

New York State Assessors Association (NYSAA)

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Public Hearing

On

2019 Executive Budget

Presented to

Assembly Real Property Tax Committee

Hearing Room , Legislative Office Building

Presented by

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Scott Shedler, Assessor, Town of Ramapo, Rockland County

Maggie A. Alix, Director, Real Property Tax Service Agency, Albany County

Greeting

Good afternoon, it is my pleasure to be with you today. My name is Warren J. Wheeler, IAO. I am the assessor in the towns of Constantia and Richland, the former assessor of the towns of Hastings and Boylston, and past president of the New York State Assessors Association. This past November it was my honor to accept the position of executive director of the New York State Assessors Association. Thank you for the opportunity to appear today on behalf of the Association to discuss the executive budget. With me today are: Scott Shedler, IAO, assessor, town of Ramapo, Rockland County, first vice president of the New York State Assessors Association; and Maggie Alix, former assessor for the town of Green Island, director of the Albany County Real Property Tax Service Agency, chair of the New York State Assessors Association Legislative Committee.

The New York State Assessors Association was formed in 1940 to improve the standards of assessment practices. The Association serves as a clearinghouse for the collection and distribution of useful information relating to the assessment of real property. The Association is a proponent of local government. Assessors are on the front line of legislative action. Assessors serve to educate the taxpaying public on the nature and importance of the work performed by assessing officers and explain and implement changes in legislation.

For over a decade, Gallup has reported that American citizens believe in their local governments. Americans have the most trust and confidence in their local governments and their local government leaders. Assessors are leaders in the community.

STAR

We believe the state has an opportunity with this budget and this legislative session to provide property tax relief. One way the state can address rising taxes is to increase the cap on STAR, the School Tax Relief exemption. Property owners are most comfortable with their local assessor, and annual changes to the administration of the STAR program causes chaos and diminishes trust. The Association recognizes the efforts of the Department of Tax and Finance, and we continue to strengthen ties, however, 2019 is not the year to cap the savings on STAR nor decrease the income threshold for the STAR exemption. The executive budget contains proposals that will convert the STAR exemption to a STAR credit. The exemption will soon be diminished; there is no need to expedite the process.

Taxpayers who don't have the ability to pay their school tax bill outright and currently escrow taxes will be disadvantaged. For example, a property owner who escrows their taxes will on average save an additional \$12 by switching from the STAR exemption to the STAR credit. However, the same taxpayer will need to save on average an additional \$50 a month in order to cover their school tax bill. At the end of the day, all we want to do is provide the best service possible to our residents. We do not believe the executive budget enables assessors to meet these goals. We do, however, encourage you to approve Part TT, which will improve the STAR

administrative process to be more responsive to taxpayer needs and we are in full support of moving Part PP forward.

Make Real Property Tax Administration More Effective and Efficient

Local municipalities are in a position to be able to respond to fiscal emergencies, natural disasters, and unforeseen events. Municipalities have been cognizant of the tax cap and have been fiscally responsible. Local officials have been working cooperatively and have utilized their authority to address regulatory requirements. The Association supports giving each locality the opportunity to tailor its policies to fit the needs of its community. Revenue Bill Part J covers a variety of administrative practices that will make assessment administration more effective and efficient. The Association supports Part J with a local option.

Local Assessment of Utility Property.

A recent study was delivered to the Governor's office related to the establishment of a utility assessment ceiling. This change in New York Real Property Tax Law will allow the State of New York to establish a public mass utility of real property central assessment program. This legislation would allow the State of New York to take over the valuation of utility property in a private right-of-way. Utility property located in a private right-of-way is currently assessed by the local assessor in the same fashion as afforded every other taxpayer in the State. If the State takes over valuing mass utility, there will be a shift in taxes that will impact the real property tax burden on residents and local business.

Condominium Bill

The Association appreciates the continued work of the Assembly. We would like to take the opportunity to thank the Assembly for passing the Condo Bill in 2018. Our members and the taxpayers in the state of New York are grateful that the Assembly recognizes the importance of valuing condominiums in the same fashion as single-family homes. We are one step closer to equity. This is a historic year and our goal is to see this bill pass both chambers and be signed into law.

Protecting Our Seniors

Our associations legislative committee was tasked with looking at the rp467 limited Income Senior exemption, the committee came up with proposals to simplify the definition of income that would make it easier for the seniors to file and to document their income, and to also make it easier to administer this exemption. There is a growing trend where senior's income is becoming more complex and shifting away from traditional sources like just social security and pensions, with some bank interest, and heading more towards IRAs and other more complex income sources.

Conclusion

Thank you for the work that you do and for the time we were afforded today. We appreciate the opportunity to share our perspective on the executive budget. We look forward to working with you this legislative session.