

Postcard and Joint Public Hearing – Questions and Answers

Thomas County’s Joint Public Hearing will be held on Wednesday, September 20, 2023 at 6:00 p.m. at Thedford Public School-Old Gym, 304 Maple Street, Thedford NE 69166

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Why am I receiving this postcard?

Counties are required to send out this postcard due to legislative bills that were passed by the Nebraska Legislature during the 107th session (2021-2022) – specifically LB644 as amended by LB927. The postcard is triggered by the tax request of certain political subdivisions – cities, counties, school districts and community colleges – when those requests exceed their “allowable growth percentage” (i.e. their property tax request exceeds their property taxes from the previous year by over a certain amount).

What is “allowable growth percentage”?

According to Nebraska Revised Statute §77-1631, allowable growth percentage means a percentage equal to the sum of (a) two percent plus (b) the political subdivision’s real property valuation from the prior year.

Is this a tax bill?

No, it is not a bill. The postcard is intended to inform the property owner of a potential property tax increase/decrease to certain levies of their property tax bill for next year, and to inform the property owner of the joint public hearing those political subdivisions need to participate in before they can submit their adopted budget for next year.

How does this impact the property taxes that I already paid this year?

This does not impact the property taxes you paid for this year. This postcard is notifying owners of estimated changes to certain levies within their property tax bill for next year.

Keep in mind, property taxes are paid in arrears. During calendar year 2023, property owners paid their property taxes for 2022. During the calendar year 2024, property owners will pay their property taxes for 2023.

How do I tell if my property taxes will increase?

This information is on the postcard. The far right column shows the *estimated* change in your property taxes, if any.

I received a postcard for an estimated tax increase, but it looks like my taxes are going down (or there is no estimated change from 2022). Why did I get a postcard?

State law requires a postcard to go to all property owners within the political subdivisions that are asking for more in tax revenues, by a certain amount, than they asked for the previous year. That doesn’t mean every property in the political subdivision will have increased taxes – depending on the 2023 value of property and what the political subdivision is planning to do for its tax rate, the taxes on some properties will remain the same or even go down. But the higher tax request from the political subdivision triggers a postcard for all of the properties within the subdivision.

If my postcard is indicating estimated decreases in my property taxes for these political subdivisions, then can I expect my overall property tax bill to be less next year?

Not necessarily. First, these are estimates. Second, this postcard only applies to counties, cities, community colleges, and school districts. The following types of political subdivisions have taxing authority but were not required to be included on the postcard, nor are they required to participate in the joint public hearing, so this postcard does not include any of their property tax requests:

- Villages
- Sanitary and improvement districts
- Educational service units
- Fire Districts
- Natural Resource Districts (NRD's)

I only see one political subdivision listed on this postcard. What about the other political subdivisions with taxing authority?

The Nebraska Legislature determined that only counties, community colleges, and school districts making a property tax request exceeding their allowable growth percentage need to be included on the postcard and participate in the joint public hearing.

I have a homestead exemption. Does this change by homestead exemption?

No, the information on the postcard is determined before any property tax exemption or tax credits has been calculated. The final determination of homestead exemption status is made by the State of Nebraska in late October. If you qualify for full or partial homestead exemption, that status will be reflected in any property tax bill you receive in December.

I only have one public hearing listed on my postcard. Are there supposed to be more?

If you only have one public hearing listed on your postcard, then that means all of the political subdivisions listed on your postcard are not required to participate in the joint public hearing.

Are these political subdivisions voting on their tax rates at this joint public hearing?

No. At the joint public hearing, a representative from the political subdivision will give a brief presentation on the political subdivision's intent to increase its property tax request by more than the allowable growth percentage and the effect of such request on the political subdivision's budget, but there will not be any votes taken after the presentation.

For the political subdivision participating in this joint public hearing, their participation in this joint public hearing is required BEFORE the political subdivision can file their adopted budget statement. Then on a subsequent date after the joint public hearing, the governing body of each participating political subdivision will pass an ordinance or resolution to set such political subdivision's property tax request.

If I attend the joint public hearing, will I have an opportunity to speak?

Yes, there will be a public comment period after the political subdivision's have finished presenting. Those speaking from the public will be limited to five minutes (The County Clerk [who is charged with organizing this public hearing] may adjust the time limit depending on how many speakers are present).

While the public comment period is the opportunity for members of the public to speak during the hearing, *there will not be back and forth discussion between members of the public and representatives from the political subdivision.*

I won't be able to attend the meeting, but would like to submit comments. How can I do that?

There are two ways you can submit comments:

1. Send an email to clerk@thomascountyne.gov. Please include "Joint Public Hearing" in the subject line; or
2. You can mail a letter to the Thomas County Clerk | PO Box 226 | Thedford, NE 69166