

## **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 7 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 2017 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 \$223 to \$284.50. The rate for trash removal including recycle service and yard waste pick-up increased from \$255 to \$312.50 annually. This rate is expected to remain steady for 3-years until the service contracts with the two different privately owned garbage collection companies expire in 2020.

Some senior citizens may not be aware that the State Legislature made a change to the Senior School Property Tax Credit program this year which reduces the maximum credit allowed from \$500 to \$400 for 2017. Under the program, property owners age 65 and older who meet the 3-year 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.

In addition, some school taxes were increased by the local school boards due to voter approved construction projects – especially in Lake Forest (+18 cents/\$100 assessed value), Caesar Rodney, and Poly Tech (vocational education) School districts. On the other hand, a few school districts experienced small reductions in their tax rates – particularly in Milford (-14 cents/\$100 assessed value), Capital, and Smyrna.

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.

This year the last day of September falls on Saturday, so for customer convenience the Kent County Tax Office will be open from 9 a.m. to 12 noon on Saturday, September 30 to accept property tax payments.

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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