

TAXES – A DIFFERENT VIEW

By Joan Brooks, Selectmen Chair

It's tax time again and no one likes to pay taxes. But let's look at them in a different way. The tax bill shows what percentage is allocated to the school system (SAD 63), Penobscot county, and the town budget. In Eddington 51.74 % is for the school system; 7.38% goes to the county, and 40.88% goes to fund all the town services.

At the annual town meeting the citizens vote on the appropriations for town services. Citizens do not have an opportunity to vote for or against the school and the county budgets at the town meeting. A total of 59.12% of our tax bill comes to us essentially in the form of two "invoices" and we have no say at town meeting about whether or not they are too high.

An individual's tax is based on the size and location of the property, the size and condition of the dwelling, the frontage on a water body, and a number of other factors such as having a swimming pool or other "extras". Everyone's taxes differ in the total amount. For example a property on Rt.9 is taxed at \$1,615.12. Of this amount \$835.66 goes to the school, \$119.20 goes to the county, and \$660.26 to fund town services. This is the only portion of the taxes that is controlled directly by the citizens at town meeting. Looking at this another way, it costs \$12.70/week in taxes for a nice house on a five acre lot and for all the services provided by the town.

Or a house on 2.3 acres on a side road is assessed a total tax of \$4,928.87 with \$2,014.92 or \$38.75/week for town services. Another house on 2.1 acres pays a total tax of \$485.06 with \$198.29 or \$3.81/week for town services. And then there are highly desirable properties fronting on a water body. A 0.11 acre lot with a 50 foot frontage on the water is taxed a total of \$856.75 with \$350.24 or \$6.74/week for town services. Another lakefront lot of 1.22 acres with a 100 foot frontage is taxed \$2,538.22 with \$1,037.62 or \$19.95/week for town services. The value for each frontage foot on the water is set by the sales ratio and not by the citizens at town meeting.

Services include having a town office and staff where one can conveniently register a vehicle, get various licenses and conduct other business, a fire department and staff, trash pickup each week and recycling pickup twice a month, a code enforcement officer, a licensed plumbing inspector, an animal control officer, police protection, a planning board that acts on applications and drafts ordinances for the good of the town, a board of selectmen to oversee town business, an assessors board, an assessors agent, fire hydrants, street lights, general assistance, cemetery maintenance, regional recreation, road and bridge maintenance and snow plowing. Even with the tax range shown in the above examples from \$3.81 to \$38.75/week it is still a bargain for all the services received.

Eddington's tax rate of \$10.40 per \$1,000 of evaluation is one of the lowest in the area. For the past two years it was \$9.80 per thousand. That is just a 60 cent tax increase per \$1,000 in evaluation over the past 3 years. Further, the town has operated with a balanced budget for at least the past 50 years.

Look at your tax bill. Divide the amount listed for the town by 52. The result is your tax cost/week for town services. Consider the services you receive and then decide whether you are over-taxed or not for this portion of your tax bill.