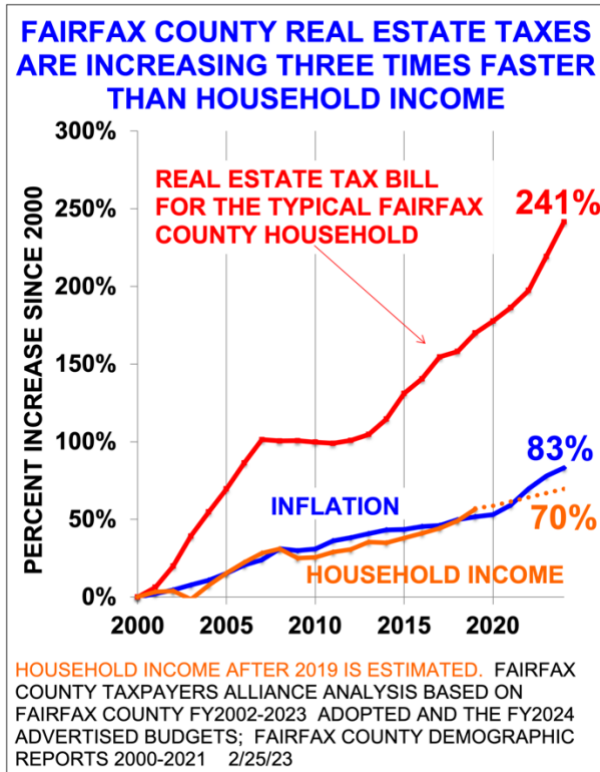




FCTA Bulletin – March 7, 2023

HOW I SUCCESSFULLY APPEALED MY REAL ESTATE ASSESSMENT!

By Ron Quasebarth, Board Member, Fairfax County Taxpayers Alliance



If you haven't contested your property tax assessment before, it's worth at least considering. If you have done it before and gotten rejected, you might find here some new ideas that will improve your chances of success.

If you're thinking of appealing, keep in mind you have only until April 3rd to submit your application.

Some background: I live in a one-street development built in 1992 in which there were three models. Mine is the smallest of the three. It is a corner property which means that there is perhaps 20% more acreage than most of the other homes. There is a thirty-foot utility easement behind my property, which forms a verdant privacy fence.

So, looking at my 2021 assessment which showed a 6.7% increase on top of several prior years with similar increases, I decided once again to look into the process of contesting it. Here's what I did.

To begin I went to [Fairfax County Real Estate Assessments Appeals page](#). At the [sales and detailed property information link](#), I then entered the Map Reference Number for my property shown on the assessment. You can also enter your address. This described my property and contained a "Neighborhood Sales" link on the right showing homes in my "Assessment Neighborhood." The comparable homes provided reference points for assessing my home's value.

Next, the most creative step: Finding actual real estate descriptions of the comparable homes. What is the total square footage of those homes? Number of finished floors? Date of construction? Size of deck or pool? Note any other features of interest that would raise or decrease value. Search Zillow and Redfin to get the actual detail on each of those homes, including market value. I did all of this before driving by each one to note location

or features that those real estate websites may have missed. I found that one home had a fully finished basement and large deck, features that my house lacked.

At the end of that process, I concluded that all but one of the “comparable” homes had more finished square footage, were newer by a decade, and one was in a golf course community. The county had incorrectly assumed I had a fully finished basement and a deck much larger than mine. It didn’t take notice of other details, like my home being the smallest of the three models in my neighborhood. In my response to the county, I noted all these details to show that their comparable homes were not nearly as similar as they had assumed. After a week or so I had an unannounced visit from a friendly county agent to do a personal audit of my home. I gave him free rein to see the home’s three floors and the outside.

In a few weeks, I learned that my “real estate appeal” had succeeded.

Join the Fairfax County Taxpayers Alliance!

“Watchdog of the Taxpayer’s Dollar since 1956”

www.fcta.org

contact@fcta.org