



CRYSTAL LAKE ELEMENTARY DISTRICT 47 PROPERTY TAXES FAQs

Frequently Asked Questions

Property taxes are an important source of revenue for public (K-12) schools. For information about property taxes and tax levies, see the Frequently Asked Questions below.

1. What is a tax levy?

A tax levy is the amount of money a school district and/or local government (taxing district) requests and certifies to be raised from property taxes to provide sufficient funding for its programs, services and/or operations.

In most counties in Illinois, tax levy amounts are based on home values/Equalized Assessed Valuation (EAV) and the Consumer Price Index (CPI). The law allows taxing districts to make a prediction to ask for (levy) more taxes than they expect to collect because at the time of the levy, new property EAV is unknown.

2. How does the district/local government determine its levy?

A tax levy is based on a school district's current and projected budgetary needs. District 47 receives approximately 74 percent of its revenue from local tax dollars. Levies enable a school district to meet current financial obligations and plan for future needs.

3. How much can the school district increase its tax levy?

Crystal Lake's property taxes are subject to the Property Tax Extension Limit Law (PTELL), more commonly referred to as a tax cap. This law limits any increase in the taxing district's total property tax levy to the Consumer Price Index (CPI) or 5 percent, whichever is lower. Tax caps are designed to keep up with inflation.

The PTELL was enacted by the State of Illinois as a means of tempering the rapid rise of property taxes primarily in and around Cook County. This was during a period of rapidly inflating property values that accelerated increases in property tax bills. Thus, in years whereby the community was experiencing significant growth and experiencing increases in their property values, the local taxing district's ability to collect revenues was limited and subject to the PTELL.

For informational purposes, see the chart below for a historical illustration of CPI:



4. What is a tax extension?

In early April, taxing bodies receive notification from the county clerk's office of the actual amount of local tax revenue they may receive. This is known as a tax extension.

5. How is a tax extension calculated?

The total tax extension is the product of the taxing body's Equalized Assessed Valuation (EAV) multiplied by its calculated tax rate and is equal to the total property tax billings on the district's behalf.

6. How is a home's Equalized Assessed Valuation (EAV) calculated?

The EAV is calculated by averaging the home value over the past three years and then dividing by three (3). EAV usually amounts to approximately one-third or 33% of a home's value. The value of the home is determined by the Township Assessor and is reported to the county. School Districts do not have a part in the valuation.

-Example: Home value of \$300,000 = approximately \$100,000 EAV

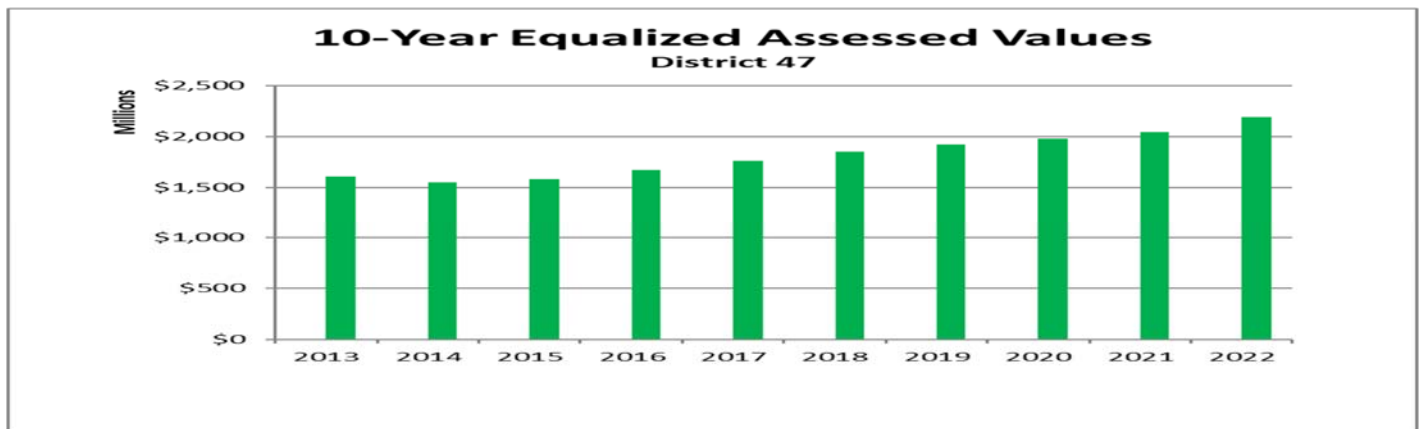
7. My property taxes increased this year. Why?

There are several reasons why property taxes may increase year over year. An increase in property taxes within your particular taxing district may increase due to the following:

- a) An increase in the assessed value of your property.
- b) A decrease in assessed value that is lower/smaller than the overall decrease in assessed value for the taxing body. See #8 - "If the assessed value of my home decreased, why did my taxes increase?"
- c) A decrease in the taxing district's overall equalized assessed value can increase the tax rate. See #5 - "How is the taxing district's tax rate calculated?"
- d) An increase in taxes levied by the local government & school district in accordance with the Property Tax Extension Limitation Law. See #5 - "What is the Property Tax Extension Limitation Law?"
- e) Public voting for bond issues such as new construction of schools, jails, etc.

8. If the assessed value of my home decreased, why did my taxes increase?

The Township Assessor adjusts the value of all properties from time to time. A lowered assessed value will not necessarily lower your property tax bill. The assessed value is only used to determine your property's portion of the total county tax. Lowering the values of all properties equally will not change your portion of the total tax needed to operate the county government. In the past year, many newer neighborhoods that were built in the last decade had significantly higher assessed values than their current market value. As such, these values may have been reduced, creating a "shift" in the tax burden. Thus, although your property's assessed value may have decreased, there may have been many homes that had a higher decrease in assessed value resulting in a shifting of the tax burden. A visual representation of how the area's values have changed over the past ten years, see the chart below.



9. How is the taxing district's tax rate calculated?

To raise the money requested in levies, county clerks must calculate a tax rate for each fund for which the taxing district levied. The tax rate is a number that, when multiplied by the tax base, will produce the levy amount. A tax rate is calculated using the following formula:

Tax rate = Tax levy ÷ tax base

Note: A district's tax base is the total equalized assessed value, minus certain homestead exemptions, plus the value of any state-assessed property.

10. What is the effect of the tax base on the tax rate?

The greater the tax base, the lower the rate needed to raise a given levy. An increased tax base, which could be the result of an increased equalization factor, new property, removal of exemptions, or tax incentive programs that have expired, could result in a lower tax rate. A decreased base, which may be due to property demolition or decreasing property values, could result in an increased tax rate.

11. What's the first step in determining if my property assessment is accurate?

Call your local township assessor or check your local township's website. Make sure the information about your property is correct. The local assessor may also be able to show you other properties similar to yours in your neighborhood. You can determine if your property is equitably assessed. He or she may also have sales information. If you have lived in your home for a long time, you may not realize how much it is worth now.

12. I don't agree with my property assessment. What do I do now?

Try to work it out with your assessor's office. If you don't get the assessment satisfactorily resolved then get prepared. You only have 30 days from the newspaper publication date (see #11 "How will I know what my new assessment is?") to file an appeal, so you need to start doing your research early. Go to the county web site at <http://www.co.mchenry.il.us> Then go to departments, then to assessments, then to forms. Bring up the Residential Assessment Appeal form and familiarize yourself with it. While there, look at the Board of Review Rules. You will also need to check out recent home sales by going to the county or township assessment office to view recent sales in your area. You might also want to talk to a realtor or check out some of the real estate sites on the internet. Please remember, your assessed value is as of January 1st of the current year.

13. How will I know what my new assessment is?

You may receive a letter in the mail in the late summer or early fall from the McHenry County Assessor's Office. This is your new official assessment notice that includes assessment and property information as of January 1st of the current year. At the time you receive your letter, assessment changes (changes made by the assessor, not equalization) are published in the local newspaper. That publication date marks the beginning of the 30-day appeal process for your township.

14. I'm filing an appeal. What now?

Don't miss the deadline. By state statute, your appeal cannot be accepted after the deadline. Determine if your appeal is to be on equity or on market value. Your home could be assessed at the correct market value, but if all the other similar homes on your street are assessed below market value, then you are over assessed because you are carrying a larger share of the tax burden. In an equity complaint, you must supply the market value and assessment of comparable properties in your neighborhood. In a market value complaint, you must supply recent sales data to support the fact that your home may be over-assessed. Remember, you need to use comparable properties. That means properties of similar size, story height, quality of construction and style. You must use the comparable property form to show the differences between the comparable properties and your home. Be sure to file this information with your complaint form. This is your "evidence" to prove that your assessment is incorrect. You want to provide the most convincing case that you can. This means that you also need to show where your information came from. Pictures of your comparable and your own home can be valuable evidence. After receipt of your appeal, in most instances, you will receive a Notice of Hearing. There is an option to have your assessment appeal heard on the evidence and you may check the box indicating no hearing required. In this case, you would submit your evidence to the Board of Review. The township assessor would then submit their evidence. The Board of Review would conduct a hearing based solely on the weight of the evidence provided by both parties.

15. I purchased my home during this past year. Will the Board of Review consider that?

If you recently purchased your home and the Board of Review determines the sale to be “arm’s length” -- that is, advertised on the open market -- then they may adjust your assessment and a hearing would not be necessary. In that case, you will receive a “10-day notice.” Short sales and foreclosures that are advertised on the open market may be “arm’s length.” This gives you an opportunity to have a hearing if you are still unhappy.

16. What happens at the hearing?

The hearing is somewhat informal. Present will be two or three hearing officers, a clerk to handle the paperwork, the township assessor, and you the property owner. You may be represented by an attorney if you choose. Most residential property owners choose to represent themselves. You must include the authorization to represent form if you have someone represent you at the hearing. The Board will ask you to talk about the evidence that you submitted to prove your assessment should be changed. If you go to the hearing and all you have to say is that your taxes are too high, the Board of Review will tell you that they have no jurisdiction over your tax bill. They can only discuss your assessment and the market value of your property. Your tax bill is calculated by multiplying your assessment, minus any exemptions, by the rates for the various taxing districts that serve your property. Even a home located very near to yours, may be served by different taxing districts. Due to all those variables, it is best to compare assessments, rather than tax bills. After hearing your arguments and asking you questions about your evidence, then the Board will ask the township assessor to respond to your evidence and information and provide any additional information he or she may have.

17. When will I know the decision of the Board of Review?

In most cases, the Board will make an oral decision at the conclusion of the hearing. Sometimes, they will want to collect additional information or verify information, prior to them making a decision. The Board does not issue official written decisions until all hearings have been held, usually by mid-March.

18. What can I do if I’m not happy with the Board of Reviews decision?

Once you receive that written Final Notice of Findings, you will have 30 days from the date of the postmark to file with the Illinois Property Tax Appeal Board (PTAB). Those forms are available in the county office.

19. What is involved in filing a complaint with the PTAB?

You will be expected to provide evidence and proof of your contentions regarding your assessment. Determination of hearing date and all correspondence will originate from the state. However, PTAB hearings are held at the county office for the convenience of the taxpayer. The state sends a hearing officer to preside over the hearing, which is recorded. The hearing is a little more formal than the local hearing. Again, you are allowed to present your case first. The Board of Review is there to explain their reasons for the assessment they placed on the property. The township assessor may be there to provide information and act as a witness for the Board of Review, if the Board made their decision based on information provided by the assessor. Remember, the appeal to PTAB is “de novo”. That means all new. You can provide additional information that you may have neglected to provide at the county level. The Board of Review can also provide new information.

20. I don’t think the Property Tax Appeal Board made the right decision. Is there anything more I can do?

Since you have exhausted all of your administrative remedies, you can now file a court action. Contact your attorney.

21. Are there any exemptions that would reduce my tax bill? Yes. Exemptions reduce the Equalized Assessed Valuation (EAV) by a specific amount; the actual tax savings depends on the tax rate for the specific property.

Some exemptions include:

- General Homestead Exemption
- Homestead Improvement Exemption
- Senior Citizen Homestead Exemption
- Senior Citizen Assessment Freeze Exemption
- Person with Disabilities Exemption
- Veterans with Disabilities Exemption
- Returning Veteran Exemption

Please refer to the McHenry County Assessor website <http://www.co.mchenry.il.us> for the specific details of the exemption and the qualifications.

22. How can I tell which exemptions have been applied to my property? You can review your assessment information online or contact the Office of the Supervisor of Assessments.

23. Are there other taxpayer assistance programs? Yes, there are two.

1. The **Senior Citizen Real Estate Tax Deferral Program** allows qualified senior citizens to defer part or all of the property taxes on their personal residence. It's a form of a loan with a six percent interest rate which is to be repaid after the taxpayer's death or at the time the property is sold. Contact the McHenry County Treasurer for more information.
2. **Circuit Breaker Grants** provide low-income senior citizens and disabled citizens yearly grants to help pay property taxes. To apply, you need to complete **Form IL-1363**. For more information, contact the **Illinois Department on Aging** or call 1-800-624-2459.

If you have further questions about tax levies after reviewing the FAQs above, please feel free to contact:

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