

EQUALIZATION UPDATE

The first phase of the equalization project was completed in January of 2016. All properties in Gray have been visited and the buildings measured. Interior inspections were made where property owners were present. Anyone that did not have an interior inspection may call the Assessor's office and request an inspection. The data collection that took place resulted in a significant number of changes (the discovery of additions, decks, and outbuildings previously not assessed, and in some cases the removal of structures that were assessed but no longer existed) to assessment records throughout the Town. As a result, those changes were made for the current tax year. Taxpayers that have an increase or decrease as a result in the 2016-2017 tax year can check with the assessor's office to find out what caused their valuation change. Any changes that were made cannot be taxed retroactively.

The sales analysis and valuation schedule development phase of the equalization will take place over the course of the fall and winter of 2016. After the schedules have been completed in the spring of 2017, the new assessments will be calculated. A field review will take place in April-May before completed preliminary assessments are mailed to taxpayers. Taxpayers will then have the ability to schedule an informal hearing to review assessment information and present any information that is relevant to the property value. After any changes resulting from hearings have been made, the 2018 tax bills will be issued. Taxpayers who believe their assessment is over-valued after the bills have been issued will then have the ability to file formal appeals in accordance with State Statute.

Lastly, the general rule of thumb for an equalization program is that one third will see an increase in taxes after equalization, one third will see a decrease in taxes, and one third will remain relatively the same. Virtually all property assessments will increase. Currently, the Town of Gray has an average ratio of 84% which means that, **on average**, assessments are 84% of what they would sell for at fair market value. The goal of the equalization project is to assess all properties at 100% of fair market value in order to assure that all taxpayers are being treated equally.

Town-wide Survey for Comprehensive Plan coming in October

This October, the Town's Community Development Department will be conducting a survey of all property owners in Gray. The purpose is to update the transportation and land use sections of the 2003 Comprehensive Plan that was written before the Rt. 26A, also known as the By-Pass, was built. The Comprehensive Plan provides the long-range vision for the Town for the next 10 to 15 years and functions as the "blueprint" for guiding policy decisions such as future zoning districts, transportation policies, recreation options, and economic development.

As a property owner in Gray, the survey is *your opportunity to express your opinion about the Town* including aspects you like, and perhaps changes that you believe should be undertaken. The survey will be conducted electronically via any computer with internet service. The survey link will be active to fill out **from September 30th until October 28th**. If you do not have a computer with internet service, there are several computers available for public use at the Gray Public Library during their regular business hours.

This notice has been included in your tax bill to encourage you to sign up on the Town's website so that when the survey is available in late September, the Town will send you a reminder and a link for the survey directly to your computer. There are 5 easy steps to sign up for the direct notification of the survey:

1. Go to "www.graymaine.org/subscribe" on your computer
2. Enter your e-mail (2x) in the boxes provided
3. Click on the "Community Development" box under Urgent Alert
4. Fill in the Captcha (red box at bottom of page) by typing in number in the white box
5. Click on "Subscribe me"

The Town encourages you to sign up your e-mail to ensure you receive the survey later next month. If you have follow-up questions, please do not hesitate to contact the Community Development Department at 657-3112.