



City of Cambridge

19.

IN CITY COUNCIL

November 14, 1994

- COUNCILLOR SULLIVAN
- COUNCILLOR BORN
- COUNCILLOR DUEHAY
- COUNCILLOR MYERS
- VICE MAYOR RUSSELL
- COUNCILLOR TOOMEY
- COUNCILLOR TRIANTAFILLOU
- COUNCILLOR WALSH

ORDERED: That the City Manager be and hereby is requested to ensure that sufficient notice regarding residential exemptions that may be available to property owners is communicated to all property owners and to report back to the City Council as to how such information is conveyed to property owners; and be it further

ORDERED: That the City Manager be and hereby is requested to respond to the attached letter regarding the difficulty experienced with regard to learning about the residential exemption.

In City Council November 14, 1994
 Adopted by the affirmative vote of nine members.
 Attest:- D. Margaret Drury, City Clerk.

A true copy;

ATTEST:- *D. Margaret Drury*
 D. Margaret Drury
 City Clerk

Robert G. Reppas
48 Highland Avenue #2
Cambridge, Massachusetts 02139

City of Cambridge
Assessing Department
Ms Sally Powers, Director
City Hall
Cambridge, MA 02139

November 3, 1994

Dear Ms Powers:

A real estate broker recently informed me of the Residential Exemption option. After some investigation on my part, I realized that your office's failure to inform me of the existence of the Exemption has cost me over \$2,000 since 1991. I hereby request a formal investigation into this matter and a reimbursement of my overpayment of real estate tax.

I have reconstructed a chronological presentation of the facts that may have lead to your oversight and my confusion:

We purchased our home on December 31, 1990. Your office probably did not receive the paperwork until January 1991. I was never informed by your office about the existence of the Residential Exemption.

By accident I learned of the Exemption this summer. I called Fay McKinnon at City Hall and then visited a few days later. In person, she repeated the following procedure. As a resident of Cambridge, I should receive a *Tax Facts* booklet twice a year before each real estate tax bill is mailed. In addition, a flier announcing the Residential Exemption is mailed four times a year. Fay asked me to complete a form and assured me that the Exemption would be deducted from my next tax bill. She also gave me the September 1993 edition of *Tax Facts* and told me that a retroactive refund was not possible. I suggested that there must be a problem with their system because I have never received *Tax Facts* or the fliers.

Later, I talked to my neighbors to learn that no one recalled receiving *Tax Facts* or any fliers. Therefore, I called Michael Sullivan and asked his advice.

Michael called back a few days later to report on his conversation with Kevin McDavitt. Michael was told that *Tax Facts* is mailed twice a year, but fliers do not exist. The Assessors Office should have sent an application for the Exemption a few months after my

Ms Sally Powers

November 3, 1994

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purchase. I affirmed that I had not received an application in 1991 possibly due to the unusual closing date, so he suggested that I write this letter.

Several days after receiving my October real estate tax bill, I receive the *Tax Facts* booklet in the mail. My neighbors told me that they also had received it for the first time.

The *Tax Fact* booklet states, "Most Cambridge residents are already qualified and automatically receive the exemption." Since I wasn't automatically qualified and I didn't receive an application in 1991 and I never received the *Tax Facts* booklet until last month, how could I have been properly informed? Clearly, your procedure to inform citizens lacks consistency and completely failed in my case. Therefore, I believe a full refund of my overpayment is due.

Respectfully yours,



Robert G. Reppas

cc: Mr. Michael Sullivan ✓



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COUNCILLOR SULLIVAN

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CM-397

Consent Order #19

Councillor Sullivan re: Residential Tax Exemptions
notifications.

In City Council November 14, 1994