

Property tax bills often generate ??? for County employees

Property tax bills are mailed out in early August each year and taxes are due on September 30. Invariably, County employees are asked by relatives, neighbors, and/or strangers why their “County taxes” went up.

Listen, be patient, and share this valuable information with the old or new friend about the tax structure in Delaware. State law requires the County to bill and collect school taxes, but the County does not set the property tax rate for schools or control education spending. Typically, the school tax will be the highest figure on the bill.



The actual County tax rate used to fund paramedics, 911 dispatch, County parks and recreation, County Library, land use planning, and assorted supportive services did not increase this year or the 11 previous years. Much of the credit for the stable tax rate goes to the hard work of County employees doing their best to control operating costs. It is much appreciated.

There is one noteworthy change to the 2021 billing statements that the County does control. The garbage collection rates for residential properties within County garbage districts have changed due to contract rebid. The annual rate for trash removal including recycle service increased from \$284.50 to \$300.50. The rate for trash removal including recycle service and yard waste pick-up increased from \$312.50 to \$329.00 annually. The current rates are only valid for the 2021 billing cycle. The Public Works department is currently seeking Requests for Proposals to set the new multi-year contract rates.

The Tax Office regularly sends courtesy reminder letters to recipients of the Senior Tax Credit encouraging them to pay their balance in full by May 31, to ensure that the credit remains on their accounts. Some may still need to be reminded that taxpayers must pay their property tax bill in full by the end of each tax year in order to qualify for this credit for the subsequent property tax year. Under the program, property owners age 65 and older who meet the residency requirement and apply by April 30 qualify for up to 50% off the regular school tax portion of their annual property tax bill on their primary residence.

Here a few of the changes you may see reflected on your current tax bill: Smyrna School District saw the largest tax rate increase (+31 cents/\$100 assessed value), Capital had the second highest increase (+09 cents/\$100 assessed value). Woodbridge School District's tax rate remained the same while both Milford and Lake Forest experienced minor decreases.

While some taxpayers may see an increase in their annual bill due to the above mentioned changes, it is important to note that the basic Kent County tax rate remains unchanged. Also note that many taxpayers never see actually their County/School District property tax bill, since it is often mailed directly to the mortgage company – which pays the bill from funds collected from the monthly mortgage payment.

If you or a relative still have questions, they can get answers by calling the Tax office at (302) 744-2341.

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