



Burrowed – Inside the Haines Borough  
Second Edition 7/31/23

This is the second edition of this newsletter intended to provide you more information about your Borough government's activities. My Manager Report tries to capture the most important issues between Assembly meetings, but there are many other activities taking place that I'd like to share with you.

If you don't wish to receive this newsletter, please feel free to opt out by replying in the Subject line – OPT OUT. The intent is not to overload your inbox, but to provide information that is short, easily downloaded with minimal graphics, and informative.

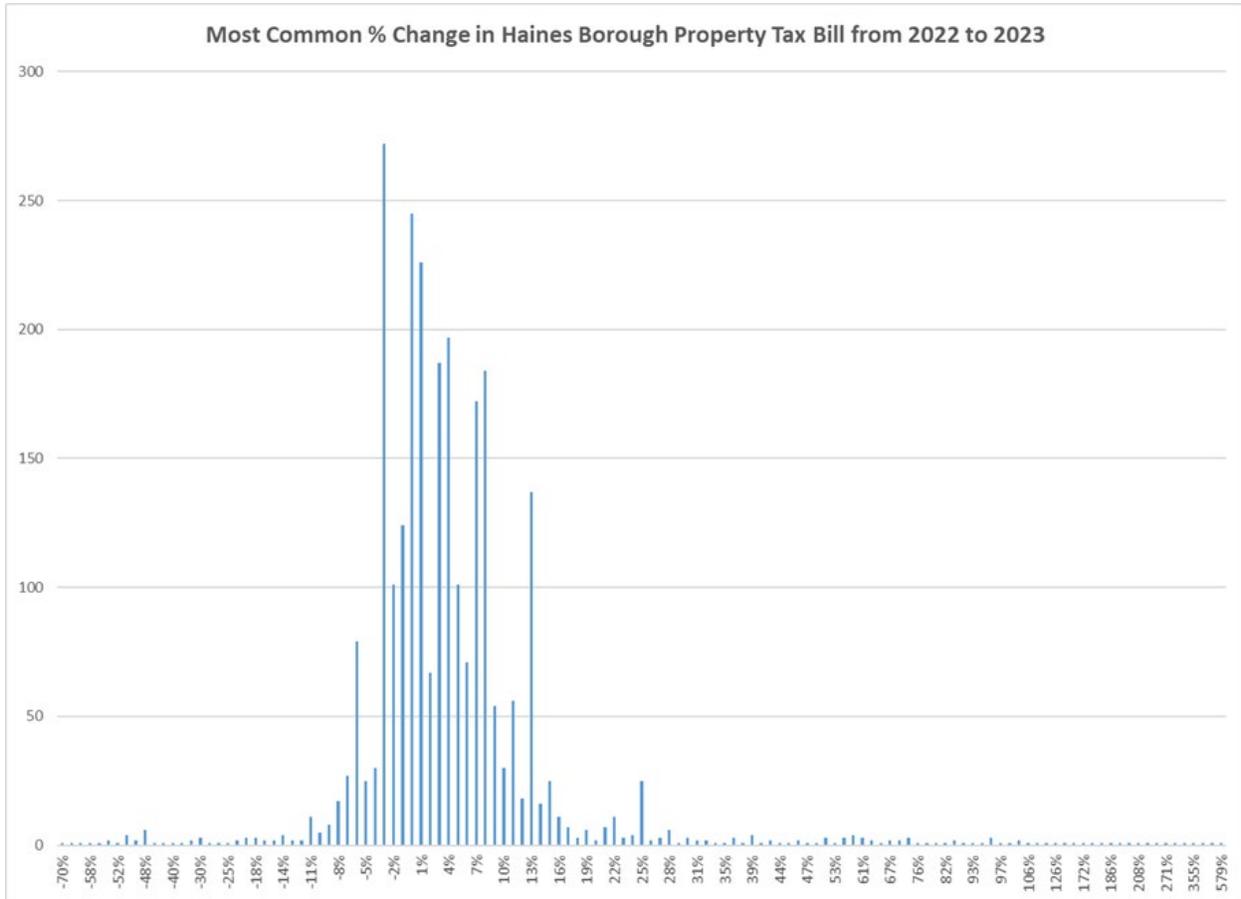
**DNR COMMISSIONER VISIT:** Although it was inconvenient due to the weather and the fair, State Department of Natural Resources Commissioner John Boyle viewed DNR assets in Haines Friday, July 28. This was the soonest his schedule would allow. Mayor Olerud, Chilkoot Indian Association representatives, Tourism Director Rebecca Hylton and I discussed the bear/human conflict issue at Chilkoot State Park, potential ways to reopen Portage Cove campground, and possibilities for Mosquito Lake Recreation site among other issues. Collectively, we'll come up with a plan of action to present to the Assembly before the Commissioner's next visit and we'll schedule another open house.

**Assessment Facts and Figures:** We encouraged property owners to appeal their property tax assessment if their questions had not been answered as the deadline for appeals approached this year. We wanted to preserve due process and the opportunity for more time for our small staff to answer questions. Of the 2,865 taxable parcels in the Haines Borough, there were a total of 221 appeals. That's 7.7% of the total which were appealed and are being worked through the process. I'll be providing more detail on that when I send an update this week to those who are in the appeal process.

From 2022 to 2023, property tax bills decreased for 29% of taxpayers. For 52% of taxpayers, the change in tax was \$30 or less, 78% of tax bills changed by \$100 or less.

FY24 total property tax revenue is budgeted at \$3,628,063 which is 6% higher than the FY23 budgeted figure of \$3,436,651.

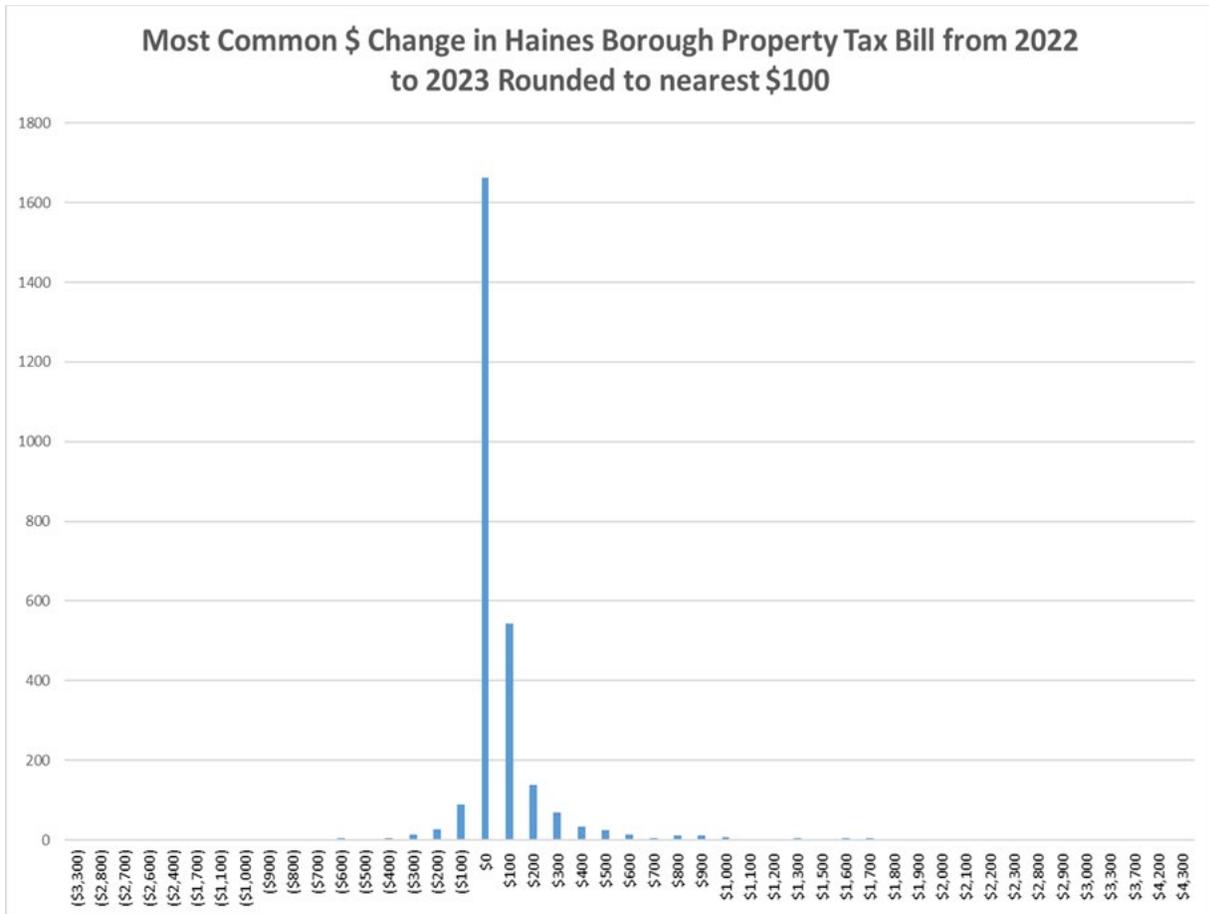
I have included a few charts showing that for the bulk of property tax payers, the change from 2022 tax assessments is around 10% above or below last year. That is the case for 82% of property tax payers. The horizontal axis shows the % change in sales tax from 2022 to 2023 and the vertical axis shows the number of properties that experienced that change.



These figures are without the senior and veteran exemptions. A couple of things to keep in mind which we talked about back in March:

- Over time in the Borough, buildings have been valued at different times than the land they sit on. This makes a comparison with a neighbor’s property perhaps not an apples to apples comparison if the buildings and land were assessed at different times.
- It is very difficult for a political body (an Assembly) to sit as a Board of Equalization – they are sitting as judges, requiring decisions based on the law and not on emotion. The BOE has very strict constraints during appeals:
  - Borough Code is based on the State Statute regarding the BOE and appeals.

- The appellant bears the burden of proof. The only grounds for adjustment of assessment are proof of unequal, excessive, improper, or under-valuation based on facts that are stated in a valid written appeal or proven at the appeal hearing.
- As you might expect, the terms unequal, excessive and improper have been to court resulting in the following understanding:
  - EXCESSIVE – To show that an assessment is excessive, an appellant must show that the assessment is more than just overvalued. It must be shown that the assessment is grossly disproportionate when compared to other assessments (or, it can be shown that there is an intentional or fraudulent purpose to place an excessive valuation on the property.)
  - UNEQUAL – To show that an assessment is unequal, the appellant must show that there are other properties in the same class as the property being appealed and that there is no basis that would justify different valuations of the property.
  - IMPROPER – To show that an assessment is improper, it must be shown that the assessor used an improper method of valuation, which amounts to fraud or a clear adoption of a wrong principle of valuation.
- We communicate frequently with the State Assessor, Joseph Caissie. He provided this information for the Assembly acting as the Board of Equalization:
  - *One of the things that mass appraisal has is the ability to point to the fact that uniform techniques were used to appraise all properties. Uniformity is more important than getting to market value, but hopefully they are the same. To take an extreme example, suppose the tax assessor uses a methodology that values all property at 200% of market. This isn't ideal, but in this circumstance, no one is being hurt because the mill rate is half of what it would be otherwise. If a fee appraiser were to come in and point to a building appraised at \$2m and say "here's the real market value" and provide strong evidence that it should be only \$1m...that's definitely valid to point out under state law. But dropping the value to \$1m without changing the tax assessor's methodology would unfairly lower the tax burden of only that one building. That's why uniformity is so important, and why in sort of a "tie" between an outside fee appraiser with one opinion of value and the tax assessor's value, the tax assessor wins. They could both have reasonable estimates for the value of a property, but when they're both reasonable, the tax assessor's value stands.*



This chart is similar but instead of % change it shows \$ change rounded to the nearest \$100.

**ELECTION TIME:** You are the “public” in Public Service. Borough Clerk Alekka Fullerton can help answer questions if you are interested in running for the many offices that will be open in October. Clerk Fullerton’s email address is: [Clerk@haines.ak.us](mailto:Clerk@haines.ak.us) and her phone is 907-766-6402.

[Here's](#) information about how to run for a Borough office. You must declare your candidacy between August 1 and August 20. The final application day is a Sunday, meaning if you wait until the last day, you’ll have to either email the application or put it in the dropbox outside the Borough Administrative office front door.

In service to Haines-  
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