



TOWN OF LANCASTER SENIOR CITIZEN PROPERTY TAX WORK-OFF PROGRAM

Purpose: *Information for the Senior Citizen Property Tax Work-Off Abatement Program is in accordance with Massachusetts General Law Chapter 59 Section 5K*

To provide property tax relief to senior homeowners, over 60 years of age. Eligible seniors are given the opportunity to reduce their property tax obligation by as much as \$1,500.00, in exchange for community service. Under the program, participating taxpayers volunteer their services to the municipality in exchange for a reduction in their tax bills.

Eligibility Requirements

The senior must satisfy tests relating to age, domicile, ownership, and occupancy. Town of Lancaster employees will not be eligible for this program. Members of Boards, Commissions, Councils, and Committees cannot participate by doing work related to their appointed or elected position.

Age: senior applicants must be over 60 years of age

Ownership and Residency: applicants must be the assessed owner of the property on which the tax to be abated is assessed or have acquired ownership before the work is performed and the abatement applied. The applicant must own and occupy the property as their domicile. Their domicile is where their principal and legal home is located, their family, social, civic, and economic life is centered, and they plan to return whenever they are away. They may have more than one residence, but only one domicile.

- If the applicant holds a life estate in the domicile, the applicant is the owner
- If the domicile is held in a trust, the applicant must have legal title, i.e., be one of the trustees, on the applicable January 1 assessment date, or at the time the work is performed.

Documentation: applicant must provide whatever information is reasonably required to establish their eligibility. This information may include, but is not limited to:

- Birth Certificate
- Evidence of ownership, domicile, and occupancy

Maximum Abatement and Hourly Rate

In accordance with M.G.L. Ch. 59 Section 5K, the maximum abatement taxpayers may earn is \$1,500 per fiscal year. In addition, they cannot receive credit for their services at an hourly rate higher than the state's minimum wage and no lower than the federal minimum wage. The Board of Selectmen have approved an hourly compensation, up to \$1,500 maximum, based upon current state minimum wage, as of the program start date which is November 1st. All hours worked for abatement must be completed from November 1 to October 31 and any excess hours cannot be carried over. All completed hours must be certified to the assessors before the abatement is applied to the actual tax bills. Federal, Medicare and OBRA will be deducted from the gross amount earned and the net amount will be applied to the **actual** tax bill for the fiscal year, divided equally between the third and fourth quarter with an additional commensurate CPA surcharge credit.

(There is a limit of \$1,500.00 per residence/property per fiscal year. Hours can be shared by spouses residing in the same household; however, credit cannot exceed the \$1,500 between the two.)



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Jobs

A variety of jobs **may** be available; types of duties may include clerical assistance; sorting, filing, shredding, photocopying, light labor, etc. Department heads must submit all requests to the Assessors Office outlining their needs for positions by September 30th prior to the start of the program date (November 1st).

The program will attempt to match the skills and interests of applicants to the needs of Town departments. The number of positions available is based upon funding in each fiscal year combined with requests from various Town departments. Job placements may not be available for every applicant and placement will only occur if there are positions available. The applicant will be notified at the time of approval whether or not a placement is available. Unfortunately, depending on the department needs, not all applicants will be placed immediately.

Application Process

Applications are accepted at any time but will only be considered if funds are available during the program year (November 1 – October 31).

All applicants are required to complete the Program's application form annually. Applications will be available online under the Assessors Department, mailed - upon request, or picked up in the Assessors Office.

Completed applications must be returned to: Assessors Office, 701 Main St, Suite #3, Lancaster MA 01523.

Upon receipt and review of the application by the Assessor's Office, applicants will be notified in writing as to whether or not they are eligible to participate in the program. Applicants may not start work until they are in receipt of written notification from the Town informing them of their acceptance in the program and their assigned position. Also, all necessary paperwork must be completed before any work is performed.

Timesheets

Participants will be required to keep track of all hours worked monthly on program timesheets which will be signed by the participant and signed by department heads as verification. Participants must turn in signed timesheets to the Assessor's Office by the 5th of each month for hours worked the previous month. All hours must be completed, approved, and submitted to the Appropriate Department Head on or before 12:00 PM on November 5th in order to process an abatement on the applicable fiscal year's actual tax bills.

Treatment of Amount Earned

The amount of the property tax reduction earned by the taxpayer under this program is not considered income or wages for purposes of **state** income tax withholding or workmen's compensation. The abatement amount is however, considered income for purposes of federal income tax therefore an IRS Form W-2 will be provided to the program participant.

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