



Discussion Topic

March 2008

A monthly resource for the Community Action Groups of Michigan Farm Bureau

QUESTIONS

1. How can your local Farm Bureau help people prepare for an appeal of their property taxes?
2. How can the local Farm Bureau prevent frustration of landowners during this process?
2. How can your local Farm Bureau help people keep their taxes to a minimum?

Upset about property taxes? Prepare for the Board of Review

Your township Board of Review has heard it all before.

"My taxes are too high," people will repeat as they stream in to complain to the board, which by Michigan statute must convene on the second Monday in March, or the following Tuesday or Wednesday. Most board of review members will agree about your taxes, but that's not enough to have an assessment reduced. For that, you'll need evidence, concrete documentation and a pretty darn good reason before your assessment will be changed to your advantage.

So how does the average Joe go about it? Senator Bruce Patterson, representing Michigan's 7th Senate district, has produced a 10-step method that could help you find success.

The first step is to get a copy of your property's worksheet or appraisal card from the local assessor. Next, check that worksheet for errors. If there are errors, an assessor may change it on the spot. But if you must go before the board of review, be sure you know how much the property has depreciated.

After checking to be sure your increase isn't because of improvements made, the fourth step is to perform an inside inspection of the buildings that the assessor could not see. Repair estimates for cracked foundations, for example, may be good evidence of defects that could lower property value.

Fifth, examine your location. Eyesores nearby or evidence of run-down neighboring property could lower your value. Local realtors can help you compare your property with others. Or, professional appraisers can offer the best evidence and best proof of value.

Next, be sure your assessor knows about personal property included in a sale or potential sale, including things inside the house and, on crop land, things such as irrigation rigs; and be sure you bring comparable property assessments if you're arguing that your property is over-assessed.

Finally, put all this information into a letter. But even if your request is denied by the Board of Review, you can appeal to the Michigan Tax Tribunal if you file your request to appeal with it by July 31, 2008.

A complete copy of this guide may be found at www.SenatorBrucePatterson.com.