

Senate Election Law and Municipal Affairs Committee

Jessica Bourque 271-2104

HB 1581-FN, allowing municipalities to adopt a requirement that property owners be given notice when the assessed value of their property changes by certain amounts.

Hearing Date: April 7, 2026

Time Opened: 9:30 a.m.

Time Closed: 9:48 a.m.

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

Members of the Committee Absent: None

Bill Analysis: This bill allows municipalities to adopt a requirement that property owners be given notice when the assessed value of their property changes by certain amounts.

Sponsors:

Rep. Wherry

Rep. Ford

Rep. McFarlane

Rep. McGrath

Rep. Mary Murphy

Rep. Pauer

Who supports the bill: Rep. Robert Wherry, Cory Stone, Eric Pauer

Who opposes the bill: Sarah Burke Cohen

Who is neutral on the bill: Jim Michaud

Summary of testimony presented:

Representative Robert Wherry, Hillsborough-District 13

- This is about when a property is reassessed outside of the municipal-wide property assessments every 5 years.
- There are certain instances when a property can be assessed outside of municipal-wide assessments due to changes or errors, and in those situations, there are no notification processes to inform property owners that it is happening.
- We heard in House testimonies that people were assessed without notification, and because an appropriate abatement can take months, those folks were without that money for an extended period of time.

Senator Lang asked how this aligns with zoning and planning. For example, if I add a deck to my house and I know it will increase my home's value, does the building of the deck trigger this process? Is the town now required to send me a notice that this will increase my home's value?

Rep. Wherry said he believes that once the work is finished, yes, but this also covers municipal errors, such as confusion over addresses or name mix-ups, where the town made a mistake that needed correction.

Senator Rochefort followed up on Sen. Lang's question. What about a town that uses a contracted assessor vs. a town that has its own assessing department? This seems to add costs to the budgets of towns that use a contracted assessor.

Rep. Wherry said he believes that using a postcard wouldn't significantly increase the tax burden.

Senator Rochefort asked about the contracted assessor's costs because they would need to be paid for the extra work.

Rep. Wherry said that at the point where the assessment is made, they could mail it, and added that he does not think this needs to be a complicated process.

Jim Michaud, Hudson Chief Assessor

- NH municipalities are already permitted to do this, and some do.
- Under the current wording, this would need to be a warrant article every year, which seems like a burden and unnecessary.
- 14 calendar days isn't long for some of the smaller towns that are open only 1 or 2 days a week and have only 1 person handling administrative tasks. 14 business days might work better.
- As written, this would be sent only to "a" property owner. In many cases, there is more than one property owner. How would the municipality decide which owner to send the notice to?
- Questioned whether \$1000 is the right threshold. For example, a small change to a deck could result in a \$5,000 change in the home's value. Suggested to the committee that if they were going to go forward with this bill, they should consider setting a minimum threshold of \$10,000 and let municipalities decide for themselves whether they want to go higher.
- This could restrict towns that already follow this practice because you will be establishing new standards, even though they have already made their own decisions.
- This applies to all property owners, including exempt property owners, such as churches. A notice would have to be sent to a church even though it will never receive a tax bill. That seems like a poor use of municipal resources.
- Last year, the legislature passed a bill (HB 71) that changed the notice requirement for municipality-wide revaluation, eliminating the requirement to

mail a notice of a change in assessed value and instead allowing municipalities to post it on the town website.

- When is an assessed value considered official? It is official when the governing body signs the tax warrants, so notices cannot be sent until then. Theoretically, people might receive their tax bill before they get the notice.

Senator Rochefort returned to his earlier question. Hudson has a dedicated assessment department, but Gorham, Randolph, and many other small towns do not. Senator Rochefort said he is concerned that we might be heading toward a situation that will cost towns that contract for assessment services more money.

Mr. Michaud said that is correct. Most communities in NH contract out assessment services. He thinks some communities would have administrators send the notices, but because staff sometimes juggle three roles, this would make the position more difficult. If they have their contractor do it, it is an additional expense.

Senator Rochefort said that it is conceivable that something designed to increase transparency and lower taxes could end up costing taxpayers more.

Mr. Michaud said a town could publish the list of properties with changed assessments on its website, although many already do so.

Senator Lang said that, as he read the original bill, the intent seemed to be to inform people so they could go to the town office to discuss the change.

Mr. Michaud said yes.

Senator Lang said that, as he reads it, he doesn't see where this is limited to changes of assessment. Obviously, I know that adding a deck will increase the value of my property, yet the town will still be required to send out this notice.

Mr. Michaud said Senator Lang is correct. If someone is doing new construction, they should already know their bill will change. He has folks who speak with him at his office before they add an addition to see how much that would increase their tax bill.

Senator Lang asked whether the current tax bills show how someone's property assessment has changed from the previous assessment.

Mr. Michaud said no, it is just the current assessed value.

Senator Lang said maybe that is the change the committee could make to show what the previous assessment was, in addition to the new assessment.

Mr. Michaud said that most towns have that information on their websites, and that not every town has the same tax bill. They are all different. Some are smaller, and

some are bigger, and if you start jamming more information onto it, it becomes more problematic.

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Date Hearing Report completed: April 9, 2026