect the true market value of your property, you should contact the Assessor's office immediately to confirm that the physical characteristics on your Property Record Card (PRC) are accurate. After speaking to the assessor, if you still feel the assessment does not equal the fair market value of the property, you should file an appeal with the Monmouth County Tax Board before January 15th, 2021. Here is a link to the appeal site- <https://secure.njappealonline.com/prodappeals/login.aspx>

Please note that the site will not be open until the 2021 assessment postcards are sent out. If you miss the January 15th deadline, you will not be able to file an appeal at the County until the following year (2022).

If you choose to file an appeal on your 2021 assessment, you will be required to provide evidence to demonstrate your position. "Evidence" is typically recent sales of comparable properties. You can research sales data at the Monmouth County Open Public Records site- <http://oprs.co.monmouth.nj.us/Oprs/External.aspx?iId=12>

Select "Deed/Sr1a List" under step 1 then you can modify your search according to the other fields.

**Although the assessment postcard has "Net Property Taxes" billed for the prior year, the dollar amount on the postcard may not be correct for income tax purposes. In most cases, this would be the amount billed in the prior year, but not necessarily paid. Further, added assessment(s) or tax appeals could cause a discrepancy in what is reported on the postcard versus the actual amounts. Feel free to call the tax office to confirm the amount you were billed and paid in the prior year.*

11. Why are we annually reassessing now and how was it done in the past?

In the past (and currently outside of Monmouth and Somerset Counties), the assessment function may not have been as uniform and accurate as what current technology allows for. Due to technological and administrative constraints, assessments were set during a revaluation year and remained stagnant despite obvious changes in the markets and sub markets. Annually, "assessment to sale price ratios" were studied to establish a "common level of assessment" ratio. One of the many problems with the antiquated traditional assessment system is that it was based off an assumption that every property within a municipal boundary appreciates / depreciates at the same rate. Obviously, this is not true. Every neighborhood and property class react differently to the market environment.

It is necessary to study each of the markets and submarkets individually (annually) to be sure the total tax levy is distributed in accordance with recent and reliable market data. The only appropriate fix for this is to conduct reassessments annually. The old assessment model enabled an environment where assessments were often significantly removed from the current market value of properties. That type environment is ripe for taxes to be inappropriately distributed. Monmouth County has reformed the distribution component of property taxation to address this obvious shortfall. The Assessment Demonstration Program (through annual reassessment) strives to use advancements in technology, education and mass appraisal techniques to provide this better service to the tax payers.

Created in Monmouth County, the *Assessment Demonstration Program* (ADP) is an international award winning program that has been recognized as a model assessment paradigm by Moody's Investor Service and Harvard Kennedy School. The ADP won the industry's top respected *Distinguished Assessment Jurisdiction Award* for 2019 from the *International Association of Assessing Officers* (IAAO). The IAAO presents the *Distinguished Assessment Jurisdiction Award* to a national, state, regional or local agency that has instituted a technical, procedural or administrative program that improves on prior programs, and is recognized as a component of a model assessment system and a contributing factor to equity in property taxation. This prestigious award has been given to the most deserving district in the *world* annually since 1983.

If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact us.

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