PROPERTY TAX ASSISTANCE

EXEMPTION PROGRAMS:

A tax exemption program provides property tax relief by exempting or subtracting a certain amount of value from the assessed value of your home before applying the tax rate to determine your annual tax obligation. All of the following exemptions require completion of an application to the local town office where the property is located. Exemption claims may require additional information to support the claim for exemption, and must be delivered to the Assessor's office no later than April 1st in order to qualify for the exemption for that year (and subsequent years).

Homestead Exemption -This program provides a measure of property tax relief for certain individuals with respect to their permanent (or "primary") residence, which they own. That property is referred to as the "homestead" property. In order to qualify, the individual must have owned a homestead property (not necessarily the current residence) in this state for at least 12 months prior to the date of application.

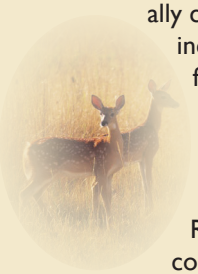
Veteran Exemption - A veteran is eligible for this exemption if he or she served during a recognized war period and is 62 years or older or served during a recognized war period and is receiving 100% disability as a veteran or became 100% disabled while serving in the line of duty but not during a federally recognized war period. Similar exemptions are also available for the unremarried widow or widower and/or minor child or parent of a deceased, qualifying veteran. An enhanced exemption is available for a qualifying paraplegic veteran who received a federal grant for specially adapted housing.

Blind Exemption - An individual who is determined to be legally blind is eligible for this exemption.

"CURRENT USE" PROGRAMS:

The State of Maine has four "current use" programs which allow qualifying property to be assessed at its "current use" as undeveloped land rather than at its "highest and best" use, which is the general assessing standard. Certain criteria must be met for each program in order to be eligible, and any future change in the use of the land that causes disqualification will result in the assessment of a financial penalty. Full advantage of these programs is obtained only with relatively long-term enrollments (i.e., well over five years). All four programs are available to the property owner through an application process with the local municipality. Applications must be filed on or before April 1st in order to qualify for the current-use assessment for that year and subsequently, until the property is disqualified or withdrawn from enrollment.

Farm Land - The property owner is required to own at least 5 contiguous acres of undeveloped land. The land must be used for farming, agriculture, or horticulture and can include woodland and wasteland. Additionally, the tract must annually contribute at least $2,000 in gross income or in home-use value from farming activities.



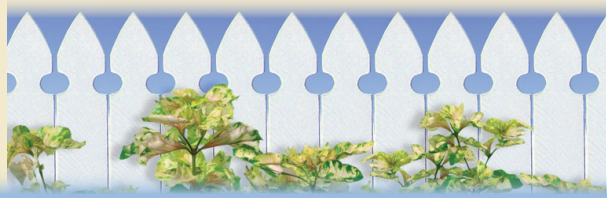
Open Space - The tract must be undeveloped land that is preserved to provide a public benefit. Recognized public benefits include conserving scenic resources, enhancing public recreation, promoting game management and/or preserving wildlife and wildlife habitat.

Tree Growth – To qualify for the Tree Growth tax program, the forested parcel must be at least 10 acres in size and used for commercial harvesting.

Working Waterfront - "Working waterfront land" means a parcel or portion of a parcel of land abutting tidal waters or within the intertidal zone (located between the high and low water mark), the use of which is more than 50% related to providing access to or in support of the conduct of commercial fishing (including commercial aquaculture) activities.

ABATEMENT OF TAXES:

Application for Property Tax Abatement Because of Poverty and/or Disability - An abatement is a forgiveness or a cancelling-out of a previously established property tax obligation. The municipal officers (board of selectmen or town or city council) may on their own knowledge or in response to a written application make such abatements as they believe reasonable on the property taxes owed by a person who they believe is "unable to contribute to the public charges" for reasons of either poverty or infirmity.

"CIRCUIT BREAKER" PROGRAM:

Maine Residents Property Tax and Rent Refund "Circuit Breaker" Program – Unlike the other programs discussed above, which in various ways work to reduce a person's property tax obligations, this program provides a cash benefit to qualifying individuals for the purpose of helping them pay the property taxes or rent on their primary residence. Eligibility for this program is based on household income. Applications for this benefit program are available at the town or city offices or directly from the State (Maine Revenue Services), and must be submitted each year.