

## **THE BOARD OF REVIEW AND THE ASSESSMENT APPEAL PROCESS.**

### **Who are the board of review?**

The Supervisor has a list of persons who have expressed a desire to serve the Township and become involved on a Township Board or Commission. The Supervisor and Assessor review the list and select persons who have a broad knowledge of the Township. Persons with real estate knowledge or experience are preferred. Two-Thirds of the board members are required to be property owners in Washington Township.

### **What are the responsibilities of the Board of Review?**

The Assessor turns the assessment roll over to the Board of Review, who can increase or decrease any improper assessment. The Board has no control over millage rates or property taxes.

### **When Does the Board Meet?**

The Board meets three times a year. In March it meets the Tuesday after the 1<sup>st</sup> Monday. In July it meets the Tuesday after the 3<sup>rd</sup> Monday. And in December it meets the Tuesday after the 2<sup>nd</sup> Monday. Property assessments may be appealed only in March. The July and December Board of Review meetings are to correct clerical errors and mutual mistakes of fact.

### **Are the meetings open to the Public?**

Yes! Under the Open Meetings Act, anyone can attend the meetings, including members of the press.

### **Who May File An Appeal?**

Any person may file an appeal regarding the assessment of any property within the board's jurisdiction. By law, non-resident property owners can appeal by letter. Washington Township allows all residents to appeal by letter. Washington Township also will allow an agent, someone you have designated, to appeal on your behalf. Most often the property owners appeal in person. You need to schedule an appointment if you or your agent is to appeal in person.

## **What type of appeals will the Board hear?**

The Board of Review has the authority to act on appeals of:

**CLASSIFICATION:** this is roughly equivalent of the use of your property. There are six classifications, Agricultural, Commercial, Developmental, Industrial, Residential and Timber Cutover.

**STATUS:** certain properties such as Churches are tax-exempt. Sometimes there are unusual situations that create appeals.

**EQUITY:** All properties within the jurisdiction are to be assessed at the same ratio; 50% of True Cash Value.

**HARDSHIP:** Poverty stricken property owners can request tax assistance from the Board of Review. Household financial documentation will be necessary.

**VALUATION:** This is by far the bulk of the appeals. It is important to remember that neither the Assessor nor the Board of Review can affect the millage or the taxes. They can change an assessment if shown that it exceeds 50% of the True Cash Value.

## **Should I Protest?**

The Board of Review functions in many ways like a court, although the procedures are much more informal. Like a court, it has the authority to decide on certain issues based on evidence. In deciding whether to appeal your assessment to the Board of Review, you should first answer these two questions:

- 1) Does your protest involve an issue that the Board of Review has authority to decide?
- 2) Do you have enough supporting evidence?

## **How should I present my protest?**

If you are protesting on the value of the property, you should be prepared to justify why your property would not sell for twice the assessed value. (See next question.)

If you are appealing based on hardship, documentation will be necessary. You should contact the local Assessor for the hardship form and other details. (Hardship information is kept confidential.)

The better information you present to the Board the better they will be able to make an informed and fair decision.

- Prepare a concise appeal.
- Use valid documentation.
- Stick to the facts.
- Be organized
- Remain objective.

### **How can I make an effective appeal of assessed value?**

The taxpayer must give evidence to show that the assessment is incorrect. The Board of Review needs good reason to alter an assessment. It is imperative to be able to answer the questions, “What do you think the property is worth?” and “What are you basing your opinion on?”

All assessments are to be based on the sales of similar properties. You may hire a professional appraiser, or you can look at sales in your neighborhood and compare them to your home. The Assessor’s Office will give you sales information. But remember, this is your appeal and the paperwork should be done for you. Per state law, the sale’s price of a property cannot be the sole determining factor of the assessment of that property. Neither the Assessor nor the Board of Review can raise nor lower a property’s assessment based solely on its sales price. Mortgage appraisals also may not show True Cash Value. Depending upon what size mortgage you needed and when the appraisal was done.

### **How can I review and compare sales?**

For example, let’s say that in your neighborhood a home is sold for \$80,000 and is identical to yours except that it has no garage and you have a two car garage. You have determined that your garage is worth \$4,000 to \$6,000. Another home sold for \$96,000. It has a house similar to yours and a garage similar to yours, but has an extra lot. Land sales show that the value of the lot is \$8,000.

SALE #1	$\$80,000 + \$4,000(\text{garage}) = \$84,000$
	$\$80,000 + \$6,000(\text{garage}) = \$86,000$
SALE #2	$\$96,000 - \$8,000(\text{extra lot}) = \$88,000$

These two sales indicate a proper assessment on your property should be between \$42,000 and \$44,000.

Other recent sales in your area should be reviewed the same way. You need to be especially careful if the sales are different from your home in size, age, or quality. This will require some time and thought, but the hardest part will be to remain objective. It is hard to stay objective when you’re discussing something as personal as your home.

**Are the Board of Review decisions permanent?**

No! The decisions are binding only for current assessment year.

**How will I know the Board's decision?**

The Board of Review will not give you a decision at the time of the hearing. The decisions will be mailed as soon as possible. Along with this notification, there will be information about the Michigan Tax Tribunal.

**Can I appeal the Boards decision?**

Only those assessments reviewed by the Board of Review can be appealed to the Michigan Tax Tribunal. Their appeal deadline is June 30<sup>th</sup> of that year. The Michigan Tax Tribunal had no idea why or what your first appeal to the March Board of Review is about. You need to write a letter stating everything you would like them to know and start at the beginning. The Tribunal will make their decision based solely on the testimony that is presented at the hearing. Letters should be mailed to:

Michigan Tax Tribunal  
Small Claims Division  
P. O. Box 30232  
Lansing, MI 48909