



THE WATCHDOG

Keeping a watchful eye on taxation

A Publication of the Dickinson County Taxpayers Association

A 501 (C) (3) non-profit organization

OCTOBER, 2020 VOLUME 18 ISSUE 2

Mark Your Calendar

Annual Meeting
PENDING

Monthly Meetings
Second Thursdays
8 AM
April through
December
Normally at Arnolds
Park City Hall
Currently by Zoom
Public Invited!

Officers

President
Phil Petersen

Vice-President
Mark Sullivan

Treasurer
Jan Bowles

Executive Director
Lissa Potter

Board of Directors

Jan Bowles
Bill Carmichael
Darrell Mergan
Phil Petersen
Owen Primavera
Amy Schlueter
John Shanafelt
Mark Sullivan
Robert Zylstra

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Spirit Lake, IA 51360
www.dctaxpayers.org*

Our Association goal is to better inform Dickinson County taxpayers how our taxes are determined and how our tax money is spent. In August you received the 2020-2021 Property Tax Bills by mail. The new tax bills will reflect the March 2019 revaluations. That would include the 20 percent increase on Okoboji lakeshore land. For taxpayers in the Okoboji School District your bill will also include the cost of building the \$25M new Middle School Building in Milford.

COMING EVENTS

Your Taxpayer Association is your government spending WATCHDOG. While many taxpayers are gone for the winter we remain active. Here is some of the work we will be doing for the balance of this year and early next year:

- **November 2020** – In Iowa, for odd-numbered years the Assessor must reevaluate the assessed value of each piece of property – **that means next year (2021) will be a reassessment year.** We have been monitoring the sales of lakeshore property in 2019 and 2020 that will be used for determining any new assessment value. We will be meeting with the Assessor in November to be sure we are on the same page and there will not be unnecessary increases in tax valuations.
- **January & February 2021** - Each taxing jurisdiction holds budget meetings in January and February. We will be monitoring all of the budget meetings to encourage conservative spending.
- **March 2021** – We will be communicating with the Assessor about the revaluation notices that will be sent out this month.

LAKESHORE LAND VALUATION

In March 2019 (an Iowa reassessment year) the Dickinson County Assessor mailed an assessment notice that increased the value of East and West Okoboji lakeshore land by an average of 20 percent. Impacted were 1,263 lakeshore properties on West Okoboji and 633 lakeshore properties on East Okoboji

Our conclusion - as your Association - was that the County Assessor believed that since 3 percent of the 1,263 West Okoboji properties and 3 percent of the 633 East Okoboji properties in 2019 sold for an average of 20 percent over their assessed value - that one could conclude that the other 97 percent of the properties would have also sold for 20 percent over their assessed value. Meaning that all lakeshore properties on the Okoboji chain received a 20 percent increase on their land value.

To learn more about how the value of lakeshore land is determined checkout the Taxpayer Association website www.dctaxpaters.org select the Property Tax tab and then select Lakeshore Land.

RE-ASSESSMENT AND PROTESTING 2021

Iowa law requires the Assessor to reevaluate the market value of each parcel of property in odd-numbered years. If the valuation of your property has changed you could expect a notice from the Assessor in March of 2021. If you feel your Property assessment was made in error you may file a written protest with the five member Dickinson County Board of Review. The Board operates independently of the assessor's office, and has the power to confirm or to adjust either upward or downward any assessment. Normally your written protest must be filed between April 2nd and April 30th of the reassessment year.

If your protest is unsuccessful with the Board of Review. You can file an Appeal with a state agency – Property Assessment Appeal Board (PAAB). More information about the PAAB appeal process can be found at their website <https://paab.iowa.gov>.

You do not need an attorney to file a Protest of an Appeal. But you need a very fact based argument if you expect to be successful. Someone experienced with the process would be very helpful.

TAXATION & THE TAXPAYER'S ASSOCIATION

TAX REDUCTION

The Taxpayer Association would love to implement a tax reduction. Unfortunately, we do not have that authority. The tax levies are determined by the assessed value and the budget requirements of each taxing jurisdiction. Each budget expenditure has a particular constituency that doesn't want to receive reduced or fewer services. For example, the farmers are very vocal about the rural roads and bridges being properly maintained. Local jurisdictions are very reluctant to run a deficient.

POSITIVE NOTE

Although it has been difficult to implement a tax reduction the Taxpayer Association has been effective in keeping Dickinson County levy rates as some of the lowest in the State of Iowa. The County Assessor, Board of Review, Board of Supervisors, City Councils, School Boards, and other taxing jurisdictions are well aware of our presence. By asking questions and requesting information we are helping to reduce tax increases.

TAXPAYER METINGS

In normal times the Taxpayer Association meets the second Thursday of the month. Although our Board of Directors meets during January, February, March we remain active with the winter Local Government budgeting process. We hold an Annual Membership meeting the second Friday of June. This year, because of the Covid-19 virus, we published an August annual report in the two local newspapers. Because of the Covid-19 virus we are holding our monthly Board Meeting using ZOOM technology. Contact the Executive Director for Zoom meeting details at email contact@dctaxpayers.org.

OUR ABILITY TO INFLUENCE

Our influence with the Board of Supervisors, City Councils, and School Boards is enhanced by the number of members in the Taxpayer Association. Your membership will make our Association stronger. By having a membership you will be assured of receiving our newsletter WATCHDOG. Membership information can be found on our website www.dctaxpayers.org.

YOUR SUPPORT IS IMPORTANT TO US

We appreciate your support. It makes our voice stronger with government officials. We encourage your contact by email to contact@dctaxpayers.org or by mail to Box 598, Spirit Lake, IA 51360.

YOU CAN HELP

You can help control our taxes by becoming better educated about how our property tax works. A great source of information about Dickinson County taxation can be found on our website – www.dctaxpayers.org

Check out the section labeled **PROPERTY TAX** using these headings:

Assessed Value	How to Compute
Assessor	Lakeshore Land
Flow Chart	Levy Rate
Board of Review	Protest
Calendar	Rollback
Equalization	

A great deal of information can be found on your Dickinson County tax bill mailed each August. If you have questions you can call the County Assessor's office located in the Spirit Lake Courthouse. **Telephone 712/ 336 –2687.**

