

**EAST GREENBUSH CENTRAL SCHOOL DISTRICT
2015-2016 School Taxes
Questions and Answers**

When should I expect my tax bill in the mail? Your tax bill will be mailed on September 9, 2015.

When is the tax collection period? The tax collection period for this year is September 9, 2015 to October 9, 2015, without payment of a penalty.

Where can I pay my taxes? Payments should be mailed to: **School Tax Office, EGCS, 29 Englewood Avenue, East Greenbush, NY 12061**. If you choose to pay your taxes in person, you may do so at the **First Niagara Bank** located at 615 Columbia Turnpike, East Greenbush (next to Crown Cleaners) or 600 North Greenbush Road, North Greenbush (in the Home Depot Plaza). Town of Schodack residents wishing to pay their taxes in person may do so at the Schodack Town Hall.

Can I pay my tax bill in installments? No. Your tax bill must be paid in full, within the determined 30-day tax collection period, to avoid payment of a penalty.

Can I pay my tax bill using a credit card? No. Credit cards cannot be used to pay your tax bill. Acceptable methods of payment are cash, personal check, bankers check, or money order.

Will I be charged a fee if I pay my taxes late? Yes. Tax bills paid between October 10, 2015 and October 31, 2015 are subject to a penalty of 2 percent. Taxes paid November 1 or later are subject to an additional penalty of seven percent.

Where can I pay my tax bill after the tax collection period ends? Taxes paid between October 10 and October 31 are subject to a 2 percent penalty and should be paid in person or mailed to: **Claudia M. Shields, Tax Collector, East Greenbush Central School District, 29 Englewood Avenue, East Greenbush, NY 12061**. Town of Schodack residents are required to pay their taxes to the Schodack Town Hall. In November, any unpaid school taxes and penalties are turned over to the Rensselaer County Bureau of Tax Services and are subject to an additional 7 percent penalty. The Rensselaer County Bureau of Finance may be contacted at 270-2755.

What should I do if I find an error or missing exemption on my tax bill? If the error relates to the property assessment or exemption amounts, please contact the town assessor first. If you feel a mistake was made by the District tax office, you may contact that office at 207-2542.

TAX LEVY

What is the tax levy? The tax levy is the total amount of money needed to be raised from local taxes to fund the East Greenbush Central School District budget after state aid and other revenue sources are taken into account.

What is the change in the tax levy for 2015-2016? The tax levy for 2015-2016 is 1 percent lower than the tax levy for 2014-2015.

Is the District cutting costs to help lower the tax levy? Yes. The Board reached settlements during 2013-2014 with all unions, which included concessions on health insurance. These concessions alone provided almost \$1.5 million in savings in the 2015-2016 budget. The District continues to look for ways to increase efficiency and reduce costs.

What other measures are being undertaken by the Board to reduce the tax burden for residents?

In April 2015, the Board of Education adopted a budget for the 2015-2016 school year with a tax levy increase below the State calculated property tax cap. School district voters approved the proposed budget on May 19, 2015. Approval of the Tax Freeze Compliant School Budget means that eligible homeowners will receive a rebate in the fall of 2015 if also eligible for the School Tax Relief (STAR) property tax exemption.

TAX RATES

Is the tax rate the same as the tax levy? No, the tax rate differs from the tax levy, and several factors go into determining the tax rate. In calculating the tax rate, the tax levy is divided between the six towns located within the East Greenbush Central School District using state formulas. These formulas take into account full values, assessed values and equalization rates, all of which are used to determine the tax rate.

What does the Board do to mitigate the increase in tax rates for homeowners? For 30 years the Board of Education has adopted two classes of tax rates: **homestead rates**, and **non-homestead rates**. The District applies homestead rates to residential property and non-homestead rates to commercial property. This dual-class system of tax rates provides homeowners with a savings of between 5 to 8 percent, versus a single tax rate system. This savings would not exist if a single tax rate was used. The Board must adopt a resolution each year in August in order to provide this savings to homeowners.

ASSESSMENTS

Who determines the assessed value of my property? Each town has an assessor who is responsible for determining the assessed values for properties within that town. Questions regarding town equalization rates and individual property assessments should be addressed directly to your town assessor. The phone number of the office of the assessor for each town within the EGCS D is listed below.

| | |
|-----------------|------------------|
| Chatham | 392-2550 |
| East Greenbush | 477-9710 |
| Nassau | 766-2343 |
| North Greenbush | 283-6175 |
| Sand Lake | 674-2026 ext. 24 |
| Schodack | 477-7932 |

What is Full Value? The full value (also called market value) is what your property would sell for under normal conditions. For residential properties, your assessor generally determines market values by comparing your property with similar properties that have sold in similar neighborhoods, giving consideration to other factors possibly affecting market value.

What is Assessed Value? The assessed value is the assessor's opinion of your parcel's current market value (full value) multiplied by the uniform percentage of value used in your town. Assessed values are used along with the tax rate to compute the tax due for a particular property, before exemptions.

What is an Equalization Rate? Equalization rates are determined by the State and represent the overall ratio of a municipality's total assessed value to the municipality's total property market value. Equalization rates are used in apportioning property taxes among municipal segments of school districts. In order for a school district to fairly distribute its property tax levy, the levy needs to be divided in proportion to the total market value of each municipality or municipal segment. This allows for an equitable distribution of taxes based upon the market value of each municipality.

STAR EXEMPTION

What is the STAR exemption? STAR is New York State's School Tax Relief Program that provides a partial property tax exemption from school taxes to eligible homeowners. Most New Yorkers who own and live in their home are eligible for the STAR exemption on their primary residence.

There are two parts to the STAR property tax exemption:

- The Basic STAR exemption is available for owner-occupied, primary residences where the homeowners' income is under \$500,000. Basic STAR works by exempting a portion of the full value of a home from school taxes.
- The Enhanced STAR exemption is available for the primary residences of senior citizens (age 65 and older) with yearly household incomes not exceeding a statewide standard. For qualifying senior citizens, the Enhanced STAR program provides additional savings by exempting a greater portion of full value from school taxes.

Where do I see how much STAR is saving me in tax dollars? Your school property tax bill mailed to you in September will clearly show the amount of the STAR exemption and your tax savings.

What are the maximum values of the Basic and Enhanced STAR exemptions? The maximum values allowed for the Basic and Enhanced STAR Exemption differ from town to town. Below is a list of maximum STAR values by town for the 2015-2016 school year.

| Town | Basic STAR Tax Savings | Enhanced STAR Tax Savings |
|-----------------|------------------------|---------------------------|
| Chatham | \$522.00 | \$1,102.00 |
| East Greenbush | \$514.23 | \$1,075.00 |
| Nassau | \$505.79 | \$1,081.00 |
| North Greenbush | \$512.12 | \$1,067.00 |
| Sand Lake | \$527.35 | \$1,084.00 |
| Schodack | \$511.00 | \$1,058.00 |

Is the STAR exemption automatic? No. **To receive the STAR tax exemption, you must file an application with your local property assessor by March 1 for it to appear on your tax bill.** If you have applied previously and been granted the Basic STAR exemption, you do not need to reapply. However, you must notify your assessor if your primary residence changes. Most seniors receiving the Enhanced exemption will need to reapply yearly.

What recent changes did NYS make to the STAR program? Homeowners who claim the Basic STAR exemption were required to register with the New York State Department of Taxation and Finance by December 31, 2013 in order to continue receiving benefits in 2014 and subsequent year. This new requirement was implemented by the State in order to reduce fraud. Individuals who failed to register by December 31, 2013 should contact the New York State Department of Taxation and Finance at (518) 457-2036.

Is there a STAR Rebate available? No. New York State discontinued the STAR Rebate program in 2009. Separate from the STAR Exemption, the STAR Rebate program previously provided eligible homeowners with a rebate on their school taxes in the fall, the amount of which was calculated based on the homeowner's income.

OTHER EXEMPTIONS

What other exemptions does the District offer to reduce my tax bill? There are several exemptions available within the EGCS D that exist to provide tax relief to homeowners. Not every school district has these exemptions, and all three are subject to Board of Education approval.

Senior Citizens

The District allows a partial tax exemption for homeowners age 65 or older with limited incomes. This exemption provides a 50% reduction in the assessed valuation of property for qualifying seniors with annual incomes up to \$29,000. Lower percentage exemptions are provided based on a sliding scale for qualifying seniors with incomes between \$29,000 and \$37,400. That scale is provided below:

| 2014 Income Levels | Percentage Exemption |
|---------------------------|-----------------------------|
| Up to \$29,000 | 50% |
| \$29,001-\$30,000 | 45% |
| \$30,001-\$31,000 | 40% |
| \$31,001-\$32,000 | 35% |
| \$32,001-\$32,900 | 30% |
| \$32,901-\$33,800 | 25% |
| \$33,801-\$34,700 | 20% |
| \$34,701-\$35,600 | 15% |
| \$35,601-\$36,500 | 10% |
| \$36,501-\$37,400 | 5% |
| \$37,401 & Over | 0% |

Persons with Disabilities and Limited Incomes

The district allows a partial tax exemption for qualifying homeowners with disabilities and limited incomes by reason of that disability. This exemption provides a 50% reduction in the assessed valuation of property for qualifying property owners with annual incomes up to \$29,000. Lower percentage exemptions are provided based on a sliding scale for qualifying persons with disabilities with incomes between \$29,000 and \$37,400. That scale is provided below:

| 2014 Income Levels | Percentage Exemption |
|---------------------------|-----------------------------|
| Up to \$29,000 | 50% |
| \$29,001-\$30,000 | 45% |
| \$30,001-\$31,000 | 40% |
| \$31,001-\$32,000 | 35% |
| \$32,001-\$32,900 | 30% |
| \$32,901-\$33,800 | 25% |
| \$33,801-\$34,700 | 20% |
| \$34,701-\$35,600 | 15% |
| \$35,601-\$36,500 | 10% |
| \$36,501-\$37,400 | 5% |
| \$37,401 & Over | 0% |

Veterans Exemption

East Greenbush Central School District's Board of Education approved an alternative veterans' tax exemption in January 2015 for veterans of defined periods of wars, veterans who received expeditionary medals and veterans who sustained disabilities from their service.

- A qualified residential parcel receives an exemption equal to 15% of its assessed value up to \$6,000.
- Where the veteran can document service in a combat theater or combat zone, the property receives an additional exemption equal to 10% of its assessed value up to \$4,000.
- Where a veteran has received a service-connected disability rating from the Veterans' Administration or the Department of Defense, there is an additional exemption which is equal to one-half of the disability rating, multiplied by the assessed value of the property up to \$20,000.

Accessibility, Section 459-a

The district allows a partial exemption from taxes for property that is installed, altered or improved subsequent to the Americans with Disabilities Act to remove architectural barriers for the disabled.

Are these exemptions automatic? No. homeowners must contact their local town assessor for an application, provide proof of income and other information needed to qualify.