



City of Easthampton Senior Tax Work-Off Program Calendar Year 2022 (Pilot Year 2)

General Information

The City of Easthampton by vote of the City Council and approval of the Mayor on March 3, 2021 has accepted the “Senior Tax Work-Off Program” as outlined in Ch.127 s.59 of the Acts of 1999. Residents 60 years of age or older are eligible to work off up to \$1,500 in property taxes a year at the prevailing state minimum wage rate (as of 2022, \$14.25 per hour) provided they meet certain guidelines.

City of Easthampton Program Guidelines for Fiscal Year 2022

Purpose

The purpose of the Senior Tax Work-Off Program is to assist older adults living in the City of Easthampton with the payment of residential property tax bills while acknowledging and affirming their skills and abilities and the community’s continuing need for their services. This program is in addition to other tax abatements and property exemptions for which senior taxpayers may be eligible.

Program Eligibility –

- 60 years of age or older at the time of application
- Resident of Easthampton
- Owner of record (at the time of application) or spouse of owner of record
- Property for which the abatement is requested must be the primary residence of owner
- Owner must possess employable skills
- Property tax payments are current
- Limited to one \$1,500 work-off per household
- Meets income eligibility requirements –
 - \$57,190 maximum annual gross income (incl. Social Security) - individual
 - \$65,360 maximum annual gross income (incl. Social Security) - couple
- Supplies references
- Agrees to a CORI check
- Submits a copy of a recent property tax bill
- Submits a copy of a recent Federal income tax return.

Hourly Rate – not to exceed \$14.25 per hour (or the current prevailing state minimum wage). \$14.25 per hour to be used to compute tax reduction, not to exceed \$1,500 per fiscal year and 105.25 total hours.

Volunteer Period – for FY 23 tax bill, seniors who are eligible under this program may volunteer their time between May 1, 2022 and October 31, 2022 to receive tax abatements. **A senior volunteer may receive a prorated amount of their abatement should they work fewer than the necessary hours to receive the full abatement. For many positions, proration is likely in 2022 due to the likelihood of not working the maximum hours in the compressed time frame of switching from the City’s fiscal year to the calendar year. The average weekly hours if working the full 5 months are 5 per week.**

Income Limitations – total Gross annual income. Guidelines used by HUD and by the CPA when determining exemptions for seniors of low to moderate income).

Married couples-----\$65,360.00
Single-----\$57,190.00

Ownership – Program participants must be the owner, or the spouse of the owner, of the assessed property on which the tax to be abated is assessed or have acquired ownership before the volunteer work is performed and the abatement is applied.

Accounting for Abatements

Volunteers may work between May 1, 2022 and October 31, 2022 for a reduction in their FY2023 real estate property tax bill. Reductions must be applied to the actual tax bill for the fiscal year shown on the tax bill as an abatement or credit against the amount due. All reductions will be charged against the Assessor’s overlay account.

Treatment of Tax Reduction

The amount of the property tax reduction the volunteer receives under the statute will be net of Federal taxes. These amounts are not considered income or wages for purposes of state income tax withholding, unemployment compensation, or workman’s compensation. However, the volunteer may have to declare the amount of the property tax reduction (\$1,500.) as income on his or her Federal income tax return for the year that the amount was credited. **Applicants may wish to consult a tax expert for understanding of any tax implications of this abatement.**

Status of Volunteers

Volunteers performing services in return for property tax reductions are employees for purposes of municipal tort liability. Municipalities will therefore be liable for damages for injuries to third parties and for indemnification of the volunteers to the same extent as they are in the case of injuries caused by regular municipal employees.

Applying for a Volunteer Opportunity

Application forms will be posted on Friday, April 8, 2022. They are available by calling or visiting the Easthampton Council on Aging Office (527-6151) or by download from the ECOA City website (www.easthamptonma.gov).

1. Applicants fill out the Application (Part 1) and the Confidential Financial Data Sheet (Part 2) forms. Applicants also will need to submit a copy of their most recent real estate tax bill and a copy of their most recent Federal income tax return (IRS Form 1040, 1040A, or 1040EZ (both sides)). Forms and supporting documentation are submitted to:

STWO Program
Easthampton Council on Aging
19 Union St.
Easthampton, MA 01027

2. **All applications received on or before Tuesday, May 30, 2022 will be reviewed first for completeness and second for program eligibility.** Incomplete applications will not be considered and will be returned to the applicant for completion. Complete applications received after this date will be reviewed for eligibility depending on remaining volunteer opportunities. **(Applications for the FY 24 tax rebate are due November 30, 2022, with program participation between January 1-October 31, 2023. If a resident misses the opportunity to participate for FY 23, they may submit an application for FY 24 beginning November 1st.)**
3. Applications will be reviewed, applicants will be interviewed, and positions will be filled on a rolling basis beginning April 2022. Applicant placement in a particular job is determined by matching applicant skills with skill requirements for each job. An interview with ECOA staff and the department supervisor may be required as a prerequisite for job placement. **While every effort will be made to place an applicant in a position, no applicant is guaranteed a position.** If the applicant worked in the previous year, they may apply again and be considered for a position, but no repeat applicant is guaranteed a position.
4. Applicants selected for placement will be notified by the ECOA Executive Director or the position supervisor. If the applicant agrees to the placement, the applicant will be asked to sign the Participant Agreement. Placed applicants will work on mutually agreed upon schedules with their assigned departments. Applicants will be required to attend an orientation session.
5. Applicants and/or their supervisors will be required to keep timesheets of all volunteer hours worked. Timesheets with accrued hours volunteered through October 31, 2022 should be signed by the Department head or supervisor and submitted to the Council on Aging every two weeks and no later than Thursday, November 3, 2022. The Council on Aging will forward information to the Treasurers', and the Treasurer to the Assessors', Office for the tax credit.

Eligibility Screening Process

- Completed applications
- CORI check (applicant must bring a driver's license or other government-issued photographic identification)
- Verification of the following:
 - Property ownership (Assessor's Office – info. obtained by staff)
 - Residency and Age (City Clerk's Office – info. obtained by staff)
 - Income Eligibility (determined by Part 2 of Application and Federal income tax return).
 - Reference checks
 - Property for which abatement is requested is primary residence
 - Real estate taxes on the subject property are current

Positions

- Filing, mailing, data input, inventory
- Custodial, landscape and garden maintenance, handywork
- Greeter, receptionist, event assistant, medical rides driver
- Other positions in development