

How Do I File for Abatement?

The time period for filing abatement applications is after the issuance of the third quarter actual tax bill, mailed on December 31st, and on or before the third quarter actual tax bill due date of February 1st. All abatement applications must be received in the Assessors' Office by 4:00PM or be postmarked by the US Postal Service no later than February 1st. By filing for abatement, you are appealing the assessed value of your property, not the amount of taxes you are billed. Your assessed value only determines your share of the tax levy. The tax levy is determined by the budget votes at Town Meeting after other revenue sources and expenses are calculated. Filing an abatement application does not stay the collection of your taxes; to avoid loss of appeal rights or addition of interest and other collection charges, the tax should be paid as assessed.

Assessments are based on "Full and Fair Cash Value" defined as the price a willing buyer would pay a willing seller for property exposed to the market for a reasonable time period. Property valuations for Fiscal Year reflect the assessment date of January 1st. The Department of Revenue required us to verify and analyze arm's length sales that occurred during calendar year two years prior to determine current fiscal year valuations. Therefore, your property valuation is based on the real estate market as of two years prior, not on the current real estate market. Changes occurring in the real estate market after the January 1st assessment date will be analyzed for the formation of the next fiscal year's assessments. New construction, including additions and remodeling, is valued according to its condition as of June 30th.

Before filing for abatement, obtain a copy of your Property Record Card online in the Assessor's Office, which contains all the data on your parcel including detailed land and building information. You should review your Property Record Card to ensure that all the data is accurate. Please note that a complete property inspection will be required upon filing of abatement application. Your abatement application may include data and/or documentation to support your opinion of value. Information on sales data and valuations of properties in the Town of Sterling can be found on our website or in the Assessors' Office. Appraisal reports may be considered as documentation to support your opinion of value upon review and determination of inclusion of comparable arm's length sales occurring within the same time period on which our assessment is based.

The Assessors will request income and expense information from you for investment properties utilizing the income approach to value. Abatements filed on personal property accounts will be required to provide a completed Form of List. After your application is reviewed, you may be asked to supply other additional information. The Assessors will review and respond to your abatement request within 90 days of your filing. You may request a meeting with the Assessors. The Assessors' decision on your abatement application may be appealed to the Appellate Tax Board 100 Cambridge St., Suite 200, Boston, MA 02114, telephone (617) 727- 3100, and website: <https://www.mass.gov/orgs/appellatetax-board>. The Assessors encourage all taxpayers to bring any questions regarding the valuation or abatement process to our attention so we may help you.

ABATEMENT FILING CHECKLIST

REMEMBER:

- FILING DEADLINE IS FEBRUARY 1st.**
- SIGN THE ABATEMENT APPLICATION.**
- INCLUDE YOUR OPINION OF VALUE AS OF OUR ASSESSMENT DATE OF JANUARY 1st.**
- INCLUDE SUPPORT FOR YOUR OPINION OF VALUE.**
- YOU WILL BE CONTACTED FOR A FULL PROPERTY INSPECTION.**
- CONTACT OUR OFFICE TO ASK ANY QUESTIONS.**