

RESOLUTION No. 2021-

***RELATIVE TO SUPPORTING A CITY-WIDE REASSESSMENT PROJECT
FOR THE CITY OF NIAGARA FALLS AND ENDORSING
THE PRINCIPLES OF ITS EXECUTION***

BY:

Council Chairman Kenny Tompkins
Council Member Frank Soda
Council Member John Spanbauer

WHEREAS, the City Council of the City of Niagara Falls has determined that it is in the best interest of the City to commence an Assessment Equity Program for parcels of real property within its geographic boundaries; and

WHEREAS, the City of Niagara Falls has not conducted a City-wide reassessment project in 15 years, and consequently, real property in the City is assessed at its value as of the year of 2006; and

WHEREAS, the current equalization rate is 67% and is expected to continue declining, with inequities of assessed values common throughout the City's 22,804 parcels; a current and comprehensive reassessment will allow the tax levy to be more fairly distributed; and

WHEREAS, NYS Real Property Tax Law Section 305 states that "*all real property in each assessing unit shall be assessed at a uniform percentage of value*"; and

WHEREAS, both the NYS Financial Restructuring Board (June 19, 2017) and the Niagara Falls Financial Advisory Panel (November 30, 2015) recommended a City-wide revaluation, and the NYS Financial Restructure Board specifically stated "*the City would gain significant benefit from a city-wide reassessment of all properties (and across all categories). The City's current valuations result in assessments that are not consistently accurate. Moreover, the dated nature of the City's property data (particularly regarding commercial properties) prevents assessments from being kept accurate through regular updates. A full revaluation would enable the City to better manage and project trends within its taxable assessed valuation. This would ensure that property owners are being taxed fairly and equitably based on the true value of their property, as well as enable the City to add to its taxable base, and by default, revenue at a constant tax rate.*"; and

Kennedy _____ Soda _____ Spanbauer _____ Voccio _____ Tompkins _____

WHEREAS, the two-tier taxation system (Homestead and Non-Homestead) that is utilized in Niagara Falls is believed to be an obstacle to economic development and many communities throughout New York State have recognized the disadvantages that result from such a system and have eliminated the system; and

WHEREAS, many local municipalities in both Erie and Niagara Counties, such as Amherst, Clarence and Cheektowaga, consistently update property reassessments every 3-5 years; the City of Buffalo completed a full reassessment in 2020 and the City of Lockport and the Town of Lockport will undergo reassessment projects in 2022; and

WHEREAS, the first step in moving forward to a unified tax rate system has to begin with a comprehensive, city-wide property reassessment in order for the City to determine the true market value of properties; and

WHEREAS, this City Council understands that at this time it is appropriate to conduct a city-wide reassessment that will be in the best interest for the future of the City of Niagara Falls; and

WHEREAS, the City will solicit professional services from a qualified vendor to ensure the City's resources are adequately utilized, and for this contractor to conduct a general reassessment to reflect revised assessments of real property for tax purposes; and

WHEREAS, the hired firm must provide the City a quality comprehensive project to produce fair and equitable assessments, as well as engage the community in the entire process to ensure proper information is being communicated.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that the City Council of the City of Niagara Falls, New York hereby supports the following principles with regard to real property reassessment

1. **Taxpayer Fairness:** The proposed reassessment for roll year 2024 and all subsequent general reassessments, shall be conducted in a fair and equitable manner;
2. **Funding for Reassessment:** The majority of the funding for the city-wide reassessment would be covered by American Rescue Plan Funds (approximately \$750,000). In addition to the American Rescue Plan Funds, the City will seek funding from the NYS Financial Restructuring Board and NYS Department of Taxation and Finance to offset the cost of the reassessment project; and
3. **Recurring Reassessments:** The proposed reassessment for roll year 2024 shall be conducted in a manner that creates the necessary technological infrastructure to support recurring general reassessments. The City Council supports a five (5) year recurring reassessment.