

**Property Tax Information Session  
With Commissioner Justin Rodriguez**

On May 27th, 2020, Commissioner Rodriguez was joined by Bexar County Tax Assessor-Collector Albert Uresti, SWBC Ad Valorem Tax Advisors President Gary Rivas, and SWBC Ad Valorem Tax Advisors Vice President Jerry Jurica to answer constituent questions, provide insight into property tax programs, and information on how to protest valuation.

Below are the questions submitted via the Facebook Live chat during the session. If you have additional questions for our office, call us at (210) 335-2612 or email [precinct2commissioner@bexar.org](mailto:precinct2commissioner@bexar.org).

**1) Why did the Bexar County Appraisal District wait to send out appraisals?**

We have been told that the Bexar Appraisal District delayed sending Notices of Appraised Values due to San Antonio's 'Stay Home, Work Safe' order and to also give time for the Governor to consider and respond to the many requests to provide property tax relief including freezing property values at 2019 pre-pandemic levels. However, property owners will still have 30 days from the postmarked date on the valuation letter to submit their protests. For more information, visit [www.bcad.org](http://www.bcad.org) or call 210-224-8511

**2) When Seniors don't pay is interest charged to the taxes that are owed when they die? If so it could be so much there Property would belong to the county.**

Interest accrues at the rate of 12% per year on any past due taxes. However, if an active deferral has been granted, the interest is reduced from 12 to 5% per year. The Texas Tax Code allows taxpayers over the age of 65 and those who meet the Social Security Administrations definition of disabled, a special Homestead Exemption which will allow the taxpayer to postpone paying the property taxes on their residence as long as they still live in it, or until the home is sold. Interest does continue to accrue at the rate of 5% per year. Once the deferral is ended, all accrued taxes, penalty, and interest must be paid within 180 days. If the taxes are not paid in this time frame, the taxing units may pursue foreclosure. Property owners who have an outstanding mortgage should check with their mortgage company to make certain the deferral does not violate the terms of the deed of trust. If the home has a mortgage, the deed of trust may permit the mortgage company to foreclose if all taxes aren't kept current.

**3) Can we talk about the land value vs the improvement value of property? I went through the process and was told that I couldn't affect the land value even though it doubled from 2018 to 2019. They wouldn't let me argue land value.**

The Texas Property Tax Code allows a property owner to present evidence of why a land value may be too high. The appraisal districts appraiser may not be receptive to discussing the land value at an informal meeting but a property owner has a right to present testimony at a formal Appraisal Review Board hearing. It is important to remember that the appraisal district is charged with

determining a property's overall market value as of January 1. A property's overall market value may be comprised of a land value and an improvement value (real estate):

- Land value                      25,000
- Improvement value        100,000
- Total market value        125,000

The appraisal district typically will analyze market sales obtained from Realtors MLS Service. These sales do not indicate what a buyer paid for a lot or the improvements (house) separately, and only indicate what the buyer paid for both the lot and house. The appraiser is left to determine an allocation of the sales price. In "mass appraisal", an appraiser is required to develop a systematic analysis for a group of properties, not one individual property. The appraisal district will do its best in finding lot or land sales that are applicable to the subject property with proper adjustments such as size, location and unique characteristics. The analysis will help the appraiser determine a neighborhood's base land rate (cost per square foot). Unless there is some characteristic that applies only to a property owners affected lot such as lying in a flood zone and where most other lots are not, the appraiser will be reluctant to change the land value as it could cause imbalance to an appraisers' equal and uniform model. If an appraiser agrees that the overall market value does need to be adjusted, they most likely will reduce the improvement value and not the land value. <https://comptroller.texas.gov/taxes/property-tax/valuing-property.php>

**4) How are land values determined year over year?**

The appraisal district should research market sales of similar property types in the area to determine what market "rates" are. Different property types (unimproved raw land, developed commercial vacant lots/land, residential lots) will have different market rates specific to that property type and location.

**5) How does refinancing information affect the devaluation of your home?**

Refinancing should not have any bearing on the valuation of your home. However, during the course of a typical home refinance, it may be necessary to commission a fee appraisal for the purposes of assuring the lender that the collateral (the house and lot) is worth the amount of the loan. If the fee appraisal is less than the appraisal districts estimate of market value, it could be provided as evidence in a protest hearing or informal meeting that the home is worth less than the appraisal districts estimation. The appraisal districts estimate of market value has no bearing on a lenders opinion of market value to secure repayment of the home loan.

**6) How does one know if their property value is too high? Who can we trust to give us the reasonable value of our property?**

A licensed real estate broker or agent can determine an opinion of market value by analyzing the sales comparables of a neighborhood (comparative market analysis). Many real estate agents are willing to provide this information at no cost. Licensed Property Tax Consultants are also qualified

to give an educated opinion of a property's estimate of market value for a fee. Several property tax consulting firms in San Antonio focus their practice on residential properties.

**7) I'm in Edgewood and my kids don't even go there is should be sent to the school district that they actually attend.**

Who a property owner pays taxes to is based on the physical location of a property. Taxing jurisdictions (cities, counties, school districts, hospital districts, etc.) may impose a property tax if a property lies within its jurisdictional boundaries. A school district may impose a property tax regardless if the property owner or the owner's family attends a public school within the school district's boundaries.

**8) Will we be hit with late payment fee and interest if we miss June 30 deadline as I did for personal property tax to the tune of \$7000.**

The June 30<sup>th</sup> deadline is mandated by State law and cannot be extended under any circumstances. Any late second-half payment will be assessed a 13% late fee on July 1<sup>st</sup> and 1% interest per month thereafter until paid in full.

**9) I just had my disability rating go up can I submit my updated information or is it too late?**

It's not too late for to apply for an increase in 2019 disability rating. You will be required to forward you increased veteran disability rating to the Bexar Appraisal District at [cs@bcad.org](mailto:cs@bcad.org). When updated, the changes will be forwarded to the Bexar County Tax Office and our records will be updated accordingly.

**10) Hello, who all do we write and call to advocate for tax relief, i.e. freezing current tax appraisals, especially due to current events?**

The Governor of Texas was inundated with formal requests from cities, counties, appraisal districts, tax offices, and State Senators and Representatives. The City of San Antonio City Council, Bexar County Commissioners Court, and the Bexar Appraisal District all requested property tax relief including freezing property values at pre-pandemic levels but were unsuccessful. There are currently no mechanisms allowed by the Texas Property Tax Code which could provide potential property tax relief. In the wake of Hurricane Harvey in 2017, new legislation was demanded by property taxpayers whose properties were severely damaged by the storms after the January 1 appraisal date. New laws and temporary exemptions were created in the 2019 legislative session which provides tax relief to property owners whose properties may be physically damaged by natural disasters. The temporary exemptions did not include properties that suffered *economic* damage caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. Property owners should contact their state Senators and Representatives that oversee the districts in which they reside. City Council and County Commissioners have no power to enact property tax code legislation but can support their constituent's efforts to be heard. <https://comptroller.texas.gov/taxes/property-tax/disasters/index.php#:~:text=Tax%20Code%20Section%2011.35%20allows,appraised%20value%20of%20the%20property.>

**11) I filed for my homestead and it's granted for 2019 and 2020. When will I get my refund for 2019?**

The Tax Assessor-Collector would have to review the account specifically to confirm the exemption and if applicable, the amount of the refund. Contact their offices at (210) 335-2251 or online at <https://www.bexar.org/1515/Tax-Assessor-Collector>

**12) How soon will veterans who applied for disability and over 65 exemptions in February 2020 receive refund?**

The Tax Assessor-Collector would have to review the account specifically to confirm the exemption and if applicable, the amount of the refund. Contact their offices at (210) 335-2251 or online at <https://www.bexar.org/1515/Tax-Assessor-Collector>

**13) Everyone should protest but many never see there tax reports because it goes to there finance company.**

At their request, and if they maintain an escrow, the tax statement will be forwarded to the mortgage company instead of the property owner for payment. The property owner may visit our website at: [www.bexar.org/tax](http://www.bexar.org/tax) to confirm property values, property taxes, ownership and exemptions.

Tax Statements/Bills are sent to the mortgage company if the lender tenders the property tax payment. Notices of Appraised Value are sent directly to the property owner at the address provided by the property owner. These notices are typically sent on or near April 1 every year provided the value increases by more than \$1,000 or there was a change in ownership. A Bexar County property owner can also look at the appraisal districts record of his property by visiting the Bexar Appraisal Districts website at <http://www.bcad.org/> and clicking on the Property Search link. The deadline to file a protest is May 15 or 30 days after the date of the notice, whichever is later. A Notice of Protest form is required to be included with the Notice of Appraised Value.

**14) Why can't Bexar County lower taxes under the current circumstances of this pandemic? We know it could have been done.**

Property taxes in Texas are a function of two separate components: 1) Appraised Value and, 2) Tax Rates. A value needs a rate and a rate needs a value to create a tax amount. Property owners can protest the appraised value on an annual basis. A lower value could lead to a lower property tax provided an increase in the tax rate doesn't offset the lowering of the appraised value. Property owners can also let cities, counties and school districts know that they want lower tax rates by speaking at budget meetings and tax rate public hearings. As stated by the Tax Assessor-Collector, no provisions are legally available in the Tax Code to lower property tax obligations *from a valuation standpoint* as a result of our current crises. The Governor could have called a special legislative session to address property tax relief in regards to the current pandemic but he is not expected to do so. It is still possible however, for taxing units to consider adopting lower tax rates and expanding existing exemption amounts.