

TRIM NOTICES

ON THE WAY!

TRIM Season is in full swing at the Lee County Property Appraiser's office, which means Lee County property owners are on the lookout for their Notice of Proposed Property Taxes. This formal communication is prepared by my office and coming to your mailbox soon! The annual mailing is sent in mid-August to all Lee County residential and commercial property owners, as required by law.

This official document is often ignored or mistaken for junk mail, but it contains important information about your property taxes and should be examined carefully. If you do not receive your notice in a timely manner, or accidentally file yours in the shredder, all is not lost! Current and historical notices are available for download on our website at www.leepa.org, where you can preview your notice, save it to a digital file or print the document for your records.

Better Known as the TRIM Notice

The Notice of Proposed Property Taxes is commonly known as the Truth in Millage (TRIM) Notice in honor of the Truth in Millage Act, which was passed by the Florida Legislature in 1980. Truth in Millage was designed to keep taxpayers fully informed which taxing authorities are responsible for the taxes levied and the amount of tax liability owed to each one.

The law established statutory requirements

for all taxing authorities levying a millage to follow, including maximum millage levies for counties, municipalities and special districts. The law also prescribed requirements for all notices and budget hearings, which is why taxpayers receive a TRIM Notice.

Why Is the Notice So Important?

Not everyone likes surprises, especially when it comes to their taxes! The purpose of your TRIM Notice is to notify you about changes in your November tax bill, including your ad valorem property tax estimate and the proposed tax rates for the coming year.

The Property Appraiser does not collect taxes or set the proposed tax rates. Rather, the taxes are collected by the Tax Collector and the rates are set by the local taxing authorities based on their budgetary needs.

Understanding Your TRIM Notice

The Florida Constitution requires the Property Appraiser to determine the market, or "just" value of all property within the county each year, as of January 1. In Florida, market value is considered the most probable sale price for a property in a competitive, open market between a willing buyer and a willing seller. Your market value is the amount assigned for tax purposes and located at the top of your Notice.

Next, you'll see your assessed value, which is your market value minus any assessment reductions, like the "Save Our Homes" benefit, or an agricultural classification. Any exemptions you qualify for will also be itemized on the notice,

such as the homestead exemption, veterans' disability and charitable exemptions. Exemptions are applied to the assessed value, including deductions for agriculture, conservation or historic preservation.

The taxable value listed on the notice is your assessed value minus the exemptions you qualify for. In some cases, your assessed and taxable values may vary by taxing authority, because certain assessment reductions and exemptions may not apply to all levies and discounts.

If You Disagree with the Notice

Examine your notice closely to confirm that the Property Appraiser's valuation is correct. If you think the proposed taxes are too much, or the tax rates are too high, take part in the decision-making process and contact the appropriate taxing authority to voice your concerns or objections. The notice includes their contact information, and the dates and locations for the budget hearings.

If you feel the Property Appraiser's valuation of your property is inaccurate, or an exemption or classification you've applied

for is not reflected on the notice, you may file a petition with the Value Adjustment Board (VAB) at the Lee County Clerk of Court to preserve your taxpayer rights. If you decide to file a petition, do not delay! The filing deadline is 25 days from the date of the mailing of the notice.

We recommend you also contact the Property Appraiser's office to schedule an informal conference, so we can answer your questions and listen to your concerns. Please have your evidence available to support your opinion. If we discover a discrepancy in our valuation, your value will be adjusted accordingly, and you won't need to use the hearing process.

Don't be Taken by Surprise!

Reviewing the details on your TRIM Notice helps you stay informed about your property taxes. It gives you enough time to seek clarification if you disagree with the information presented. It also provides an opportunity to offer feedback to your local taxing authorities and keeps you engaged in the tax assessment process. As always, if you have any questions just reach out, the Property Appraiser is here for you. 📧



Matt Caldwell is a seventh generation Floridian. He holds a bachelor's degree in history from FGCU and a master's in geomatics from University of Florida. Matt served in the Florida House of Representatives from 2010-2018 and was elected to serve as Property Appraiser in 2020. He lives in Lee County with his wife, Yvonne, and daughter, Ava.

