

Board of Equalization

December 2016

Annual report of the Board of Equalization

Board Members: Steve Janes , Chairman, Nancy Fleischman, Vice Chairman, Tammie Moses, Secretary, Peter Wiley, John Lowry and Bill Cromwell

Certification and Training: Each new Board of Equalization (BOE) member and continuing members must attend (remotely) board training every four years as provided by the Virginia Department of Taxation. All six Albemarle BOE members agreed to and attended the training in April and May of this year along with the County Assessor and the Assistant County Attorney responsible for real estate. All board members were then certified/re-certified and a letter was sent to this effect to the County Executive.

Meetings: The Board of Equalization (BOE) schedules meetings after the filing deadline of March 15th for administrative appeals (as allowed by Albemarle County Code §15-1002) of only the current-year assessments. Taxpayers have the option to appeal directly to the BOE or to first request an internal review by assessment staff and, regardless of the results, may then appeal to the BOE. Albemarle County Code requires the BOE to conclude its duties by September 1st for appeals of the 2016 reassessments and December 31st for supplemental assessments (such as new construction) made effective during the year. These dates are the same annually, and are mandated by County Code §15-1002 (C). The BOE held 10 hearings on reassessment appeals from June 23rd through August 11th and no appeals were filed on supplemental assessments, therefore all duties of the BOE were concluded within the required period.

Summary: The Board received appeals on 271 parcels owned by 23 different taxpayers. Of these appeals, 180 parcels were individual condominiums homes that are managed as part of one apartment property, and 45 other parcels are individual lots in a single subdivision for townhouse development. The remainder were mainly individual parcel appeals ranging from single family to large commercial. These parcels ranged in value from around \$64,000 to over \$77 Million.

The total assessed value of these 271 parcels was initially \$261,277,800. The BOE decided to reduce the assessment of 12 parcels by \$6,876,000 (in total), which is a 2.6% overall reduction of all parcels appealed. In respect to the total taxable land book for 2016, which was \$18,213,355,600, this is a 0.038% reduction. An additional parcel, which is currently under the land use taxation program, had its market value reduced by \$3,737,500, but this change has no effect on current year taxes. The vast majority (257) of the appealed values were affirmed by the BOE as accurate and thus were not changed. One parcel's value was increased at the request of the owner by \$22,000.

Weldon Cooper Center for Public Service includes a chapter on assessments in their annual Virginia Local Tax Rates manual. Not all of Virginia's 95 Counties allow appeal of assessments. Of those who do, Albemarle granted changes in size and amount not unlike other localities of similar parcel count and population. Only 271 parcels out of more than 44,000 taxable parcels in the County were appealed to the BOE.

The County continues to face the challenge of finding and retaining BOE members who meet the experience requirements of Virginia Code and who are willing to serve.

Conclusion: The BOE serves the citizens of Albemarle County by ensuring fair and equitable taxation and maintaining a process that is open and allows taxpayers an avenue to challenge their real estate assessment while protecting the integrity and equity of the overall tax base of the County as mandated by Code of Virginia § 58.1-3379. The Board has been very flexible in scheduling hearings and accommodating to the needs of the taxpayers in the presentation of materials and testimony for the appeal of the property owners' assessment. The Board members take time to educate the taxpayers about the appeal process and solicit information that is most applicable to the assessment of their property. Being taxpayers themselves, the members of the BOE are able to understand the appellant's position, but the BOE is experienced enough to also understand the requirements of the assessment process.