

**RECOMMENDATIONS ADOPTED BY REVALUATION COMMISSION
AT JANUARY 8, 2014 MEETING**

1. Revaluation Standards

The Commission recommends the City advocate for passage of state legislation that will allow local communities the option of phasing in, over a period of three years, the changes resulting from a revaluation. The legislation will be prepared by the City Solicitor with care to ensure it is technically valid. The legislation will contain the following elements:

- a. Each community will have the option of electing to “phase in” through the passage of an ordinance stating the decision to “phase in.” The “default” position will be a continuation of the status quo absent the passage of such an ordinance.
- b. The ordinance electing a “phase in” (or reverting from a “phase in”) will be separate from the budget ordinance. Once passed, the city or town will forward its election promptly to the State Department of Revenue.
- c. Once a community enacts an ordinance opting for a “phase in,” it will continue to “phase in” for future revaluations until it enacts an ordinance reverting to the “no phase in” status quo.
- d. The “phase in” option will apply to both statistical and full revaluations.
- e. The deadline for electing this option is thirty-one (31) days after the valuation date (i.e. 31 days after December 31 of the baseline valuation year.)
- f. The “phase in” will apply to all revalued property, both those increasing in value and those decreasing in value.
- g. The “phase in” option will first become available for revaluations conducted in calendar year 2016 for property values as of December 31, 2015.
- h. A city or town electing to “phase in” will develop procedures that include the process for adjusting property values for improvements and other changes that occur between revaluations.
- i. The following examples illustrate how the “phase in” would apply for two sample properties:

– Example:

Old Assessment	New Assessment	Taxable Value Year 1	Taxable Value Year 2	Taxable Value Year 3
\$100,000	\$130,000	\$110,000	\$120,000	\$130,000
\$240,000	\$180,000	\$220,000	\$200,000	\$180,000

2. Internal Procedures

a. Transparency

1. The Assessor will post online record cards for every property. For residential properties, the record card will include all information on which a valuation is based. The card also will indicate the “algorithm” through which the data points on the record card were combined to reach a valuation.
2. For commercial properties, the record card will include all information used to develop a valuation except for proprietary or confidential information, along with general information about how valuations are developed.

b. Customer Service

1. The Assessor will develop a communications plan to provide the public with multiple channels of communication about the upcoming revaluation, including the City’s website, emails, social media, news releases and advertising, and for enhanced customer service access immediately following the issuance of tax bills to answer questions. The goal should be to eliminate “busy” signals, and to respond to all calls within twenty-four (24) hours.
2. The Assessor and/or the valuation company will schedule community meetings prior to the issuance of tax bills to describe the revaluation process generally without getting into specific property values.
3. Every staff member, regardless of position or duties, must be cross-trained to be able to answer all basic constituent questions.
4. Improve and increase public relations efforts during revaluations. Providing taxpayers with more information about how the revaluation is conducted and when appraisers will be in each neighborhood reduces confusion and appeals, lowering overall workload.
5. The Assessor’s Office staff should ensure that appropriate staff attend professional development opportunities about revaluations, including any annual training institutes for tax assessors sponsored by the State. The City should commit adequate resources to the Assessor’s Office to support this professional development.

c. Timeline of Revaluation

1. Much of the work involved in a revaluation is conducted in conjunction with private appraisal companies certified by the Department of Revenue, so maintaining an appropriate and efficient schedule for revaluation requires diligence on the parts of both the Assessor's Office staff and the outside firm.
2. Contracts and Requests For Proposals for private appraisal firms should include dates and defined windows for all major aspects of revaluation process, including but not limited to data collection, Assessor review, and City Council review.
3. The Commission will not require specific dates, but the following guidelines provide a framework for a schedule:
 - a. The revaluation database will be submitted to the Assessor and the Internal Auditor at least three months prior to the expected budget enactment date. Currently, the City Council enacts the budget in early June, pointing towards a delivery date on or around March 1.
 - b. The revaluation company will be available for informal meetings with taxpayers to discuss their new values for a period of at least four (4) weeks, beginning at one (1) week after impact notices are mailed. The tax bills will describe the informal review process.
4. The appraisal company contract should include strong penalty clauses granting the Tax Assessor the power to withhold payments if the agreed upon schedule is not adhered to.
5. Progress reports should be sent from the appraisal firm to the Tax Assessor on a monthly basis. Reports should include account status, action items, needs of the appraisal firm when in Providence, and the full schedule for revaluation annotated with current status of each task.