

ASSESSMENT SURVEY – QUESTION 1
From Regular Mail

“Should the district continue to file property appeals to correct what appear to be under-assessed properties? Why or why not?”

Comments – For Appeals

“Yes – and also over-assessed properties – equalize on same basis so everyone pays his fair share.”

“The reassessment property was a real joke! No one even evaluated my father’s property. We did realize (learn) my parents were paying taxes on a barn (for 50 years almost) that was not on their property.”

“Fair thing to do”

“For accuracy”

“It allows for proper assessment throughout the district/township.”

“In order to have an accurate, and fair, basis for school tax revenue.”

“Fairness”

“I think everyone should be paying for the assessed value the district has established in 2003. If your home sells for more than 20% of assessment then reassess. But, maybe there can be a system to gradually increase the tax that is owed. For example, if your assessment is for \$75,000 and selling price is \$150,000 do not slam the new homeowner with a large increase the same year they move in. Maybe an increase of 20% a year for 5 years until the property is paying for the new assessed value of the home?”

“Only for properties sold or improved (e.g. building permits)”

“When the last assessment was approved by County Council, it was stated that reassessments would occur as market values changed.”

“All residents need to be assessed fairly.”

“The appearance of under-assessed properties bothers me as a tax payer. Fairness can be attained through the appeal process.”

“The process appears to be fairer than not doing it.”

“Everyone should pay their fair share.”

“New sales should require the fair market value to be assessed.”

“Everyone should pay their fair share.”

“The assessment process used by Erie County was not accurate. If someone purchases a \$300,000 property, they should pay taxes accordingly.”

“Fairer for all property owners. In a district such as Fairview, with property values so wide ranging – it serves all citizens to have fair assessments.”

“The district needs to address those properties that appear to have under-valued assessments.”

“I feel that my property has been singled out - among other things with sales numbers published in the Times-News that simply appealed to the “class envy” crowd. Let’s have all properties put under the same spotlight.”

“Too many not paying their fair share means some have to pay too much.”

“I think the purchase price is the best indicator of a home’s value. I think reassessing a home at 90% of the sell/buy price. I have just purchased a Fairview home and have had my tax increased.”

“It’s only fair we all pay our fair share of property taxes.”

“Everyone needs to pay according to their current home value.”

“To have fair assessments across the board.”

“That is a fair form of appraisal. It is very difficult to argue that you are being over assessed when you paid the new amount for the property. I was a victim of 1 major increase after I purchased my home recently. The properties around me are of equal value but assessed at far less, therefore I am forced to pay a disproportionate share of school and township expenses.”

“If property increases in value so should the tax.”

“To have fair and balanced assessed properties.”

“It is not fair for the people who build new homes to be assessed on the full market value while other homes have assessments lower than their full market value at time of sale.”

“Continue to use increased revenue to provide smaller increase (or no increase) to all taxpayers.”

“It’s only fair.”

“There seem to be many large/expensive homes that are underpaying – everyone needs to be on equal ground according to home value.”

“Everyone pay their fair share, but no more.”

"It is reasonable to maintain up-to-date assessments for taxation purposes. However, it must be done in an equitable manner – everyone must be assessed at the same time."

"Each homeowner should be expected to pay the same proportionate taxes based on the market value of his home. Market value is what a house or property sells for. (IMHO)"

"Should be what sell house for; appropriate taxes assessed properties."

"To be fair to all property owners."

"That's the only way to update current tax records – and new building permits."

"How do they assess property when they never see the inside of a home or even know what the owner has done to upgrade their home? My insurance company put a much higher price on my home than what it was appraised for by whoever did it. I never saw anyone doing that in our neighborhood."

"Every Fairview resident has a responsibility to financially support the school system, even if no students are currently enrolled. This is our situation now. Our 2 children graduated over 10 years ago."

"If they are grossly under assessed. Be realistic concerning what someone would really pay for the property."

"So everyone is treated equal."

"Yes, but the assessed value should become the selling price from date of sale forward and not be retroactive to previous assessment."

"Because I do not intend to sell. I do not wish to be "taxed out" of my home!"

"Fairness of tax burden across the community."

"To make property values fair from house to house. Case in point, my house was valued at x amount. Houses across the street from me were valued considerably higher. In talking with the neighbors on my side of the road, they have the same opinion."

Comment- Against Appeals

“The district needs to cut their spending.”

“This should have been done in the first place instead of spending more \$ after the fact. Wait for the next reassessment and practice some fiscal responsibility! There are better ways to spend.”

“Concerned that as the tax rates increases are recommended regularly by the Fairview School Board, who will want to move to this district?! I am a senior who has lived here over 39 years and thinking of down sizing – who will buy my home if these values increase?!! This combined with petroleum costs becoming prohibitive this no longer enabling one to offset taxes and distance in traveling to and from work. When we first moved here we felt the travel costs were decent enough to allow moving out of the city and or Millcreek!”

“1. Why would you second-guess the county assessors after they just spent millions of dollars on this project! 2. The schools are not in the re-assessing business. 3. Bad P/R for you.”

“The county has already spent millions of dollars on the recent assessment. If it was not good the county should get its money back. Spot appeals are not legal or fair.”

“It is nor for the Fairview School District to be the assessment vehicle for the county. The school district should frame their budget around and within the county assessment; not to mention how unfair the assessments are...and how they were originally developed.”

“You are a taxing body not an assessing organization. You have enough trouble doing what your charter is let alone starting to worry about assessments. So do your job and stop worrying about other people doing their jobs.”

“We just went through a reassessment!! (which was done poorly!)”

“If Fairview schools are in need for funding why should only a few be responsible? I think all of Fairview should pay their part. “Spot Zoning” is a very unfavorable method of raising taxes. Maybe it is time to cut some costs rather than runaway spending. There is a point where we have to say pull in your belt.”

“Some people can't pay their tax now. Pass tax to new owner not old one.”

“It is spot assessment which is what you were trying to get away from.”

“Too arbitrary.”

“Unless you are willing to address over-assessed properties equally.”

“We live in a free market economy. I can buy eggs at Country Fair for \$1.00 and Giant Eagle for \$2.00. Giant Eagle’s taxing body (government) can’t decide later that because I paid more than the eggs were thought to be worth, they can send a letter asking for more tax. The assessment is the assessment. Either get it right or don’t do it. Selling price is a function of the quality of merchandise bought, the desire of the buyer and their willingness to pay more than “expected” (or assessed) for something they want. It is also a function of the seller, who may be unmotivated to sell for 120% less than the home’s value. It’s our right to sell/buy things for what we believe is a value created. You should be assessing properties based on uniform and consistent principles and guidelines. Punishing a tax payer who buys a home for more than it is assessed by you is wrong. If they buy it for 50,000 less than assessment, do you tax less? Please do, as this quid pro quo approach is at least consistent. Assess right, and assess often; but don’t single people (new homeowners) out, and don’t single out Fairview as a place that lures you in with the bait of its virtues only to gobble you up once it has you in its jaws.”

“The under-assessed and over-assessed will average out. Why penalize those that maintain and improve their properties? We are a community that pays dearly for a school system that doesn’t practice or teach the free enterprise system and yet in much of the community doesn’t have a sanitary sewer system, storm sewer system, water system, police protection or street lights.”

“Properties were all reassessed in 2002. I don’t understand why there are appeals now. Why not then?”

“I think there are some other ways to look at this situation:

- a. There is an old saying “one man’s junk is another man’s treasure”. This holds true for real estate also. Just because a property sells for more than it is appraised at, that doesn’t mean it is worth it. There is always someone who will pay more for an item than what it is worth. Because of this, selling price has nothing to do with appraisals and assessments.”
- b. I have been living in Fairview since 1979. Since then my property taxes have more than doubled, about 125%. With the normal yearly inflation, I don’t even see a need for reassessments.”

“1. County should handle the tax problem. 2. To continue to file property appeals, Fairview School District should pay for 2 appraisals on that property to be fair.”

“There will always be inequalities due to the 20% or \$25,000 rule. A property at say \$22,000 wouldn’t pay where the one at \$26,000 pays.”

“This is unfair to the people who bought homes recently. You will discourage people from buying in Fairview if you continue this process. When I go to sell my home this will be a deterrent to the buyer.”

“What authority with what qualifications determines “what appears to be under-assessed?” Who is the determiner?”

“The appeals need to be done within 1 – 2 years of a reassessment. After that time frame all properties begin to be slowly under-assessed. The longer the appeal process goes on the more likely that the only property assessed correctly will be the ones most recently re-assessed. The vast majority will be under-assessed. This is very unfair to the small group that is reassessed.”

“It borders on the obscene and in the same family as the disgusting misuse of eminent domain. School districts should raise revenues by stating their case to the voters and asking for increases by full approval of the community. The idea that a man by the sweat of his brow, improves his home and then an arm of the government swoops in and taxes him additionally is tyranny. In Erie County our only expansions are in government.”

“The county assessment covered all properties at the same time.”

“Cost money – don’t do any good. Cost time.”

“‘Spot reassessment’ is unfair to an entire neighborhood, which should be evaluated at a given time using the same criteria.”

“I feel it can take care of itself as property is sold and changes hands.”

“Property owners should never be penalized for making improvements to their homes by assessing higher taxes.”

“Leave well enough alone. When a home is sold use this number as the assessment value.”

“The taxes are high enough now, and people will have to give up owning homes. The school system doesn’t have to have the latest in everything, pull in your belt like we do.”

“All of the appeal criteria you use and/or propose to use do not treat residents fairly or uniformly and lead to a 3 tiered assessment basis in Fairview, e.g. those below 2000/2001 valuation, those at 2000/2001, those at 90% or more of 2006 valuation or of the current year going forward. Also, the use of a fixed amount difference (25,000) or a fixed tax impact difference singles out higher value properties since they can easily trigger the appeal, whereas lower value property will not.”

“Another study costs money, lets stop spending. Real estate is a variable – leave it up to the owners.”

“Because if I found a good deal on property and put a lot of work, time and money in it – should I be penalized?”

“The assessment should be done every 5th year for all the homes. If this can’t be done, then divide the district into 5 parts and assess a fifth of the homes each year.”

“It will make it harder to sell property.”

“The district should also appeal those assessments that are too high – instead of leaving that process to the homeowner.”

“The money raised by upping taxes will be wasted paying someone to do the reassessing.”

“We pay more than our fair share in taxes!”

“Only by county total reassessment.”

“It sounds to me like they are getting greedy. You already collect off people that have no children in school and are on fixed incomes. What more do you want from us? The little bit of money we gain after selling our house to pay for a nursing home.”

“If a long-time resident has done improvements to their house to make it look nice, they should not be penalized with higher taxes.”

“Seems very unfair to me – just because a home sells and creates “visibility” on its assessment does not make it right that all those unsold properties who are equally under-assessed (some even more so) remain untouched.”

“The properties should have been assessed properly to begin with. It’s a waste of money at this time.”

“Because of tax and spend, poor management, greed. Don’t judge Fairview by Millcreek and Erie’s mistakes.”

“Assessments are done using standard guidelines. Properties sold reflect the demand of the parcel not necessarily the assessed value. As with anything being sold it only brings to the seller what the market will bear. An antique assessed at 200,000 and sold at 275,000 does not mean it was under valued. It simply means demand caused the inflated value of market price. The owner should not be penalized because the market worked to his favor. It could have just as easily worked in reverse. It is the opinion of this homeowner that the district is alienating itself from the community. In the long run, the district as a whole is greedy. The community has a distrust toward the board, due to the current appeals practice. The board is concerned with homes they feel are under-assessed and over sold according to market selling price (demand) to make sure they (district) get “their fair share.” Question: If a home is over-assessed and under sold according to market selling price (demand) will the district then refund the tax difference to the seller??? It would seem the district’s view is one of convenience working to benefit itself.”

“This process is selective by nature and as such is discriminatory. Properties were assessed 3 years ago and dollars were expended on that process. Either invest in reassessing all properties or do not continue.”

“Current economic factors are adversely affecting Fairview property values. Why add another? A county-wide reassessment will not place any single or select group at a disadvantage.”

“The district can spend millions of dollars, but they don’t know the difference between a nickel and a dime. There will never be enough money. The school district knows as much about spending money as the county knows about reassessment...it is a joke. We spend millions on reassessing properties...to later which we say are incorrect. What we are actually saying:

1. We can’t budget money
2. We can’t correctly assess properties
3. so it’s clear we can’t teach children
4. so do we even need a school district at all?

I think it’s about time everyone gets their act together. But, it’s kind of impossible with the lack of intelligence, the lack of ambition and lack of concern in the world we live in today.”

“The taxpayers of Erie County were just assessed in 2003. My taxes went up 25%. This process should not occur so often.”

“Either hire competent assessors or use a flat tax, but in any event reduce taxes.”

“Because I believe the district should adopt a fairer method of taxation based on income, not an archaic method of nebulous land values that we inherited from our mostly European (P.T.O.) ancestors, the majority of who lived a mostly agrarian life and not having much coin paid their taxes imposed by their kings with whatever they could eke out of the land in the form of timber, animals (meat), grain, etc.

I believe I can state absolutely that not one person in our community lives that kind of lifestyle. We have an organized structured environment that provides jobs for pay for the majority. That “pay” should be the basis for any form of taxation and it is to the Federal, State and Local (1%) tax agencies. This is really the only fair way to impose taxes. Let me explain...

Back in the late thirties, in order for me to not have to walk over a mile one way, unescorted, to school it was decided we should move to another house closer to school. The place that was picked was both within our means and about halfway closer. It was a real dump. Last painted probably during the Gay Nineties (inside & out). Dirty and loose wallpaper, filthy floors (no central heat, pot bellied stoves only).

Before we moved in my parents and three older sisters got busy on the place. They washed walls, hung new wallpaper, scrubbed floors, some inside painting. My dad started a garden. My job was mowing the tall grass with a push mower. My mom also planted flowers all around the house.

The first thing the landlady said when she stopped by to pick up the rent was “Gee, I could get more money for this place.” I rest my case...”

“I think they are fair as they are.”

“What makes you qualified to make this assessment of whether a given property is over or under valued? The assessment is done. Stop wasting time and money second-guessing. Get over it.”

“Why pay more taxes?”

“If the individual taxpaying resident feels that their assessment is not accurate, then they themselves should appeal, not the district.”

“The amount of jobs that have out of the area. Some people can’t afford the chance that their taxes will go up.”

“It will have a deleterious effect on current property owners selling their properties in the future.”

“Why would someone buy a home in Fairview if they know it will be reassessed? Also seems to unfairly target home owners only.”

“Professional appraisers were used during the last reassessment process. If the results are not satisfactory taxpayers have the right to appeal, not the school board.”

“Prospective property buyers will avoid Fairview if property taxes are not fixed.”

“Spot re-re-assessment (re-re-assessing a property based upon a property’s sale price) is a disincentive for people to build in, buy in, or move to Fairview. Ask any realtor and they will tell you tat they are concerned the existing policy places Fairview property sales at a disadvantage. A simple study will confirm or rule out this concern.

Neighborhood spot re-re-assessment (i.e. re-re-assessing an entire neighborhood’s property taxes based upon a property sale within that neighborhood) is the time-tested and failed GENTRIFICATION tax debacle that California experimented with. We are smart enough not to repeat mistakes.

I suggest two simple, vibrant, and fair tax policy options that will build Fairview’s tax base year after year:

1a. Base all taxes upon county wide assessments only. This puts all property owners on a fair and consistent foundation. Push the county to mandate a reassessment every years so that the assessments are current.

1b. Limit school budget growth to equal increased tax income from new construction. Encourage new construction! Let proposed millage increases depend upon majority voter approval...that will force the school district to live within its means. It will also take pressure off the board with regard to contract negotiations.

1c. Give new residents and new businesses a three year property tax holiday to help them get financially established. This will encourage the tax base to grow through new construction and new businesses. It will also bring more jobs to Fairview. Almost magically those new jobs will create more demand for new construction which will create a positive cycle of tax base growth.

1d. Develop a reduced tax rate for our retired and disabled citizens on a fixed income below \$35,000.

Create a policy of funding education through an Income Tax instead of a Property Tax. Income taxation is clearly the fairest method of taxation since people pay proportional to their income. It solves the unfairness that property taxation inflict upon young couples just getting started, seniors, and those disabled.

Finally, I highly recommend that Fairview “roll back” the re-re-assessments it forced to occur. Especially for the properties that were re-re-assessed **RETROSPECTIVELY**

(targeting sales that occurred before the new tax policy ever existed and before it was ever announced).”

“Let’s put the “cork back in the litigation bottle”. Reassessment was completed. Did the school district not agree with?

- reassessment
- reassessment process
- reassessment firm

“Our county has just been through a reassessment. That’s what we paid an extra mill for and had professionals do the job. It seems that government can’t live within a budget without raising taxes. It’s hard on us retired and elderly people, we don’t get a raise every year, our pensions are frozen and some are being turned over to the government because their company has gone bankrupt and some have received less in pension. My cost is going up faster than ever before. Gas, electric, insurance, Medicare, gasoline and property tax. When is it going to stop? Property Tax shouldn’t be used for funding the government. A flat tax on what we make would seem a better way to go. Where we the people can vote on raising the flat tax. Teachers pensions are going to cost us, wait a couple more years and nobody is going to be able to own their own home, because nobody will be able to afford it, I know I will not. I am at the end almost now. You also have reassessment every time you go to improve your home; you must obtain a permit in order to fix your home up, add on or change something. There’s an inspection for any addition you do, new state law. Thank you for listening but remember us retired people are on a fixed income and it’s getting tougher to live in this great country. Thank a vet.”

“The county already reassessed everything and people bought and sold homes based on that. It’s unfair to reassess some properties now.”

“We as Erie County taxpayers paid a lot of money for the reassessment. These values should be used.”

“Assessments can’t be based on a selling price alone. That’s a figure that could change daily. Why not just do a county-wide assessment every 10 years?”

“Assessments should be established uniformly and fairly at one time. Changes should occur only when a property is changed (building permit issued, etc.) or when a new fair and uniform assessment is done.”

“We as Erie County residents have already paid thousands of dollars for this worthless assessment and now you are wasting more money and time on appeals. And for what, to waste more of our money as you did on the façade, black top and curbing in the middle school? What does that do to educate children! What we really need is to give the taxpayer some say in the way you people spend our money.”

“The current property assessments should remain the same until the next assessments in 2011. You can’t keep changing them every year.”

“Put it on the voting ballot. Cost cutting within the district. Maybe healthcare should have employee contribution like many people have to do.”

“The county did a reassessment of properties recently. When a property is sold, then a reassessment should be done.”

“You just completed assessments. Can’t you rely on what you did? This process was stressful as we did an appeal. Limit action to properties that sell.”

“It should have been done correctly the first time around. Quit wasting government and people’s time and money.”

“Fairview has grown so much in last 20+ years, new developments providing increasing tax dollars and not putting that many new students in school – cut school budgets particularly at the administrative levels.”

“Our taxes are high enough on our current assessment without the possibility of higher yet.”

“Real estate is over-valued and will drop in a matter of time.”

“The properties were all just reassessed in the whole county. T cost the county a lot of money to do it. It will be done again in the next few years and that is sufficient. I think Fairview is being greedy and pretty soon no one will want to buy a home here and we won’t be able to sell our homes.”

“We are over-taxed now. He teachers’ salaries and school taxes are too high. Many people will be forced to move.”

“It’s fair under 2 conditions: 1) over-valued properties are also targeted and corrected and 2) the assessment is based on market conditions when the whole district was assessed.”