

I have been a licensed and active Real Estate Broker in Monroe County, PA for 50 years. When I began my career the county was primarily a summer family resort area and second home destination. When showing property to potential buyers from New York and New Jersey the question was asked, how much are the taxes. When I answered the question they would ask is that a month? Things have changed. Now Real Estate taxes are killing the area.

People are loosing their homes because of high taxes. There are usually 150 Sheriff Foreclosure Sales scheduled each month. This has been going on 6 years. In addition the yearly tax sales amount to about 800-1,000 properties. The list started this year (2018) with approximately 1,700 properties. As tax sale day (Sept. 12) approaches the list gets smaller, but to be listed for tax sale you have to be 2 years in default. An owner can pay a portion of 1 year to keep their property from being sold but that only delays it for a year.

What caused the problem? Several things. I believe it costs about \$12,000 per year to educate a student in the public schools. If the average home pays \$5,000-\$6,000 in Real Estate Taxes and they have 2 children, that home costs the school district \$ 24,000 (\$18,000 negative add \$12,000 more negative for each additional child).

In addition “open space” has been a hot topic. Every time a property is added to “open space” it comes off the tax rolls. Between the Tocks Island National recreation Area, Cherry Valley National Wildlife Refuge and County and Township Parks, thousands of acres come off the tax rolls. Stroudsburg is a small Borough as is East Stroudsburg. Stroudsburg is the County Seat. Every time the county buys a property for Court House expansion it comes off the tax rolls. Recently the County acquired a commercial building which generated approx. \$65,000 per year in Real Estate Taxes. East Stroudsburg has a similar problem with ever expanding East Stroudsburg University. The remaining property owners are left to be squeezed more for every increase in school taxes. I know of a modest home recently sold in East Stroudsburg, the monthly mortgage payment is \$450 per month, the real estate taxes are \$ 600 per month. I know if a World War II Veteran who owned a home with 14 acres. Both he and his wife lived on Social Security.

They couldn't afford the taxes and had to sell the family homestead. He died and she now lives in a 600 sq. ft. bungalow.

The horses pulling the wagon are being killed off one by one. Soon the remaining horses will be unable to pull the load.

State grants to study butterflies or Jazz or walking around money give- a-ways sound good but Real Estate Owners need help and need it now! Kicking the can down the road won't help. We are near the end of the road. Why are Real Estate Owners singled out? How about taxing automobiles based upon their cost and continue taxing them annually like Real Estate based upon the size and value. . Tax political lobbyist with an annual license fee, charge not residents a fee to use our state and township parks. There has to be another way. Please do something.

Thank you.

Jack Muehlhan , Realtor