

Senate Election Law and Municipal Affairs Committee

Jessica Bourque 271-2104

SB 225-FN-LOCAL, requiring public notice before re-assessment of property values for local tax purposes.

Hearing Date: February 11, 2025

Time Opened: 10:00 a.m.

Time Closed: 10:19 a.m.

Members of the Committee Present: Senators Gray, Lang, Rochefort and Long

Members of the Committee Absent : Senator Perkins Kwoka

Bill Analysis: This bill requires municipalities to post a 90-day notice prior to conducting any annual or 5-year revaluation of property.

Sponsors:

Sen. Avard

Sen. Lang

Rep. Ohm

Rep. Rice

Rep. Hill

Who supports the bill: Senator Avard, Victoria Gulla

Who opposes the bill: No one

Summary of testimony presented in support:

Tricia Melillo, Majority Caucus Director

- Introducing this bill on behalf of Senator Avard, the prime sponsor.
- Requires municipalities to give 90-day notice for any re-evaluation of assessed property and a 90-day posting of a notice for any change in assessed value.

Senator Kevin Avard, Prime sponsor

- The genesis of this bill is what happened in Nashua. Nashua had an assessment, and people in Nashua only had seven days to refute the appraisal because of the timing of the notices. The people of Nashua didn't know this was coming.
- Not concerned about municipalities having to comply; he is concerned about constituents, especially vulnerable constituents, receiving surprise evaluations.

Senator Lang asked Senator Avard if he would be OK with changing the number of days as long as constituents are given some kind of advance notice.

- Senator Avarad said that seemed reasonable.
- Nashua is trying to get rid of the tax cap, and on top of that, people received surprise tax bills. People are rightfully upset. For people on fixed incomes, receiving a bill for \$100 to \$600 more yearly is a lot of money.

Senator Long asked what the date was on the letter.

- Senator Avarad said he doesn't remember the date, but he remembers getting the letter.
- Senator Avarad made a promise to his constituents and asked the committee to support this bill.

Senator Long clarified that the letter Senator Avarad is referring to said property owners had seven days to respond.

- Senator Avarad said yes.

Victoria Gulla, Chesterfield

- People are always discussing tax assessments on social media.
- Held real estate licenses for a long time.
- Believes the committee should look at changing the April 1st date. That date only captures the early sales, so it isn't accurately capturing sales.
- It is common sense to let assessors have time to do the work.

Summary of testimony presented in opposition:

Jim Michaud, Hudson Town Assessor

- His comments are his own, the Town of Hudson has not weighed in on this bill.
- Concerned about the timing of this bill.
- Most revaluations are done between October 1st and December 1st.
- Hypothetically, if a town's reassessment is finished by September 20th, tax bills would not be able to be sent out until December 20th because they would have to wait 90 days.
- Supports the concept, but it comes down to a timing issue.
- There aren't a lot of assessing contractors, so towns have a difficult time hiring to do the work.
- You must do assessments after April 1st because that is when the sales come in.

Senator Lang said he would like to hear more about the timing concern. He asked who sets the assessment time line and why can't the assessments be done so that the notice goes out in August.

- Values don't come in until April 1st plus communities struggle to find assessing companies that can do the work, especially in a short period of time.

Senator Lang asked if it was accurate to say that the work can be rearranged to accommodate the deadline.

- The assessment date is April 1st so regardless of the deadline, the sales don't come in before that date. If the date were to be January 1st, then the discussion would be different.

Senator Lang asked if the first notice is the tax bill if a town does an assessment and the value changes.

- Hudson sends the notice of preliminary value before the tax bill which is roughly 60 days.

Senator Lang asked how much notice property owners receive if there is a change in assessment.

- Hudson's last reassessment was roughly 60 days after the issue of the notice of preliminary value.
- Mr. Michaud said his argument is that 90 days is too long and that the committee might want to shorten that to 30 or 45 days instead.

Senator Rochefort understands that Hudson has a full-time assessor, but some towns do not and asked what kind of strain it is for an assessor who might work with 15 different towns.

- Most communities in N.H. hire assessing contractor firms.
- The work still has to be done within the calendar constraints.