

UNDERSTANDING PROPERTY TAXES

General Property is defined by Wisconsin statutes as all taxable “real” and “personal” property except that which is taxed under special provisions, such as Managed Forest property.

The terms “real property,” includes the land and all buildings, improvements connected with the land. “Personal Property” refers to items such as machinery, furniture, and fixtures used to operate a business. It also refers to buildings on leased land when the lessee owns the buildings.

There are two basic components in any tax: the base and the rate. The base is the value of all taxable property in the district. The rate is the tax levy, or total amount of property tax money needed as determined by the taxing entity, divided by the tax base. By multiplying the base times the rate, the amount of tax is determined. For a specific tax parcel, the assessed value (base) of that parcel times the tax rate is the gross property tax due.

ASSESSED VALUE AND EQUALIZED VALUE

The assessed value is the value placed on each parcel of real property and on each individual’s taxable personal property by the local assessor. State law provides that all non-agricultural assessments must be based upon the market value of property as of January 1. State law recognizes that every municipality cannot be assessed exactly at market value each year. The law allows each municipality to be within 10 percent of the market value, provided there is equity between the taxpayers of the municipality. Assessed values, as determined by the local assessor, are open for public inspection. These values are used to determine the amount of property tax paid by each taxpayer. Because assessors in different taxing districts value property at different percentages of market value, it is necessary for the Wisconsin Department of Revenue to convert assessed values, by taxing jurisdiction, to a uniform level, called equalized values. The equalized values are used for apportioning property taxes, and for distributing property tax relief.

WHERE DO OUR PROPERTY TAX DOLLARS GO?

Although all of the initial payments are made to the local treasurers, a sizable portion must be turned over to the other governmental units for which the municipality acts as a bill collector (county/state/school district/technical college).

WHEN AND TO WHOM MUST I PAY MY PROPERTY TAXES?

Property tax bills are mailed around mid-December of each year. If you pay by installments, the first payment is due by January 31 made payable to the City of Ripon.

If not in installments, taxes must be paid in full by January 31 made payable to City of Ripon.

July 31 is the last day for payment of the second installment of real estate taxes made payable to Fond du Lac County Treasurer. The Fond du Lac County Treasurer also collects all delinquent taxes.

WHAT HAPPENS IF I'M LATE IN PAYING MY PROPERTY TAXES OR DON'T PAY THEM AT ALL?

If you are late in paying taxes, you will have to pay interest and penalty on the unpaid portion. This interest and penalty goes back to February 1 of the collection year, and accumulates at the rate of 1% interest and ½% penalty per month until paid in full. If you don't pay your taxes at all, you may lose your property.

I RECENTLY PURCHASED A HOME AND DIDN'T RECEIVE A TAX BILL. LATER I WAS CHARGED INTEREST AND PENALTY FOR LATE PAYMENT. THIS DOESN'T SEEM FAIR.

Although the municipality is required to mail the tax bill to the taxpayer, failure to receive the tax bill does not relieve the taxpayer of the obligation to pay the tax or any interest or penalty. If you are not receiving a tax bill, you should contact the municipality to make sure that it has changed its records to show you as owner. If you receive a tax bill when you no longer own a property, contact the municipality and provide the new owner's name and address.

LOTTERY AND GAMING CREDIT

Owners of a home in Wisconsin who use the home as their primary residence on January 1 of the year in which property taxes are levied may claim a credit on their property tax bill. Primary residence is defined as the home where an individual lives more than six months of the year. If temporarily absent, it is the home to which the owner returns. Only one primary residence may be claimed. Renters do not qualify.

An owner, who qualifies for the credit, but whose tax bill does not reflect the credit, may claim the credit until January 31, following the issuance of the tax bill with the treasurer responsible for collecting the property taxes. Any late lottery claims must be sent to the State of Wisconsin.

AG USE CONVERSION CHARGE

A person who owns land that has been assessed for property tax purposes, as agricultural land and who converts the land's use so that the land may not be assessed as agricultural land must pay a one-time charge to the county in which the land is located.

If you have questions about your assessment, you have the right to meet with your assessor.