November 23, 2015

New Jersey Investigates Failure of Towns to Initiate Property Tax Assessment Revaluations

On November 18, the New Jersey Department of the Treasury announced that it has issued letters to Jersey City, Dunellen and Elizabeth informing those municipalities that the state will conduct an investigation to determine whether to order a revaluation of properties within those towns for property tax purposes. The timing of the press release comes when many municipal officials were meeting in Atlantic City for the annual League of Municipalities Conference.

The Division of Taxation apparently has determined that those municipalities are the most dramatically out of compliance with their constitutional and statutory obligations requiring fair and uniform property tax assessments. Coincidentally, the boards of taxation in Hudson, Union and Middlesex counties have, according to the Division, consistently failed to require towns to uniformly and fairly assess properties. According to the Division, Elizabeth has not revalued its tax assessments in 39 years, Jersey City in 27 years and Dunellen in 33 years, resulting in properties in those towns being assessed at a fraction of their current fair market values. This effort by the Division is part of a larger effort to address issues of revaluation noncompliance by municipalities in those counties. Other municipalities identified by the Division as potential targets include Westfield, South River, East Newark, Harrison, Roselle and Winfield.

If forced to undergo revaluations, the towns in question will have to appropriate significant funds to have the revaluations conducted, and real property tax assessments will likely increase fourfold or fivefold to bring them up to current fair market value standards.

The full press release can be found here.

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