

Holyoke's property tax blunder sends officials racing to recalculate

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HOLYOKE — When Holyoke homeowners opened their tax bills this quarter, they found a surprise surcharge — a CPA rate that ballooned beyond the ballot promise, courtesy of a vendor slip-up.

Grant Schlosstein of the Board of Assessors told Mayor Joshua Garcia and the City Council in a letter that a mistake on the fiscal 2026 property tax bills — caused by a mix-up with the vendor that prints them — has been fixed, Garcia said in a [statement](#) on Wednesday.

In the letter, Schlosstein said the mistake was found Jan. 2: The tax bills used a CPA rate of 1.5%, which was wrong.

“The rate should have been set at 1% in accordance with the ballot initiative approved last November and reflected on the third-quarter bill,” he wrote.

Once the error was found, the office worked with the tax collector and treasurer to fix it and started recalculating bills to make sure the CPA rate was correct, Schlosstein added.

“As of the date of (Jan. 5), most of the corrective work has been completed, and we expect the process to be finalized within the next day,” he wrote.

The corrected amounts will show up on fourth-quarter tax bills mailed in April, he said.

In the meantime, Schlosstein said, taxpayers can ask for an updated statement, and by Friday, they'll be able to download corrected bills through the UniPay system on the city's website.

“Any taxpayer who has already made a payment based on the incorrect calculation will see a credit reflected on their updated bill,” he said.

Schlosstein apologized for the confusion caused by the oversight, he said. Although it is “understandably frustrating,” he anticipates the error will have little effect on the overall tax collection.

At Tuesday's City Council meeting, Ward 7 Councilor Meg Magrath-Smith said the city has depended on having the right people in jobs instead of building systems that work, no matter who is in them.

“We have an assessor that is out on leave. We have a new assessor who is coming in who is trying to do this process for the first time,” she said.

She said veterans' exemptions and the senior tax write-off will show up on fourth-quarter bills. This year, 52 seniors joined the tax write-off program through the Senior Center. She added that anyone with questions should call Laura Wilson, the city tax assessor.

Ward 5 Councilor Linda Vacon praised Schlosstein, a new appointee, for working quickly with other offices to fix the problem.

“This was not a complicated problem. ... It was human error. It's not a huge system complication,” Vacon said.