

The great property tax mystery finally resolved

The MCC has finally obtained information from the State Government, specifically the Department of Local Government Finance (DLGF) which explains how the property taxes payable in 2010 were calculated for Gary home-stead properties.

We **thought** the tax would be calculated by taking the basic tax cap rate (1.0%) and adding the rate for repayment of bond issues (about 0.31%) and the distressed unit appeal allowance (about 0.50%), giving a rate for **everyone** of about **1.81%**. **Little did we know.**

Tax relief for Gary city government was not calculated by increasing the tax rate cap from 1.0% to something higher, but by **reducing** the “circuit breaker credit” (the **difference** between the Gary tax rate of 6.3931% times the assessed value minus deductions and the cap rate of 1.0% times the gross assessed value without deductions) and adding 52% of this money back into the tax bill. The result was higher tax rates than expected and a significant variation in rates based on the assessed value of the property. We got **progressive tax rates** for real estate, in addition to differential deductions. Effective property tax rates varied all the way from zero to about 2.4%.

To illustrate how this worked, Sarah Ansel, from the Department of Local Government Finance (DLGF) sent the following hypothetical example, with references to lines on the tax bill:

Gross Assessed Value (line 2)	100,000	500,000	
Minus personal deductions (2a)	45,000	45,000	
Minus supplemental deductions (2b)	19,250	159,250	
Giving net assessed value (line 3)	35,750	295,750	
Times tax rate (line 3a)	6.0000	6.0000	
Giving Gross Tax Liability (line 4)	2,145		17,745
Minus 1% Cap amount	1,000	5,000	
Giving circuit breaker credit	1,145	12,745	
(For everyone outside Gary)			
DUAB relief factor	52%	52%	
Reduction in circuit breaker credit	595	6,627	
(DUAB relief to Gary city government)			
Net Tax Bill	1,595	11,627	
Effective tax rate	1.6%	2.4%	
(What Gary taxpayers pay)			

This information explains in part why overall tax rates were higher than expected and explains entirely why the rates vary significantly based on the assessed value of the property.

About the time that the tax bills came out, Indiana voters were casting ballots on a constitutional amendment which makes the property tax caps (1% for homesteads, 2% for other residential property, 3% for commercial property) a part of the constitution. This proposal, which has been approved by two consecutive sessions of the Indiana legislature, was approved overwhelmingly by the voters. MCC Vice-president Rich Barnes collected election data which show that the amendment was approved by about 72% of the voters statewide and by 75% in Lake County.

What remains to be seen is how the amendment will be implemented. In particular, it is not yet clear whether it will apply to 2010 tax bills payable in 2011 or only on 2011 bills payable in 2012. Seeing how the current rules are implemented by the DLGF, change cannot come too soon for most Miller residents.

Duly noted

HOLIDAY SING-ALONG. The **Lake Street Gallery** will present its 18th annual **Holiday Sing-along on Saturday, December 4, beginning at 7:00 pm.** Everyone is invited to visit with friends and neighbors, enjoy refreshments, and sing your heart out to the whole song-book of holiday favorites. For the holiday season, the Gallery will be open daily, starting at 9:00 am and closing at 6:00 pm Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday, at 7:00 on Thursday and Friday, and at 5:00 on Saturday. Sunday hours are 11:00 to 4:00.

WHAT DEVELOPMENT DO YOU WANT? The Metropolitan Planning Council is requesting input about redevelopment projects in Gary. One of the projects they are considering is "Northern Indiana Commuter Transportation District TOD" (Transportation Oriented Development), which would put retail and residential development along Lake Street and/or Broadway. For Lake Street, it would mean a new (and more accessible) South Shore Station with retail and improved access to Lake Street Beach. This is NOT the I65 station come to life again. **The MPC is soliciting opinions up until December 5.** Visit the MPC web site, www.MetroPlanning.org/GRIPSurvey and consider voting for "Northern Indiana Commuter Transportation District TOD" to register your vote for this project.

UNITED METHODIST COOKIE WALK. On **Saturday, December 11 from 10:00 am to noon, the Marquette Park United Methodist Church** on Grand Blvd. promises to set you up with homemade cookies for your season of entertaining family and friends. A wide selection of cookies will be on sale for \$5.50 a pound, all ready to plate and serve. Come early for the best selection.

BOOKFAIR AT BANNEKER. Banneker Middle School, located in the former Kennedy-King school building, will host a scholastic bookfair from Dec. 6th through the 10th. Books and gifts for all ages will be available, with emphasis on elementary and middle to high school age readers. The bookfair will be held in the library during school hours and sometimes immediately after dismissal. All are welcome! Come at 2:30 p.m. and see the only Gary CSC Color Guard take down the flag. For more information, contact Nora Glenn at 938-8533 or noraglenn@threedognet.com

ST. MARY'S BAZAAR. **St. Mary of the Lake Church** on Miller Avenue will present its annual **Christmas Bazaar** the weekend of **December 4 and 5** from 9:00 am to 2:00 pm. Lunch will be served both days. Offerings for sale include baked goods, books, crafts, plants, "trinkets and treasures", and lots more. Everyone is welcome.

THE NEXT BOARD MEETING OF THE MILLER CITIZENS CORP. WILL BE HELD ON MONDAY, DECEMBER 13, AT 7:30 P.M. IN THE MEETING ROOM OF THE MARQUETTE PARK UNITED METHODIST CHURCH ON GRAND BLVD. Members are invited to attend and participate.

Contact the MCC between meetings at P.O.Box 2645, Gary, IN 46403, or call 938-8831 or e-mail mceaton@aol.com.

SUPPORT FOR MARQUETTE KIDS PARK. "Big Joe" Petras reports that the annual "Men and Boys" lunch, held this year on the Saturday after Thanksgiving, raised \$600 in support of the Marquette Kids Park, which has depended, since its inception, on private donations of money and labor for its maintenance. Thanks to Joe and to those who attended and contributed. Thanks as well to the volunteers, led by Nora Glenn, who keep the park in shape all year round.

Miller saturates the Internet

In addition to the MCC, Miller is the home of a number of citizen-based organizations and groups, all with their own websites and Facebook pages on the internet.

THE MILLER CITIZENS CORPORATION. The original Miller organization, the MCC is represented by its website, www.millercitizenscorp.org, which contains information about MCC organization and activities, including recent editions of the Miller Message, the MCC newsletter.

NORA GLEN is back on line with her Millerlist. To post items, send information to Nora at noraglenn@threedognet.com and everybody's postings can then be read at www.threedognet.com/millerlist. Nora will also be posting items on Facebook at **millerlist**.

THE MILLER IMPROVEMENT GROUP has a page on Facebook, with photos and information about its activities. The MIG is dedicated to improving the Miller community, with emphasis on **cleanups and decoration**. Its most recent contribution to the neighborhood was planting and decorating a blue spruce in the old Miller School Yard at 6th Avenue and Lake Street, which will serve as a community Christmas tree for many years to come.

MILLER GARDEN CLUB is a social organization for its members which also contributes to the beautification of our community. The Garden Club keeps a beautiful flower garden at the Miller South Shore Stop, maintains the planters on Lake Street, and has recently installed the “Welcome to Miller” signs at County Line Road, Old Hobart Road, and Lake Street. The garden club also installs seasonal lights and decorations at the Miller South Shore station. Its recurring activities include a plant sale in May, the Miller Garden Walk in July, and the Brats and Bulbs sale in October. You can find out more about the club at its website, www.millergardenclub.net.

SOUTH SHORE DANCE ALLIANCE, located in the old Miller School, on Lake Street between 6th Avenue and the railroad tracks, also has a page on Facebook. The Alliance is busy training dancers and giving them opportunities to perform.

MILLER BEACH on Facebook contains information and photos of current Miller events.

MILLER HISTORICAL SOCIETY on Facebook works to keep Miller history alive.

MILLER BEACH FARMERS MARKET, which is active in summer and fall, has its page on Facebook, with current information about upcoming activities and photos of past market days.

Police citizen academy set for early in the new year

Applications are already being accepted for a Gary Police Department Citizens Academy, to be conducted after the first of the year. The program will consist of 5 weekly classes approximately two hours in length, to make the public better acquainted with the operations of the police department and more aware of what they can do to protect themselves from being victims of crime. Representatives from various divisions within the department will make presentations about their work, including crime scene technicians, the SWAT team and the Narcotics-Vice unit.

Chief Carter expects the Academy program to foster increased cooperation between citizens and police and to promote neighborhood watch groups, in which citizens join together to fight crime in their neighborhoods. The MCC, through the COP office and the Neighborhood Watch program, will be encouraging residents to participate in the academy. Citizens who are interested in participating can obtain an application form by calling Sgt. Tim Tatum at 881-7573. Application forms may also be available at the COP office. Participants will be subject to a background check before being accepted for the program.

The Gary Police Department has also instituted a new e-mail account, to make it easier for citizens to report chronic crime issues. Messages can be sent to GPDcrimetips@yahoo.com, where they will only be seen by Deputy Chief Mike Mallett.

IT'S ALWAYS TIME TO SUPPORT THE MCC!

We need your financial and moral support. Sign up now! DUES ARE JUST \$10. Inquire by e-mail to mceaton@aol.com.