

City and Town

Amy Pitter, Commissioner • Robert G. Nunes, Deputy Commissioner & Director of Municipal Affairs



A Publication of the Massachusetts Department of Revenue's Division of Local Services

Register for the 2012 Regionalization Conference Today!

DLS Seminars, Workshops and Trainings

The Division of Local Services, Franklin Regional Council of Governments, and the Massachusetts Association of Regional Planning Agencies are pleased to bring you the Fourth Annual Regionalization Toolkit Conference on Monday, September 10th at the College of the Holy Cross in Worcester.

This year's conference will feature a series of morning workshops and afternoon roundtable discussions. The workshops will include panelists sharing their insights and experiences on regionalizing municipal services and best practices. Topics will include detailed information on city and town collaboration and economic development. Roundtable discussions are also included to help stimulate conversations among local officials on various topics of regionalization. Attendees are encouraged to engage in an open dialogue to discuss specific questions or challenges surrounding regionalization.

Lt. Governor Timothy Murray, Secretary of Housing and Economic Development Greg Bialecki, Department of Revenue Commissioner Amy Pitter, DOR Deputy Commissioner and Director of Local Affairs Bob Nunes and Marc Draisen, Executive Director of the Metropolitan Area Planning Commission and will open the conference with a series of remarks. The deadline to register is August 31st and payment is required in advance. Questions can be directed to dlsregistration@dor.state.ma.us. More information can be found by clicking [here](#).

Registration Now Open for "What's New in Municipal Law"

DLS Seminars, Workshops and Trainings - Municipal Finance Law

The DLS Legal Staff will offer its annual seminar "What's New in Municipal Law" on Tuesday, October 2, 2012 at The Log Cabin Banquet and Meeting House in Holyoke and Friday, October 5, 2012 at The Lantana in Randolph. Presentations include new legislation and recent court decisions pertaining to local government. Register now for the "What's New in Municipal Law Seminar" by clicking [here](#).

Tax Rate Setting Workshops Continue

DLS Seminars, Workshops and Trainings - Bureau of Accounts

As part of our new Strategic Plan, DLS is sponsoring a series of four regional workshops in August and

September throughout the Commonwealth to help cities and towns prepare for setting FY13 tax rates.

The sessions are scheduled for August 15th in Rowley, September 6th in Greenfield, September 13th at Shrewsbury Town Hall, and September 28th in Middleboro.

Staff from the Bureau of Accounts will lead the sessions, which are being held in partnership with local auditor and accountant groups to highlight best practices in setting tax rates. This is an opportunity for city and town finance teams to review the process and to ask questions before tax-rate setting season gets into high gear in the fall and early winter.

Catching Up with the Community Innovation Challenge Grants

Tim Dodd, Local Government Program Manager, Executive Office for Administration and Finance

(Once per month, City and Town will highlight grant recipients and provide project updates from the Community Innovation Challenge Grant Program.)

Hampshire Regional School District

The Public Schools of Williamsburg, Southampton, Westhampton (School Union 66) and the Hampshire and Chesterfield Regional School Districts have undertaken an initiative to improve the efficiencies of their technological applications for human resources, accounting and finance, communication, and educational support using Community Innovation Challenge Grant funds. Acknowledging that the core responsibility of a school district is to provide all students with high-quality educational opportunities, the CIC program provides support and opportunity to build a unified capacity for using technological applications that improve efficiencies and services. The project's regionalization of technology support services includes: (1) data sharing through the implementation of a Standard Interoperability Framework (SIF); (2) regionalized "HelpDesk" to coordinate and track technology supports. It seeks to allow for a work order system, remote trouble-shooting, equipment repairs, remote system upgrades and network management; (3) planning for Massachusetts Broadband Initiative (MBI) implementation; and (4) Improving regionalized transportation system for more efficient bus routes by coordinating student information with the use of routing software (Versatrans) and our student information system (PowerSchool). The project, while currently focusing on local schools, is also seeking partnerships and collaborations among the five towns that will increase regional coordination and efficiencies.

Manchester-Essex Regional School District

The Manchester-Essex Regional School District is a recipient of a Community Innovation Grant designed to support regionalization of services and creation of efficiencies in city and town programs. The district's education-related project focuses on regionalizing services for children with dyslexia in an effort to consolidate services in one location and contain spiraling special education costs. The "Intensive Reading and Written Language Program" provides small classes, individualized reading tutorials, and specialized teaching methodologies for children in grades four and five whose reading and written language skills fall well below grade level. By providing intensive intervention, the district anticipates a reduction in out-of-district tuition costs, increased student readiness for middle school, and more optimal long-term results for these children. Director of Student Services Allison Brown Collins noted that "the Intensive Reading and Written Language program has already been well received by parents. Given the district's proximity to Landmark School, the district was seeking to provide parents with a high quality, cost-effective alternative to out-of-district special education placements. We would not have been able to launch this critical program without the support of the Community

Innovation Grant."

New IGRs Released

The Division of Local Services has posted the following two Informational Guideline Releases to its website:

[IGR 12-301](#) provides municipal and regional school officials with information on the FY2013 payment schedule for Cherry Sheet programs.

[IGR 12-302](#) informs local officials of provisions of the Fiscal Year 2013 State Budget that allow cities and towns, under certain circumstances, to lower their minimum required contributions to local and regional schools under the Education Reform Act for FY2013.

DLS Announces FY2013 Tax Rate Recap

Bureau of Accounts

The Division of Local Services has released the FY2013 EXCEL Tax Rate Recap, related forms and instructions. They can be found by using the following link:

<http://www.mass.gov/dor/local-officials/accountant-info/automated-programs/recap.html>

This year's cover letter includes several important topics to consider when completing the FY2013 tax rate recap form including overlay provisions for telephone valuation, emergency spending, deficits in certain funds, enterprise indirect costs and Gateway submission.

DLS encourages submission of applicable forms through the Gateway system. When submitting forms via Gateway, BOA and BLA suggest that forms be completed, printed, signed and filed locally (for audit purposes) as well. Forward to BOA or BLA only supporting documentation not entered into Gateway. Gateway can be found using the following link:

<https://dlsgateway.dor.state.ma.us/gateway/Public/WebForms/Login.aspx>

August and September Municipal Calendar

August 1: Taxpayer

Quarterly Tax Bills Deadline for Paying 1st Quarterly Tax Bill Without Interest

According to M.G.L. Ch. 59, Sec. 57C, this is the deadline for receipt of the 1st Quarter preliminary tax payment without interest, unless the preliminary bills were mailed after July 1. If mailed by August 1, the 1st Quarterly payment is due August 1, or 30 days after the bills were mailed, whichever is later, and the 2nd Quarterly payment is due November 1. If mailed after August 1, the preliminary tax is due as a single installment on November 1, or 30 days after the bills were mailed, whichever is later.

August 1: Taxpayer

Annual Boat Excise Return Due

August 1: Accountant

Notification of Total Receipts of Preceding Year

The total actual local receipts (e.g., motor vehicle excise, fines, fees, water/sewer charges) of the previous fiscal year must be included on Schedule A of the Tax Rate Recapitulation Sheet (Recap) which is submitted by the Assessors to DOR. On the Recap, the Accountant certifies the previous fiscal year's actual revenues, and the Assessors use this information to project the next fiscal year's revenues. Any estimates of local receipts on the Recap that differ significantly from the previous year's actual receipts must be accompanied by documentation justifying the change in order to be approved by the Commissioner of Revenue.

August 10: Assessors

Deadline for Appealing EQVs to ATB (even numbered years only)

August 10: Assessors

Deadline for Appealing SOL Valuations to ATB (every 4th year after 2005)

August 15: Assessors

Deadline to Vote to Seek Approval for Authorization to Issue Optional Preliminary Tax Bills

For semi-annual communities issuing optional preliminary property tax bills, the Assessors must vote to seek authorization to issue the bills from DOR by this date. After receiving approval, Assessors must submit a Pro-forma Tax Rate Recap Sheet to DOR for review and issue the tax bills by October 1.

August 31: DOR/BOA

Issue Instructions for Determining Local and District Tax Rates

A copy of the Tax Rate Recap Sheet and its instructions are forwarded to the town.

August 31: Assessors

Begin Work on Tax Rate Recapitulation Sheet (to set tax rate for semi-annual bills)

Until the Tax Rate Recap Sheet is completed and certified by the Commissioner of Revenue, the community may not set a tax rate nor send out its property tax bills (unless it issues preliminary quarterly tax bills or requests from DOR the authority to send out preliminary tax notices if DOR requirements are met). Communities should begin gathering the information in enough time for the tax rate to be set and tax bills mailed by October 1. The Tax Rate Recap Sheet provides Mayors or Selectmen with a ready-made financial management tool because the town's most important financial management information is summarized on this form. The Mayor or Selectmen should review the Recap Sheet in preliminary form in order to understand the following financial information:

Page 1 (Tax Rate Summary) The proposed tax levy should be compared to the levy limit. If a town does not levy to its limit, the remaining levy is referred to as excess levy capacity. Excess levy capacity is lost to the community for the current fiscal year although it will always remain in the levy limit calculation;

Page 2 (Amount To Be Raised) This section includes appropriations and other local expenditures not appropriated. These include overlay deficits, revenue deficits, state and county charges, Cherry Sheet offset items, and the allowance for abatements and exemptions. By comparing this information to the prior year(s), any significant changes can be determined;

Page 2 (Estimated Receipts & Revenues From Other Sources) In particular, Section C shows the amount appropriated from free cash and other available funds. By comparing the amounts appropriated to the balances in these accounts (available from the Accountant/Auditor), the Mayor or Selectmen can get a sense of how their non-property tax revenues are being used;

Page 3, Schedule A (Local Receipts Not Allocated) By comparing these figures to prior year(s), the Mayor or Selectmen can determine any changes in these revenues;

Page 4, Schedule B (Certification of Appropriations and Source of Funding) This section includes financial votes of City/Town Council or Town Meeting not previously reported on last year's recap.

SEPTEMBER

September 15: Accountant/ Assessors

Jointly Submit Community Preservation Surcharge Report

This report (CP-1) is a statement of the prior year's net Community Preservation Surcharge levy, and is used to distribute state matching funds on November 15.

September 15: Local Reporting Officers

Submit Smart Growth School Cost Reimbursement Report to DLS

Local Reporting Officers report (a) local smart growth property tax and excise tax revenue for prior fiscal year or (b) municipality's waiver of reimbursement.

September 30: Taxpayer

Deadline for Submitting Forest Land Certification and Management Plan, M.G.L. Ch. 6

According to M.G.L. Ch. 61, Section 2, this is the deadline to submit to the Assessors the State Forester's certification and approved management plan in order to have the land valued as classified forest land in the next fiscal year.

September 30: Municipal and District Treasurer/Collector

Submit Compensating Balance Report

If compensating balance accounts were maintained during the prior fiscal year, a report and account analysis schedules must be submitted to DOR.

September 30: Accountant/ Superintendent/ School Committee

Jointly Submit End of Year Report to the DESE

Schedule 1 - determines compliance with prior year Net School Spending requirement.

Schedule 19 - determines compliance with current year Net School Spending requirement.

September 30: Accountant

Submit Snow and Ice Report

This report is a statement of snow and ice expenditures and financing sources.

September 30: Treasurer

Year-End Cash Reconciliation for the Previous Fiscal Year (due upon submission of a balance sheet for free cash/excess and deficiency certification)

A reconciliation is the process of comparing the Treasurer's accounts to the Accountant's/ Auditor's or Schools Business Manager's ledger balance to determine if they are consistent, and for the officials to make any necessary corrections. When the reconciliation is complete, the Accountant/Auditor/School Business Manager should indicate agreement with the Treasurer's balances. Reconciliations are required annually, but communities and school districts should reconcile monthly for their own purposes. The year-end report as of June 30 must be completed and returned to DOR. Municipalities and school districts should also use monthly reports to monitor cash practices of the Treasurer's office. If the Accountant/Auditor/School Business Manager and Treasurer are not consistently reconciling cash accounts, or if the reconciliations indicate variances, the Mayor, Selectmen or School Committee should inquire as to the reasons.

September 30: Treasurer

Submit Statement of Indebtedness

Massachusetts General Laws Ch. 44, Sec. 28 requires the Director of Accounts to maintain complete and accurate records of indebtedness by cities, towns and districts. This statute also requires Treasurers to furnish any other information requested by the Director in respect to the authorization and issuance of loans. This Statement is the annual report required from Treasurers to accomplish this purpose. Treasurers should reconcile their debt records with the Accountant/Auditor before filing the Statement of Indebtedness to ensure that the Statement and balance sheet are in agreement.

September 30: State Treasurer

Notification of Quarterly Local Aid Payments on or Before September 30

When local aid payments are transmitted to communities, the cover letter indicates what funds will be made available, less quarterly assessments (see Cherry Sheet attachment for details).

City & Town is published by the Massachusetts Department of Revenue's Division of Local Services (DLS) and is designed to address matters of interest to local officials.

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