



City of Madison

## Office of the City Assessor

Michelle Drea, Esq. City Assessor

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### City Assessments Delayed Due to COVID-19

City of Madison Assessor Michelle Drea announced today that assessment notices will be delayed for at least two months. While the start of the assessment process is delayed, the taxation process remains unchanged. Property owners have the same rights and responsibilities for review of their notice. Communication with the Assessor's Office during the open book period, and the formal objection process duties remain unchanged. Tax bills will be sent and payment due at the same time as prior years.

"The delay is due to a number of reasons because of the pandemic," said City Assessor, Michelle Drea. "There are three main reasons for the delay, they include safety, resources and infrastructure."

**Safety:** As the City follows State law (Per [Wis. Stat. § 70.45](#)) "examination of the assessment roll" -what we refer to as "open book" - includes a mandatory two hour period wherein the assessor must be available to meet with the public to discuss their assessments. In many jurisdictions, this is the sum total of open book. It is the statutory minimum for what is required. Obviously, Madison affords far greater opportunity for property owners to communicate with our City Assessor's office during the extended period of open book. Unfortunately, there is no virtual option for the two hour meeting requirement and no legislative fixes are forthcoming. As a result of the pandemic, City Assessor Michelle Drea is unwilling to push forward with the assessment cycle and put any property owner or member of her office at risk by fulfilling the statutory requirement of a two hour in-person meeting.

**Resources:** The internal requirements to set values and print assessment notices requires resources beyond that of solely the Assessor's Office. In particular, Information Technology (IT) is heavily involved in the process. At this time, City IT staff is regularly working incredible amounts of overtime just to sustain current practices and ensure that essential services are functioning properly. Any non-essential service that requires IT participation that can be postponed....should be postponed. That includes assessment notices.

**Infrastructure:** The City Assessors office will receive thousands of phone calls once assessments reach property owners. Teleworking is not conducive to that level of call volume. Our property owners deserve prompt and informed responses when calling regarding their assessments. This requires City staff to be working in the office.

As Public Health, Madison & Dane County determine workers are safe in their office and face to face meetings would not compromise anyone's health, staff will notify the public prior to the release of the assessments.