

Greetings Mr. Voegelé,

I'm writing to question about the upcoming revaluation activity. What is the ultimate goal of this activity? That was not clearly outlined in the [statement](#).

When the town came up and developed this idea, was the question of legality to this action addressed? Do home owners have the right to refuse entry to these inspectors? Refusal of entry to a stranger into one's home may disallow any direct physical measurements, however, any changes/renovations performed inside that these inspectors are looking to document for whatever reason, in theory, should already be documented through the town's permit process and that should provide measurements that are on par with today's measurements and be sufficient for town taxation needs in terms of impermeable surfaces or valuation estimates.

It seems to me that the assumption that "internal measurements and valuations" are a justifiable action is somewhat of a stretch; the latest home inspection/survey - the one that is performed at the time of purchase, combined with the permit process should suffice.

Feel free to post this comment and reply on the [Citizen Comments](#) link on the TOC home page.

Thank you for your time and I look forward to your response.

Matthew J. Hall

299 Biscayne Heights

Dear Mr. Hall: Thanks for writing. I am glad to address your concerns for you and the public at large. The purpose and "ultimate goal" of the re-assessment is to insure that the taxes raised to support both the municipal government and the school district are "fairly" apportioned to the property owners in the Town of Colchester. Common law and State law govern the process dating back to 1086 in England when William the Conqueror commissioned an assessment to determine the extent of the land and resources being owned in England at the time, *and the extent of the taxes he could raise* (<http://www.domesdaybook.co.uk/faqs.html#1>).

By State law (32 V.S.A. §4041a) the Town is required to perform a re-assessment of property in Town when the Town's "assessed value" falls outside the "market value" of similar homes being sold in Town. Under this State formula the Town last re-assessment occurred in 2003. We are again are "out of [statistical] compliance" between current assessed values and sales records.

Because it has been some twenty plus years since the Town has done an interior inspection of homes, the Town believes it is appropriate for the purpose of

taxation equity to re-examine the interior of all buildings/structures. Interior inspections refine and achieve better correlation of value between variances in similar houses. Not all people secure building permits for improving their homes. Some improvements do not require a permit. Even with age/depreciation most improvements change the value of the original edifice/home. Again with the goal to apportion taxes fairly based on homestead value interior inspections increase the "confidence" in the Town's determination of value.

By Select Board policy, the Town will not enter anyone's home if permission is denied. To state this another way, property owners "...have the right to refuse entry to these [data collector] inspectors." In order to be "fair" to the citizens that allowed the Town to inspect the interior of their property, the Town can assign a higher value based on the range of values recorded on properties similar to the property the Town was not able to inspect. In this manner, if the property owner who did not want to allow his/her home inspected by the data collector does like the value assigned to his/her property, it will be that person's responsibility to produce evidence supporting a lesser value.

Unlike William the Conqueror, a municipal re-assessment *the Town is not increasing the money its collects through property taxes*. The Town's annual budget that is approved by voters on Town Meeting Day is all the money the Town is permitted raise by its tax bills to support the approved budget. Again, the purpose of reappraisal is to more accurately and fairly distribute the burden of taxes to be raised based on the value of one's property.

Townships based on English common law have been raising taxes based on property values for 1000 years in this manner. There maybe better means but this is the system we have inherited and accepted to support municipal and educational services determined to be for the "common good".

Hopefully, I have addressed your questions. If you or others reading this have additional questions please ask them of me. In the near future the Town Assessor will be posting "Frequently Asked Questions" page on the Town's website: [www.colchestervt.gov](http://www.colchestervt.gov). Please look for further information that is better technically explained than I have tried in this response to your inquiry.

Cordially,  
Al

Albin D. Voegelé  
Town Manager  
Town of Colchester, VT  
P.O. Box 55  
Colchester, VT 05446  
Tel: 802-264-5501

