

## **STATUTORY REQUIREMENTS TRUTH-IN-TAXATION**

The single most important financial resource of the City is the ad valorem tax, better known as the property tax. It is important for all citizens to fully understand the makeup of the taxes levied against their properties. The following synopsis provides a basic working knowledge of property taxes and how they are determined.

Much of what taxing authorities such as cities, school districts, counties, and special districts are allowed to levy for property taxes is determined by the State of Texas. Several years ago, the state legislature provided for the establishment of county appraisal districts. The purpose of these appraisal districts is to determine fair market values of all taxable property within a specific county. The taxable value of property is determined as of January 1 of each year.

The appraisal district generally notifies taxpayers of their assessed valuations in March and allows for them to challenge the valuations if the taxpayers believe them to be in error. A tax appraisal review board hears all tax protests and determines if the original valuation is correct or in error. On May 25 of each year, the appraisal district is required to provide taxing authorities with a certified estimate of total appraised value. This preliminary estimate is used by the City to help project what revenues will be available in the next fiscal year. The preliminary estimate, while providing indications of an increasing or decreasing tax roll, is subject to fluctuations because of possible tax protests mentioned above.

The most important date relating to the appraisal district is July 25. On that date a certified appraisal roll must be provided to all taxing authorities. This certified roll provides a basis upon which a tax rate can be applied to produce necessary revenues for the operation of City services.

After determination of a tax rate for the upcoming budget year there are several procedures and tests that must be applied to the rate in order for state law to be met. They include:

♦ **Calculation and publication of the effective tax rate.**

The effective tax rate is the tax rate that, when applied to the taxable assessed valuation, would produce the same total taxes as last year when properties taxed in both years are compared. The objective of the effective tax rate is to generate equal tax revenues using taxable valuations from different years. **The rate shows the relation between the last year's revenue and the current year values.**

♦ **Determination of whether the proposed tax rate is more than 8% over the effective tax rate.**

The 8% rule as set by state law imposes the maximum rate that may be adopted by taxing authorities without being subject to tax rollback procedures. If a taxing authority imposes a tax rate in excess of 8% of the effective tax rate, taxpayers may take measures that could rollback the adopted rate to an 8% increase. Generally, these procedures involve a petition of eligible voters and a rollback election.

♦ **City must publish notices and hold public hearings IF the proposed tax rate will exceed the lower of the rollback rate or the effective rate.**