

ASSESSMENT SURVEY – QUESTION 1

From Email

“Should the district continue to file property appeals to correct what appear to be under-assessed properties?”

For Continuing Appeals

“To lessen the millage increase to the other taxpayers.”

“While I have no problem with reassessment where a property is clearly under-assessed, but it should not be done on a ""spot"" basis. If one house on a street sells higher than the assessed value then probably all of the homes in the area are under-assessed. It isn't fair to look only at the home that recently sold. You could have one homeowner paying way more than another on the same street in the same house but not paying the same tax - which is ultimately inequitable.”

“ON A VERY LIMITED BASIS”

“It should be done county wide not by singling out one person.”

“It makes it fair to all tax payers. Properties that are over assessed should get a deduction as well to make it fair.”

“Everyone should pay their fair share. Nothing has gone down, and I am sure the district energy bills have gone up. I would hope that our community does not end up like the city of Erie. My property is assessed by fair market value.”

“It is fair to homeowners that they should be paying or be paid what the true market value is for their homes.”

“All homes in Fairview should be assessed accurately to distribute the tax burden more fairly. Future millage increases would most likely not be necessary, or be lower, if property owners were taxed on accurate assessments of their present homes.”

“Everyone should pay their fair share.”

“If a property is under or overvalued, it defeats the basis upon which the systems was designed. Yes, incorrect property valuations should be corrected. I say this even though my property taxes more than doubled when reassessed in 2002.”

“To balance out those appeals filed by property owners in an attempt to lower their assessments and to help lower property taxes for all property owners”

“To make sure all properties are assessed fairly and equally and the owners pay their fair equitable tax”

“The assessment brought a more realistic value to properties so that the taxes were assessed at the proper rates, in most cases. Though this assessment **MUST** be done fairly, without discrimination, to work properly.”

“Yes, it should. All should pay their fair share, however they should be apprised of the possibility that their taxes may increase at the time they are looking at purchasing the property.”

“To provide fair assessment to all, thus fair taxation to all.”

“You might as well get it right, then it's fair to all.”

“Property values need to be correct so a fair millage can be determined.”

“It is important to keep our tax system fair in all areas and that includes correcting errors or oversights.”

“It is inequitable to over or under assess any property.”

“Property Taxes are very high all over Erie County including Fairview Twp. I especially worry about the elderly or fixed income people. However, the process needs to be a fair one. So I do believe that properties need to be accurately assessed and the proper amount of taxed paid.”

“To assure that properties are taxed fairly”

“All properties should be assessed at the correct level.”

“Everyone should pay their fair share to maintain quality”

“I think under-assessed properties should continue to be re-assessed by appeals because it would ease the financial burden on the school district's budget.”

“Similar properties in my neighborhood remain under assessed”

“Assuming that there remain improperly valued properties (and it is impossible to believe that everything is perfect!) Both the property owners as well as the district need to maintain a method of making corrections.”

“Other residents paying higher mills to compensate for those who are not paying the appropriate amount based on their property values is not fair”

“But, why were the reassessments that were put in place Jan. 2003 not accurate? I guess if both parties have a choice to appeal this is the fairest avenue for the value/assessment of our homes. Under the third bullet, you show how many appeals owners and the district have filed, are these same or different properties? (just wondering)”

“To be fair.”

“If each tax payer pays the correct amount based on a current assessment, taxes could actually be reduced.”

“TO BRING INLINE THE VALUE OF PROPERTIES THAT ARE INTENTIONALLY KEPT LOW”

“So that the assessments are more equitable”

“It seems fair, but I'm a little concerned about possible abuse. Some assessments have seemed overly high.”

“It is fair for everyone--everyone should pay the same rate and they are not if their property is under-assessed”

“What the fair market value from each property.”

“We should continue to file appeals so that all citizens pay their appropriate share of the costs of our schools.”

“Better to be current than fall behind - when assessments lag 5-10 years then dramatic changes occur and the citizenry shocked by reality.”

“All properties should be assessed for true market value so that there will be parity in taxes paid. Thank you.”

“Because everyone should pay their fair share of property tax.”

“It is fair BUT it should be done when a house goes up for sale. If you do it this way the new owner will know the amount of the taxes. This is a BIG factor when buying a house and will affect the mortgage payment and if the buyer can afford to buy that home with the new assessment price.”

“OUR SCHOOL TAXES SHOULD BE BASED UPON CURRENT AND ACCURATE ASSESSMENTS OF PROPERTY. HOWEVER, IF THE COSTS OF LITIGATION EXCEED THE TAX REVENUES GENERATED, IT WOULD BE UNWISE TO CONTINUE THE APPEALS PROCESS.”

“Raise money needed for taxes”

“To ensure that everyone pays their fair share.”

“all properties should pay tax based on current assessment value”

“But all properties should be subjected to the same criteria for assessment, and prices of recently sold residences should influence the value of other properties.”

“As long as the District uses a consistent criterion for filing appeals, this process appears fair.”

“It's only fair that EVERY resident pay on the CURRENT value of their property. That would also provide more income to the district.”

“Perhaps it's not the best way but may be the only fair way. Real estate agents should be prepared to make proper tax estimates for prospective buyers. They need the accurate formula for calculation based on cost.”

“The SD must correct under-assessed properties to improve the current tax base and spread the tax burden to all property owners.”

For Discontinuing Appeals

“Until a fair and equitable way to resolve this problem is found, the property appeals should be discontinued.”

“This method seems almost capricious in its selecting only homes sold and truly unfair to buyers, especially if the real estate market continues to cool. According to zillow.com, real estate values in Fairview and Erie County decreased sharply, on the whole, in the 4th quarter of 2005. Those buyers who purchased homes earlier in 2005 may be re-assessed using a sale price that their homes could not command today. Basing re-assessments on sale price seems a very flawed methodology.”

“We are in the midst of a down-turn in the housing market, with many home markets over-valued. How can you file appeals based on an artificial target? Would you then re-file when the home values go down again?”

“I do not believe property value appeals should be filed by the school district; especially not when market value is the determining factor. Market value is not equal to tax assessed value. If you're going to use today's Market Value on one home, then all homes should be assessed on that basis. Otherwise, there is an inequitable treatment of property tax based on how long you've lived in the community. This is unfair to those that move in.”

“You should not be targeting newly sold properties for their market selling price. It is not fair! Also you should not be increasing taxes on homes that have NO children in your school system - give them a break! Increase the taxes on the people with kids that utilize your schools since they are the ones benefiting from them.”

“I feel that schools should be tuition based and only those people that have kids in school should foot the bill for "school expenses" but that's not the way it works. So, with the way it does work only in a FAIR manner. In other words, targeting only those people who have recently purchased a home and whose new assessment exceeds a certain percent of the previous assessment is discriminatory. Why should I have to pay more because I just purchased my home when my neighbor can increase the value of his home to the point where it too, exceeds the previous assessment, yet they don't have to pay more?”

“This policy is clearly spot assessment which should be illegal under the current law. The only way this policy could be fair is if ALL properties are reassessed in the neighborhood when a sale is made and taxes are revised (either up or down) based on this global reassessment.”

“Not under present policy.”

“It is an unfair policy. Either all the properties at Fairview should be assessed or none. The present policy raises serious ethical and discriminative issues.”

“While the desire to re-assess property is good, I don't believe the process is fair and balanced.”

“Temporarily, until a more equitable process is adopted, all selective assessments, currently based on selling price, should be halted.”

“Using the sale price alone only targets properties that have been sold and is inherently unfair and discriminatory. This is especially unfair when applied retroactively to properties purchased before there was any discussion of selective reassessment.”

“The process is random and arbitrary since it includes only properties that have been sold. Properties must be assessed on an equal basis to maintain a fair and equitable tax base.”

“We recently paid millions for a countywide reassessment to correct ""unfair"" assessments. It was advertised as a 100% value but was in fact closer to a 90% evaluation. In general, the result was equal value for comparable properties. If after 5 years, one property is sold at a normal increased price, why should it have a higher assessment than a property that has not been sold? If a property has been modified and a Building Permit is issued, it would be appropriate to reassess based on Market Value as required by law. The current practice of selective assessment based on sale price can only produce the same variations that lead to the last full reassessment.”

“Present criteria for filing appeals is fatally flawed because of the narrowness of properties that are or will be included. Indeed, Properties and property owners you have excluded speaks volumes about the innate nature of Fairview politics..... :-), moreover--the need to file appeals is based upon an upcoming cash crisis caused by reckless use of credit, overleveraging and I would assume an under funded pension fund.”

“It appears that doing so is simply a way to increase tax revenue without the responsibility of increasing taxes. You state that FSD appeals have netted increased assessments of almost \$3,000,000 which means more tax revenue.”

“The method of reviewing assessments when a property sells is reasonable. Since that is a true market value at that time. Reviewing values at times other than when they actually sell results in opinion or questionable comparisons being the basis. This is not nearly as accurate. Reduce our expenses by laying off those employed in this harassment effort. Our taxes already are so far above what is reasonable that this further money generating effort is an insult.”

“The method currently used makes Fairview properties ""uncompetitive"" against other local properties who's school districts do not use the same method. Buyers are aware that purchasing in Fairview will likely result in higher property taxes than the seller paid, but this would not be the case in another school district which is not using the same method.”

“When a property sells the true fair market value has been determined. At that time the assessment needs to be verified.”

“Because I don't believe that it is being done in a fair manner. The process being used now unfairly singles out new purchases and ignores the fact that many people who've lived in Fairview for years are living in under-assessed properties.”

“If the recent assessment process was flawed, I feel a county wide approach to correcting the problem is the solution.”

“The district appeals I believe, will adversely affect the marketability and therefore the value of Fairview Properties. The County-wide assessment of 2003 should remain the basis until the next Erie County Reassessment.”

The district must wait until a property is sold for it to be fair. Assigning a value is too subjective...the true value is determined when a property is sold...no other way.”

“I feel this will deter people from buying homes in Fairview Township. Also, sellers should be able to get all they can for their property regardless of the assessed value. The assessments were in most cases accurate and should remain as they are.”

“This is very bad. This practice does not address the fact that a disproportionate burden of tax payment is placed on those who have had their property values accurately assessed, while those who are under-assessed continue to pay less than they should.”

“My opinion differs philosophically in that I don't believe an assessment should ever change. Once a property is assessed, the assessment should stand. If the property is improved over time, the owner should not be ""penalized"" for improving the property by incurring a reassessment. If/when the property sells, then an assessment should always be done for the new property owner based on the selling price. If the property value went down, the assessment should reflect that. If it went up, it should be increased. But I don't believe an assessment should change for the same owner unless there is a blatant disparity, i.e. someone buys a \$25,000 home and tears it down and builds a hotel.”

“The selective reassessment of properties and the procedure of reassessment is currently under review by the Pennsylvania Supreme Court. The Board should probably wait until these cases are decided.”

“Fairview should not spot reassess properties. They should reassess all of Fairview Township, placing everyone on a level playing field then lower the millage so the average home owner can afford to pay their taxes.”

“I do not think the school district's ""selection criteria"" is fair. I moved here in 2002, and was one of the first to be reassessed, by the appeal filed by the school district. If I had known of the school district's reassessment policy, I may not have moved here. I think this reassessment policy has slowed home sales in the school district since it was implemented”

“When the reassessment was done the firm that did it used the same criteria for all properties. If as you indicate, as many as 35% were not assessed correctly the burden of change should not fall on those properties which are sold. I am sure there were inequities in the past as well as now. We should wait for the next reassessment to correct problems. In the meantime we all share the burden of taxes for school needs.”

“Our economic climate never remains constant whereby reassessed properties could result in over stated values. Additional criteria needs to be included in the re-assessment process, if actually required.”

"It's not equitable! Pick a philosophy and stick to it. Either stick with values done with each countywide assessment or do a district wide assessment. Don't target home sales, because they are easy pickings, but then blame the county for other areas of disparity."

"Taxes are already choking our area."

"What are the guidelines as to what an under-assessed property is? How about the tax revenue from those homes that appear to be over assessed? Will you pursue that problem at the same time to give those homeowners fair relief from this financial burden? A reassessment is never meant to be 100% accurate. The law of averages smoothes it out. To go after the under-assessed in view of the above is clearly discriminatory."

"APPEALS SHOULD ONLY BE MADE WHEN PROPERTY IS SOLD."

"The properties that the district thinks are under-assessed will be corrected when they are sold. If anything, maybe the properties that the district thinks are under-assessed and do not sell within a five year period, should be appealed."

"I don't understand the practice of reassessing property bought within the last two years. If properties are to be reassessed then do them all, not the most recent purchases."

"Leave the situation alone. There was much more peace in the community before the onslaught of this activity."

"I feel we should wait until they have a county wide assessment."

"We were all assessed by the same criteria, sale price was not a factor. If all facts concerning the home are correct, and assessed by the guidelines, assessment should not be changed. Sale prices are affected by, urgency to sell, points added in, interest rate changes, season, extras in the purchase price (riding mower, furniture), number of homes on the market at that time, etc."

"Because you are creating inequities. Only higher valued properties have been chosen, or properties which have sold. Lower valued properties and properties that do not sell are then given preferential treatment. You are also putting a damper on the market. People are now afraid to put their homes for sale."

"Property values should be updated periodically, but not on a random basis, or a selective basis, based on desirability of the neighborhood and values of houses on the same street. A different system should be designed to obtain needed money to fund the township's needs and the school district's needs besides property taxes that can bankrupt a property owner. Luxury taxes on items purchased or a flat tax on all purchases would be one way to raise revenues for the township. This area is not California or Las Vegas for desirability and should not be treated as such when it comes to property valuations."

"We should all pay our fair share. But, let's not scare people who may be considering buying in Fairview. If the house is purchased and is reassessed lets use an escalating scale over 3 to 5 years to increase the taxes."

“To be honest, I'm undecided about this. I feel that this is an “invasion of privacy”. I can understand checking on property values of sold homes as a way to raise monies needed to run the school district, but what about ways to control costs? Is the district using “lean” principles to guide them in their budgets? While I feel the teachers do a good job, look at what the private sector has in the way of health insurance and retirement plans. There are few, if any, that offer “no cost” health insurance and generous pensions. All employees are expected to contribute to their health care plans as well as retirement plans. This is not so with the Fairview school teachers. That is an unfair advantage, with “built-in” costs. The control for running the school district is totally in the hands of the school board and out of the hands of the property owners.”

“Not using the districts current reassessment policy. The current policy is unfair in how it reassesses a property that has recently sold, while doing nothing concerning similar properties that are left under-assessed. Why should I pay higher taxes than another property owner with a similar value home as mine? With the current policy I am assessed on purchase price and his home is more than likely under-assessed. I just want a policy in place that would be fair to all property owners in the district.”

“Present economic conditions require all of us to make better use of what we have. It seems to be a common thread in both government and the private sector that we look first to increase funding. It is a temporary solution to a permanent problem. Before spending money on property reassessment studies consider spending money on a management firm to assess the internal operations within the district.”

“The reassessment was made. Mistakes maybe were made but they went both ways. Appeals were made, and that should be about the end of it. Has the change in tax rate really be affected that much by the creation of ill will by the Board filings.”

“I don't remember voting for a county assessor when I voted for the people who populate the school board. If the county assessor thinks the properties in Fairview Township are valued at a reduced rate the the county assessor should be carrying the ball for a re assessment.”

“The district is notorious for excesses. It has not the wherewithal or desire to impose fiscal constraints and live within a reasonable budget. It functions under the perception that tax dollars are limitless! The tap of “infinite” dollars must be turned off and dropping assessment appeals is a prudent area to start.”

“You all know where i stand on this issue and you should know why, if you've been listening, so I will be brief and to the point here.

Unless the district can establish a policy that would address ALL of the under assessed properties in the district, not just the ones that have recently been sold, AND address them ALL at the SAME point in time, the current reassessment policy should be rescinded. if you cannot come up with a policy that would be an IMPROVEMENT over not having one at all, then reassessment should be left to the county, where it belongs, for better or for worse.”

“School Districts are run by elected Board Members and appointed Superintendents. None of these people is elected or hired because he or she is an expert in economics, social analysis, property values, and the effects on communities of all the economic

pressures and political and social issues that are mixing in the pot of life at any given time. That said, one could probably say same of folks in Harrisburg or any other State Capitol building in the US.

Yes, the Fairview schools are wonderful. By doing this spot assessment without educating and informing the residents and simultaneously using its position to lobby the County and State to force Counties/State to have some sort of ongoing process of assessing commercial and residential property everywhere, the School District is letting the job fall to malcontents.

I lived in California 30 years, from January 1975 to December 2004. As a public servant, I saw firsthand what 1978's property tax revolution did to public services in the State. I have sworn never to be a whiny retiree carrying on about fixed income because, after all, aren't we all on some sort of fixed income? I have also sworn to attempt to understand what is going on around me. It has been a challenge here in Erie where we get very little real info about what is going on in Harrisburg and other ""power"" centers in the state.

What I have been disturbed about regarding the action in the Fairview School District is its seemingly greedy grab for those few houses a year that sell instead of working with the County and State to study this and find out what is going on in the other 49 states and get something decent in place for funding services in this rustbelt, Appalachian-like economy in Pennsylvania.

However, the feeling I have been left with, having made a purchase on September 3, 2004 and learned in October 2003 that Fairview was doing this reassessment, is that of being duped and feeling pretty stupid. A lot of the residents' anger is not just about having to find more money to pay up, or wondering if their property is now worth what they paid for it and whether or not they should have purchased that property in Fairview, or feeling it's unfair to pay far more than a neighbor with a similar property, I think it was also about feeling duped by a school district."

"This will continue to be a ""hot button"" issue and can be used by parties to overcome budget shortfalls rather living within the funds received.... If this keeps up there will be a taxpayer revolt!"

"The County did a reassessment for the entire County. Some might be high and some might be low. Let it go."