

Why Conduct A Reappraisal For 2026?

Under 32 V.S.A. §4041a The State of Vermont, required a municipality to reappraise its education grand list properties, if the Director of the Division of Property Valuation and Review determines that the municipality's education grand list is at a common level of appraisal (CLA) below 85% percent, above 115%, or has a coefficient of dispersion (COD) greater than 20%. In 2022 Colchester's CLA as calculated by The Vermont Tax Department, below the 85% threshold, and the Director of Property Valuation and Review issued a Reappraisal Mandate to the town.

Section 4041a also requires the State to withhold education, transportation and other funds from non-complying municipalities until such time as the Director certifies that the municipality has carried out an acceptable plan. The State of Vermont has mandated the Town of Colchester to reappraise.

In 2023 the Vermont Legislature removed the CLA threshold requirements from "Act 68", but for those municipalities that had received a Reappraisal Mandate prior to the legislation changes must complete the mandated reappraisal.

What is the CLA and COD?

The CLA is the weighted average ratio that reflects the difference between the market values and the assessed values.

The State Department of Property Valuation and Review with the help of the Town Assessor calculates the CLA every year. Using the sale prices of qualified sales and comparing them to the sale property's assessed value the Equalized Education Grand List (EEGL) can be calculated. The Municipal Grand List (GL) is then divided by the EEGL to determine the CLA.

The COD measures uniformity with in the assessments when compared to the real estate market. It tells us what the average difference is to the median assessment to sale ratio as a percentage. This helps determine if the assessments are fair and equitable. The lower the COD the more uniform the assessments are.

What Is Meant By "Reappraisal?"

A reappraisal is the systematic appraisal of all properties with in a municipality on a given date for the purposes of taxation. In Vermont all properties must be assessed to 100% FMV with an appraisal date of April 1. The objective of the 2026 Reappraisal is to assess all properties to 100% FMV as of April 1, 2026. Reappraisals adjust assessments to FMV but also update parcel data. Updating the data will bring uniformity to the assessments making them fair and equitable assuring all property owners are paying only their fair share of the cost of

community services. Reappraisals DO NOT raise revenues. Reappraisals update assessments on all properties using current market data and appraisal standards applied at the same point in time.

Why Is a reappraisal needed?

The last town wide reappraisal was completed in 2011. It has been 13 years since the last reappraisal of all real estate in Colchester. Over time a town's Grand List will begin to display inequities. These inequities are a result of changing real estate markets and outdated parcel data. In the years after the last reappraisal, the real estate market has increased significantly. Not all categories of property, property types, and neighborhoods have appreciated at the same rate, the reappraisal will correct those differences. The reappraisal will also update the town's parcel data correcting any inequities caused by outdated data. In order to maintain fair taxation equity must be maintained not only within categories of property but across property types and neighborhoods. The goal is town wide equity by bringing assessment records up to date and assessments to present day values.

What Is Fair Market Value?

The price which the property will bring in the market when offered for sale and purchased by another, taking into consideration all the elements of the availability of the property, its use both potential and prospective, any functional deficiencies, and all other elements such as age and condition which combine to give property a market value.

Who Determines the Fair Market Value?

The buyers and sellers of the real estate determine FMV. It is the Assessor's job and the reappraisal company's job to research the sales and compare the data from the sold properties to your property's data in order to discover values.

All valid sales in a given neighborhood and property type are used as guidelines to help the assessor/appraiser calculate what the FMV could be. An assessment/appraisal is an opinion of FMV, based on economic principals and appraisal standards.

Some of the factors we consider are: local market conditions, location of the property, size and topography of land, size and quality of construction, age and condition of the building(s), improvements to the parcel, highest and best use of the property, zoning, and so on.

Isn't Fair Market Value What I Paid for My Property?

Not always. Some people will pay more than FMV for their property, while others may have purchased their property at a bargain price. If you purchased your property years ago then that purchase price is not reflective of today's market

and isn't your properties current FMV. The FMV is what the willing buyer and seller will agree to, given both buyer and seller are knowledgeable of the market, are not under distress and the property has been exposed to the market for a reasonable time. The true test is to show your property's worth, is to compare other like properties that have recently sold.

How Does the Town Update the Assessment Data?

The town has contracted with Vision Government Solutions Inc. (VGSI) to conduct the reappraisal. Their Data Collectors will be going around to all properties in Colchester by neighborhood conducting inspections to update the town's assessment data. Your cooperation in allowing the Data Collectors to conduct inspections of your property is an important piece to having a fair and equitable reappraisal. The more accurate the data the better the outcome for all property owners in town.

Do I Make an Appointment for the Inspection?

Yes. We strongly encourage to make an appointment is preferred. We understand people are busy and we will try to be as flexible as we possibly can in order to accommodate your schedule. The town will mail out Introduction Letters informing property owners that the Data Collectors will be working in a particular neighborhood and will have instructions on how to make an appointment for a property inspection. The Data Collectors will also be going door to door and will either leave a door hanger and/or will send out follow up letters letting you know they visited your property. The door hangers and follow up letters will have instruction on how to make an appointment with a data collector.

What if I Can't Make an Appointment or Refuse Entry for an Inspection?

The Data Collectors will be going door to door in an attempt to inspect all properties in the neighborhood they are working in. If the Data Collectors are unable to conduct a full interior and exterior inspection they will use old assessment data, MLS listing data, GIS map data, land records, permit records or any other data source available to get the most up-to-date data available. It is your right to allow them to conduct an inspection or refuse an inspection. If you choose to refuse an inspection, the Data Collectors will have to use other data sources, as mentioned above, and will use their best judgement on the quality and condition of the property.

How long will the inspection take?

Depending on the size and complexity of the property, a typical residential property will take approximately 15 minutes. It will take longer for more larger and more complex properties.

Who will do the inspections?

VGSI has staff Data Collectors they will be using for this reappraisal. Their names and pictures will be available on the town Assessor's web page prior to them starting inspections. The Colchester Police Department will also have their names and a description of the vehicles they are driving. We will also be notifying the CPD of what neighborhood they will be working in.

What are their qualifications?

Data collectors shall have a high school diploma or equivalency and at least three years experience in the appraisal or municipal revaluation field. Any field person who does not meet the above qualifications must work under the direct supervision of an appraiser or project supervisor. The Assessor shall be notified of the individual's name, starting date, qualifications, and field assignments prior to the commencement for the individual's duties on this project.

If Assessment Values Go Up, Won't My Taxes?

In bringing property values up to date, there is an increase in the total assessments on the Grand List for the town. Assuming the town and school budgets stay the same the tax rate will go down proportionately to the increase in Grand List, and the taxes stay the same. The Town and School can only collect what the voters have approved.

When Will We Know What the New Tax Rate Will Be, and When Will the New Tax Bills Be Mailed Out?

Once the Grand List is lodged with the Town Clerk and all appeals to the Board Of Listers are complete the Municipal Tax rate will be calculated, At the same time the Grand List will be sent to the State and the State will issue the education tax rate. This usually happens in the first week of July.

The town charter requires tax bills to be mailed on July 15.

Who Initially Sets My Assessment?

VGSI with the approval of the Assessor will set the assessments.

Does the State Oversee or Certify the Reappraisal?

The State certifies all reappraisals. Municipalities must submit a Reappraisal Compliance Plan prior to the start of a reappraisal to ensure the reappraisal complies with State requirements. The State will test the completed reappraisal using the Reappraisal Evaluation test. This is a statistical test that measures all parcels were treated equally.

Will My Property Taxes Go Down?

Your property tax bill could possibly go down. It all depends on what has happened to the market since the last reappraisal. In most reappraisals in Vermont, 1/3 of the properties will see a decrease in their share of the cost to municipal services. 1/3 will stay roughly the same, and 1/3 will see an increase in their share of the costs.

Real estate markets rise and fall at different rates over time depending on factors such as; property class, type, location, and use. These differences will affect how much your property's assessment will change. For instance, office/warehouse properties will see a different percent change than single-family condos. If the market values for your type of property and in your area have not risen as much as in other property types and locations since the last revaluation, your share of the tax burden would be reduced as a result of revaluation.

When Will the New Assessments Be Effective?

The appraisal dates for the new assessment is April 1, 2026. The new assessments will affect the 2026 GL and the 2026/2027 tax.

When and How Will I be notified of My 2026 Assessed Value?

VGSI will mail out preliminary notice with the new assessments in the spring of 2026. The notices will have your preliminary 2026 assessment and information on preliminary informal hearing. These informal hearings are designed to answer any questions or concerns you may have and to share property and market data with you about the new assessments.

After VGSI has addressed all the questions and concerns from the informal hearing, the Town of Colchester will mail out the official Change of Assessment Notices to all property owners in town.

Will I Get a Chance to Review My Assessment With Someone if I Have Any Questions or Concerns?

VGSI will mail out preliminary assessment notices before the official assessments are recorded onto the GL. They will then host informational hearings on the preliminary assessment. These informational hearings are designed to help property owners review their assessments, answer any question a property owner may have, and correct any obvious objective data errors such as a building square footage or bathroom counts.

If I Disagree With the New Assessment Or Think There Was an Error, Can I Appeal the Assessment?

Yes, any property owner can appeal their assessment any year although most appeals happen during a reappraisal year.

What is the Process to Appeal an Assessment?

The town will mail out the official Change of Assessment Notice to all property owners in town. The notice will have information on how to make an appointment to appeal your assessment. It will include all the contact information such as; email addresses, phone numbers, and online.

In Vermont there are several levels of appeal that start at the local level and go all the way to the Vermont Supreme Court.

Appeals will first go to the Board of Lister (BOL) also known as the Board of Assessment Appeal. These are a more formal appeal than the informational hearing with VGSI. Appeals must be made in writing and delivered to the Assessor's Office. Once the assessor receives the written appeal an appointment will be made for a hearing with the BOL. If you cannot attend the appointment, the written appeal will be used as evidence. All reasonable attempts will be made to accommodate property owners who can not attend the given time and day of their appeal hearing, such as setting up conference calls. BOL hearings usually focus on objective facts of the property. BOL hearing take roughly 15 minutes and most grievances can be resolved at this level. The BOL does fall under the Vermont Open Meeting Laws so all hearing will be recorded and minutes will be posted to the town's website. Results of Grievance Hearing Notices will be mailed out 14 days after the closing of the BOL hearing.

If you are unsatisfied with results of the BOL hearing you may appeal the BOL decision to the Board of Civil Authorities (BCA). The BCA is made up of all 15 Justices of Peace and all 5 members of the Select Board. The BCA is run by the Town Clerk and all appeals to the BCA must be made to the Town Clerk. This is a more formal hearing than the BOL and focuses on FMV and the more subjective nuances of market value. As part of the BCA hearing members of the BCA must make a site visit to the property and report back to the BCA for a final decision. If the property owner refuses to allow the BCA to inspect the property then the appeal will be denied and the property owner cannot appeal any farther. BCA decisions will be mailed out to the property owner 30 days after the BCA has concluded the hearing.

If you wish to appeal farther, there are two routes you can go: You can appeal to the Director of Property Valuation and Review at the Department of Taxes or the Chittenden County Superior Court. Both hearings must be delivered with in 30 days of the BCA decision, both cost money to appeal, and both could take

months to get a hearing scheduled and could be up to a year or more to have a hearing and longer to get a decision. Decisions can be appealed to the State Supreme Court.

Do I Still Have to Pay My Taxes If I Appeal?

Yes, definitely. Otherwise, penalties and interest are added to the unpaid taxes. Any judgment in your favor may require a refund or credit of taxes paid in excess of any reduced assessment.

Is There Any Disadvantage to Me If I Appeal?

No. In fact the Assessor's Office encourages you to review your assessments, and if you feel it is not reflecting the current FMV or you think there may be something an error with the data then please come in and set up a hearing. The Assessor's Office will see that each taxpayer is satisfied within the limits set by State Statute, and at the same time assure fairness with all other property owners in town. In all cases, when the Assessor finds that the taxpayer is right, an adjustment is made. The Assessor would like to satisfy each property owner, but has a duty to all taxpayers in the town to be fair and equitable, and work within the guidelines of Vermont State Statutes, and the appraisal parameters set up for all taxpayer in town.