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Important Dates to Remember

Sign Up Today for the New Officials Finance Forum!

This year's New Officials Finance Forum will be held on Wednesday, May 31st at the College of the Holy Cross in Worcester. This course is intended for recently elected or appointed local municipal finance officials and includes an overview of municipal government, the budget process, the tax recapitulation process, and reserve and debt policies. The registration form and \$50 registration fee must be received by May 22nd. [Click here for the registration form.](#)

Announcing the FY17 Community Compact IT Grant Program Awards

Lieutenant Governor Karyn Polito



Nearly two years ago to the day today, we announced the creation of the Community Compact grant program in [City & Town](#). Since that time, it is great to see the scope and success of the Best Practices program, the Information Technology grant program, and the Efficiency & Regionalization grant program.

We embarked on this initiative knowing that the future of our Commonwealth depends on the strength of all 351 cities and towns. We continue to work hard every day to strengthen partnerships with local officials and the municipalities they serve. Last year, we awarded \$2M in grant funding to 52 municipalities to drive local technological transformation and improvement projects through the Community Compact Information Technology grant program, and we are happy to continue that commitment this year.

I visited Braintree yesterday, where their fire department is using last year's grant money to install Mobile Data Terminals (MDTs) in their fire vehicles. They recently began testing the MDTs and used the software to identify a hydrant location prior to arriving on the scene of a fire, saving the crew crucial minutes in a dangerous situation.

I am pleased to announce that 47 municipalities across the Commonwealth, impacting 74 municipalities, will receive a combined \$2M in order to support the implementation of innovative and transformative IT projects by funding one-time capital needs such as technology infrastructure, upgrades and/or purchases of equipment or software with this year's grants. Embracing technology must be a key component of service delivery in any municipal government, and these projects will improve and expand services in a way that will benefit residents both now and in the future.

We thank all those who took the time to craft and submit applications and look forward to the successful completion of these projects. With so many worthy projects and a set limit of available funds, the decision-making process was certainly competitive.

In addition to the IT grant funds, we also understand that delivering critical local services effectively and efficiently requires skilled and dedicated local officials and staff.



Other DLS Links:

[Local Officials Directory](#)

[Information Guideline
Releases \(IGRs\)](#)

[Bulletins](#)

[Publications & Training Center](#)

[Tools and Financial
Calculators](#)

Communities across our state are currently grappling with the ongoing retirement of these individuals and the need for qualified individuals to take their place. At the state level, we are constantly looking for ways to adapt to changing demographics. We are focused on recruiting, retaining, and developing employees to ensure we have the talent necessary to deliver essential services.

At a recent Local Government Advisory Commission (LGAC) meeting, we discussed the obstacles cities and towns face when a long-time employee performing an important role leaves public service. In order to ensure the long-term stability of municipalities, we have committed to develop a working group tasked with addressing this issue. We plan to engage public and private colleges, personnel and hiring professionals, experts from municipal associations, and many other partners across the related fields to find the best and most effective ways to encourage people to pursue a career in public service. Please keep an eye out for future announcements regarding this group's mission and, as always, thank you for all the hard work you do to support the residents of the Commonwealth.

FY18 Preliminary Cherry Sheet Estimates

Division of Local Services Municipal Databank

The Division of Local Services has posted on its website preliminary cherry sheet estimates based on the Senate Ways & Means Committee's (SWM) FY2018 budget recommendations released today.

Click on this link to display the [municipal cherry sheet estimates](#) and this link for the [regional school cherry sheet estimates](#).

The SWMs budget recommends funding FY2018 Chapter 70 at \$4.757 billion, which includes \$12.5 million in transitional relief for school districts whose chapter 70 aid was negatively impacted by the change in low-income enrollment measures. Most other cherry sheet accounts are consistent with the Governor's House 1 budget proposal.

It is important for local officials to be aware that beginning in FY2018, the Division will begin assessing districts sending children to a charter school on a monthly basis starting with July. Previously, this assessment was deducted monthly from December through June. The charter tuition reimbursement payment schedule will also be changed to coincide with the new assessment schedule for the tuition payments. In FY2015, when local aid distributions were changed to monthly distributions, the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) modified the payment schedule for the receiving charter school districts to monthly, but requested delaying the assessment until December to reflect the October 1 enrollments. This process required the Comptroller's Office to override the payments to charter schools and the account balance was negative until the end of the fiscal year which was determined to be in conflict with MGL. The Comptroller has requested that the tuition payments and assessment be reconciled on a monthly basis. Although this means a change to sending district cash flow, it will have no impact on the budget. Since these estimates are included in the cherry sheet, districts are already

budgeting for this expense and raising the amount on the tax rate recapitulation sheet. As always, final actual tuition payments, assessments and reimbursements will reflect updated enrollment changes.

Cherry sheet estimates for charter school tuition and reimbursements are based on estimated tuition rates and projected enrollments under charters previously issued by the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education. Please be advised that charter school assessments and reimbursements will change as update tuition rates become available. Estimates for the school choice assessments may also change significantly when updated to reflect final tuition rates.

It is important for local officials to remember that these estimates are preliminary and are subject to change as the legislative process unfolds. Please contact the DLS Municipal Databank at databank@dor.state.ma.us or (617) 626-2384 with any questions.

New to Local Government? DLS has Helpful Resources

Linda Bradley – Information Technology Unit Senior Systems Analyst

Finally, spring has arrived and with it the annual ritual of town meetings. While these gatherings focus primarily on financial matters, another critical component is selecting local officials to govern municipalities. Officials may be elected or appointed during other times of the year, but a significant number are placed in office during the town meeting season.

Whether they are elected or appointed, new this spring or just in a new position, DLS offers a wealth of policy guidance, learning opportunities, and data to local officials. Additionally, DLS requires certain updates from municipalities in order to ensure accurate records, permissions and, where appropriate, certifications for the new official.

The list below details actions to be taken by the municipality in DLS Gateway and provides a compendium of recommendations to share with new officials. It provides links to data, information, and articles pertaining to municipal finance. The list is specifically intended to be shared with new local officials but may also prove to helpful to anyone currently serving in municipal government.

What action should communities take if they have a newly elected or appointed local official?

- Update the [Local Officials Directory \(LOD\)](#) to reflect the leadership change. This is typically completed by the town clerk.
- Set up a Gateway account, if required, to provide access to position-specific forms and reports. Gateway credentials can be provided by the town clerk and/or local accounts administrators or by contacting the DLS IT team by telephone (617) 626-2350 or email at dlsitgroup@dor.state.ma.us.
- Certify the board of assessors, an action taken by the chairman of the board of

assessors *and* the town clerk. They certify the LOD listing and associated data for board of assessor members through DLS Gateway.

What recommendations can be made to a new official to assist them?

- Subscribe to DLS Alerts. These periodic notices include our *City & Town* e-newsletter, Information Guideline Releases, Bulletins, Cherry Sheets and other municipal finance-related information. Sign up by clicking [here](#) or email us at cityandtown@dor.state.ma.us.
- Register for the upcoming New Officials Finance Forum (NOFF). This forum offers new officials the opportunity to network with their peers from other communities, meet the DLS team, and obtain an overview of municipal government, the budget process, and the tax rate recapitulation process, as well as reserve and debt policies. This year, NOFF will be held on Wednesday, May 31st at the College of the Holy Cross in Worcester. Preregistration is required, and there is a \$50 registration fee. [Click here for the registration form](#).
- Visit the [DLS website](#) for up-to-date information for municipal officials including training opportunities.

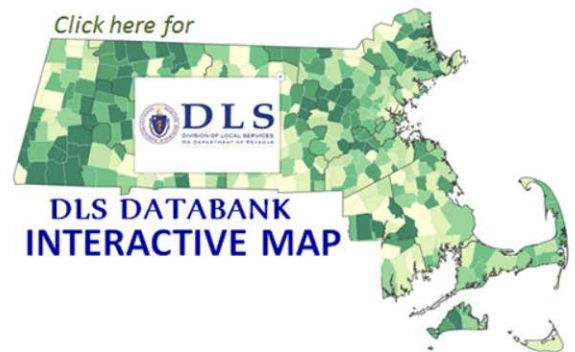
Division of Local Services

Executive
Bureau of Accounts
Bureau of Local Assessment
Bureau of Municipal Finance Law
Technical Assistance Bureau
Information Technology Unit
Municipal Databank/Local Aid Unit

Contact DLS

The Division of Local Services - Main Office
100 Cambridge Street
P.O. Box 9569
Boston, MA 02114-9569

[Office Locations](#)
[Staff Directory](#)
[Contact a Bureau or Unit](#)



Supporting a Commonwealth of Communities

The Division of Local Services (DLS) helps Massachusetts cities and towns achieve sound and efficient fiscal management through technical assistance, training, and oversight. Its bureaus are responsible for ensuring the fairness and equity of local property taxation, the accuracy and quality of local accounting and treasury management, interpreting state laws that affect local governance, distributing local aid, and maintaining a comprehensive databank on local finances.

Most Requested

Databank Reports
Preliminary Municipal Est based on Budget Process
Preliminary Regional Est based on Budget Process
Information Guideline Releases
Bulletins

Resources/Information

Municipal Modernization Act
Publications and Training Center
City & Town e-newsletter
Tools and Financial Calculators
Notice of Public Hearings/Meetings
The Corporations Book

- Visit the [DLS Gateway page](#) to access to data, forms, and processes specifically

related to assessing, accounting, tax rate setting, and more.

The screenshot shows the website interface for the Division of Local Services Gateway. It includes a navigation menu on the left, a main content area with a welcome message, and several service categories highlighted with green boxes. The highlighted categories are: 'OUR ORGANIZATION' (listing various departments), 'Public Reports and Database' (listing various reports and searches), and 'Free Cash Calculators Beginning in FY14' (listing various calculators and services).

- Visit [the Bureau of Municipal Finance Law's page](#) for a comprehensive list of reference materials including Informational Guideline Release (IGRs) and Bulletins.
- Visit [the Technical Assistance Bureau's page](#) for best practices, policy guidance, financial tools and calculators, and more.

On behalf of DLS, congratulations to all newly elected and appointed officials. Our mission is to support you in your efforts to achieve sound and efficient fiscal management through technical assistance, training, and oversight, so please feel free to [contact us](#) with any questions, comments, or feedback.

FY17 Sewer Rate Relief Awards

Gerry Cole - Bureau of Accounts Public Finance Section

In March, the Division of Local Services (DLS) announced the FY2017 distribution from the Commonwealth Sewer Rate Relief Fund, established in 1993 under the provisions of [Massachusetts General Laws c. 29, §2Z](#).

This year, funds totaling \$500,000 have been awarded to 54 Massachusetts governmental entities to mitigate sewer rate increases due to debt service obligations for qualified sewer construction projects.

DLS issued the annual program announcement and application form as Bulletin 2016-04B in September of 2016. October 28, 2016 was stipulated as the requested date for submission of completed applications.

Applications were processed by DLS and the Department of Environmental Protection (MassDEP). MassDEP provided determinations of eligible indebtedness, which is dependent upon the nature of a given project and its financing. The statute requires that eligible indebtedness be debt issued on or after January 1, 1990 having a final date of maturity more than 5 years after the date of issuance and incurred to finance or refinance

the cost of planning, design or construction of a water pollution abatement project. DLS and MassDEP require that a debt service schedule be submitted for any loan for which eligibility is requested.

Projects receiving state grants are ineligible and certain other projects have their eligibility defined in §2Z. After full review, only a small number of the projects/debt service submitted were deemed ineligible. The Sewer Rate Relief Fund is distributed on the same pro rata basis to all eligible applicants. This percentage is then applied to the total eligible debt service of each applicant to calculate the award.

Awards are legally capped at 20% of eligible debt service, but for many years, the distribution has been based on the amount appropriated by the Legislature. For FY2017, applications listing over 462 project loans and debt service were approved and grants were awarded to:

- Massachusetts Water Resources Authority (MWRA), \$391,580
- Three local Water and Sewer Commissions for a total of \$19,365
- Two Sewer Districts for a total of \$6,121
- 48 cities and towns for a total of \$82,934

Since FY1994, the sewer rate relief program has distributed over \$497.7 million to governmental entities throughout Massachusetts. The program's sole source of funding is from an annual appropriation in the State budget. Except for fiscal years when the program was unfunded, the appropriation has ranged from a high of \$58,600,000 in FY2002 to a low of \$500,000 in both FY2012 and FY2017.

Data Highlight of the Month: Budget Proposal Releases

Anthonia Bakare - DLS Municipal Databank

The Senate Ways and Means budget proposal for local aid was released this week; estimates can be found [here](#). The Division of Local Services publishes Cherry Sheet estimates based on release cycles of the state budget process in order to accommodate communities and regional school districts drafting their annual budgets and assessments. DLS provides these estimates as a service to communities to offer direct access as to what the legislature is thinking throughout the process. These estimates help communities make more accurate projections in order to achieve a balanced budget.

Because, city and town officials prefer this information as early as possible, when a budget proposal is released, the local aid estimates are updated and published on the DLS site with top priority. The stages of the budget approval process consist of the Governor's budget House 1 (H1) proposal, the House Ways and Means budget proposal (HWM), the Senate Ways and Means (SWM) budget proposal, the Conference Committee's proposal and then the final budget—which is approved by the legislature and signed by the governor. All proposals are subject to change until the final budget is approved. It is important to review each iteration of the budget proposal for each stage of the cycle. Although most accounts remain consistent throughout the budget stages, some do change. For the latest preliminary [municipal or regional school local aid estimates](#), visit our [landing page](#).

We hope you become better acquainted with the data the Division of Local Services has to offer through the *Data Highlight of the Month*. For more information, contact us directly at databank@dor.state.ma.us or (617) 626-2384.

May Municipal Calendar

- 1 Taxpayer **Deadline to Pay Second Half and Fourth Quarter Tax Bill without Interest**
This is the deadline to pay the second half tax bill in semiannual communities and the fourth quarter tax in quarterly communities.

- 1 Treasurer **Deadline to Pay the Second Half of the County Tax**

- 1 Accountant or Treasurer **Notification of Amount of Debt Due in Next Fiscal Year**
As required by M.G.L. c. 44, § 16, the Accountant or Treasurer must notify the Assessors of all debt due in the next fiscal year. The community is required to pay its debts, appropriated or not. Any debt service not covered by appropriations is added to the "Other Local Expenditures" category found on page 2 of the recap. It is important the Assessors have this information to avoid setting a tax rate that will raise insufficient revenue to cover the community's expenditures.

- 1 Collector **Mail Second Half Semiannual Tax Bills**
By this date, collectors in communities using the regular semiannual billing system mail the second half actual tax bills or, if using optional preliminary bills, mail the actual tax bills.

- 1 Collector **Mail Fourth Quarter Tax Bills**
Collector mails these bills if the fourth quarter bills were not included in the December mailings.

- 1 Taxpayer **Deadline to Pay Semiannual Bill**
M.G.L. c. 59, § 57C sets this as the deadline to pay the actual tax without interest in communities using the annual preliminary tax billing system on a semiannual basis, unless the bills were mailed after December 31. If mailed after December 31, payment is due either May 1 or 30 days from the date of the mailing, whichever is later.

- 1 Taxpayer **Deadline to Apply for Property Tax Exemptions for Persons, Residential Exemptions, and Small Commercial Exemptions**
This is the deadline to apply to the assessors if actual tax bills are mailed on or before January 1. If mailed after January 1, taxpayers have 3 months from the mailing date to file exemption applications.

Editor: Dan Bertrand

Editorial Board: Sean Cronin, Anthonia Bakare, Robert Bliss, Linda Bradley, Nate Cramer, Patricia Hunt and Tony Rassias

Contact *City & Town* with questions, comments and feedback by emailing us at cityandtown@dor.state.ma.us.

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