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Kingston non-homestead tax rate slowly being equalized

KINGSTON – Tax rates are slowly being equalized between commercial and residential properties in the City of Kingston.

The common council approved a resolution Tuesday night to move off the base proportion ratio to 52.84789 percent homestead and 47.15211 percent non-homestead.

The change comes on the heels of a report delivered earlier this year, from Center for Research, Regional Education, and Outreach, an economic think-tank based at SUNY New Paltz.

The white paper, funded by the Dyson Foundation, recommends equalizing the different property tax rates, to help the local economy by attracting businesses to the area.

The plan calls for a gradual shift in the proportion by 10 percent each year, until the rates are equal. Tuesday's resolution marks the first step in that process.

"We need to have some sort of vision of where we need to be at the end of the day," said Alderman Matthew Dunn. "It will certainly help our planning process and local businesses plan as well."

Alderman Elisa Ball voted no.

"We have in Ward 6 more retired homeowners than any other section of the city, and we are taxing them out of their homes," Ball said.

Brian Seche, alderman for Ward 2, disagreed.

"The residential tax rate per thousand is actually going down this year," Seche said. "We are actually able to take a step backwards," calling the proposal the best of both worlds.

"This is a thorny issue," said 8th Ward Alderman Steve Schabot. "We've had a 33 percent increase over the past five years in homestead tax rates, and a 24 percent increase in the non-homestead."

Schabot said he hopes the city can find a way to decrease the burden on fixed income households during this transition.

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