



## "Why Wasn't I Notified?": Maintaining the Local Officials Directory

Information Technology Unit

November 16th, 2017

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## By the Numbers

City & Town provides updates on the progress of the tax rate and certification season while also allowing you to follow the tax rate setting process in real time. Thanks to our Municipal Databank staff, this public information is available 24/7 by [clicking here](#).

Prelim. Certifications Approved: 52

Final Certification: 43 (of 70 total)

LA4 Approved: 280 (295 submitted)

LA13/ New Growth Approved:

279 (293 submitted)

Tax Rates Approved: 74

Balance Sheets Approved: 223

[The Local Officials Directory](#) is a joint effort of DLS and city and town clerks to provide a regularly maintained resource for the contact information of officials in Massachusetts' 351 cities, towns, and other local jurisdictions. The Directory determines who can have accounts and use DLS Gateway.

The Directory also determines who receives the automatic notifications such as Free Cash, Schedule A, and Tax Rate generated by Gateway modules. These notifications are sent to email addresses in the Directory, which local finance officials should review for accuracy. In some cases, local network firewall settings have resulted in nondelivery of these email messages. Local officials should work with their IT staff to ensure that messages sent by DLS are not blocked or considered spam since DLS now relies on email to deliver legally required notifications. In another case, a community might change its email domain address, and those still listed with the old address in the directory wonder why they did not get timely notifications. If your address is accurate, you will get the notification.

City and town clerks are authorized to add, update and delete officials in their respective communities, in as much detail as they think appropriate. Additionally, other departmental officials are routinely given permission to provide updates.

DLS strives to maintain accuracy for the financial and management officials with whom it does business, but with close to 13,000 constantly changing officials in the Directory, local updates have always been critical to its efficacy and success. Local administrators can designate anyone to keep entries current. The DLS IT Support Section routinely assists local officials in updates and account administration and can be reached at (617) 626-2350 and [dlsitgroup@dor.state.ma.us](mailto:dlsitgroup@dor.state.ma.us).

## DLS Gateway: Web Browser Tips

Kirsten Shirer - Information Technology Unit Director

We've written [a lot about Gateway Modernization](#), our three-year project updating all the program code behind the DLS Gateway application. That project officially ends next month, with literally millions of lines of new code now in place. Another critical

Total Aggregate Free

Cash Approved: \$961,235,910

## Important Dates & Information

### MassDevelopment: Planning and Real Estate Services Funding Opportunity

MassDevelopment recently announced a Call for Proposals for cities and towns in need of planning, economic development or other real estate-related technical assistance. Through its in-house expertise and contracts with "house doctor" consultants, MassDevelopment offers a range of technical assistance, including:

- Master Planning and Visioning for Sites and/or Districts
- Market Feasibility and Financial Analysis
- Surplus Property Reuse and/or Activation Assistance
- Coordination of Developer Tours to Showcase Commercial Redevelopment Opportunities
- Regional Economic Development Planning
- Placemaking and Public Space Activation Planning
- Industrial Site Feasibility Analysis
- RFP/Q Development and Process Management

TA awards will range from approximately \$5,000 to \$50,000.

part of the Gateway system – one we haven't yet talked about – is the software that converts that code into viewable pages, retrieves data from the Gateway servers and sends it back again, and allows users to navigate between all of Gateway's modules and pages. This software isn't actually part of Gateway at all - it's your Web browser. Because Web browsers largely determine the kind of experience you have while using Web sites and applications like Gateway, we'd like to provide a few tips to try to improve that experience.

A common question heard by DLS IT Support staff is, "What browser should I use?" Because Web browsers are independent programs developed by different companies – and they're all free – our advice is to use more than one. We all typically gravitate towards one browser as our favorite, but having more than one installed and available is good practice. Every browser has its strengths and weaknesses. If a Web page or application doesn't look right or function adequately in one browser, try another. Most Web developers (including ours) try to write code that works in all browsers, but it's not always possible. Some Web sites specify a preferred or required browser; having more than one available gives you the flexibility to switch when necessary.

What browsers are supported by DLS Gateway? All the major browsers, with an asterisk next to Microsoft Edge. Edge is not a traditional browser; it's part of the Windows 10 operating system. DOR does not have Windows 10, and Edge can't be installed separately. Most of the Gateway development team does use Windows 10 at home, and we've all used Edge with Gateway successfully. But we can't put it through our customary rigorous testing protocols until DOR upgrades to Windows 10, sometime in the future. So officially we support Chrome, Firefox, Internet Explorer and Safari, and we think Edge works – with the caveat that DOR can't currently use or support it.

Browser tabs: this is a great feature, but use caution! Having the same Web application open in multiple tabs can be risky. Browsers try to keep the tabs straight, but tabs are not a solid barrier. Everything in every open tab is maintained in the browser's memory, even when it's not the tab you're currently looking at. They do a pretty good job of juggling all this data most of the time. But when using really important Web applications like online banking, bill payment or credit card sites, or anything requiring a lot of data going back and forth (including entering your tax rate in Gateway), it's safer to keep it in a single tab. If you really want multiple pages open on the same site, use two different browsers. Doing so does create a barrier, because the two browsers don't share data.

Having trouble with Gateway? Here are a few tips from the Gateway support staff that might help.

If parts of the screen appear to be missing, check your browser's "zoom" level. If it's more than 100%, try reducing it. Gateway usually looks fine up to 125%, but if your specific monitor setting is already larger than normal, a browser zoom of more than 100% may render parts of the page unreadable.

Proposals will be accepted on a rolling basis through Friday, December 15. For more information, [visit the website](#) or contact Amanda Chisholm at [achisholm@massdevelopment.com](mailto:achisholm@massdevelopment.com) or 617-330-2073.

# MUNICIPAL Databank



## Other DLS Links:

[Local Officials Directory](#)

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

[Bulletins](#)

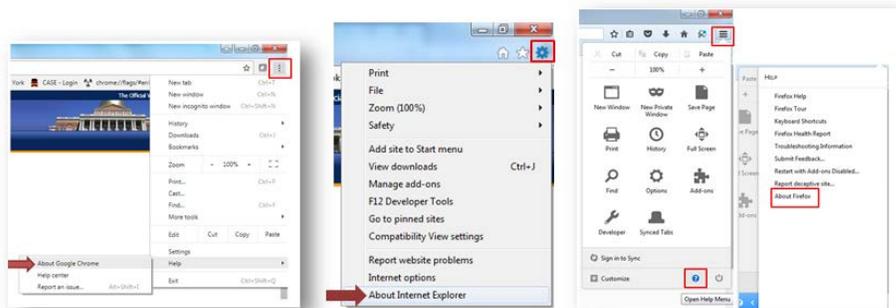
[Publications & Training Center](#)

[Tools and Financial Calculators](#)

When calling DLS IT Support, it helps us to know what operating system and browser you're using, and what the browser's version or "build" number is. How do you find the browser version number?

- Google Chrome: in the top right corner click the "3 dots" icon, then click Help, then click **About Google Chrome**
- Internet Explorer: in the top right corner click the "gear" icon, then click **About Internet Explorer**

Firefox: in the top right corner click the "3 lines" icon, then click the Help Menu icon at the bottom (the question mark inside a circle), then click **About Firefox**.



Google Chrome

Internet Explorer

Mozilla Firefox

One final tip: allowing browsers to update themselves automatically is considered a best practice. Google, Mozilla and Microsoft issue frequent security updates as well as performance enhancements and bug fixes. Each browser has a feature that, when enabled, checks for updates whenever you open the browser. Keeping your browsers up to date provides better protection against malicious code, and can mean a better overall Web browsing experience.

Whenever you have a question or a problem concerning DLS Gateway, help is available by phone or email. Contact DLS IT Support at (617) 626-2350 or [DLSITGroup@dor.state.ma.us](mailto:DLSITGroup@dor.state.ma.us). Support representatives are available during regular business hours to assist you.

## FY18 Community Preservation Act (CPA) State Match Info

Lisa Krzywicki - Municipal Databank Director

On November 14th, the Division of Local Services (DLS) released the FY2018 CPA state match to the 162 communities that have adopted the CPA surcharge. The CPA allows a community to adopt a local surcharge of up to three percent that is added to real estate property tax bills. The purpose of the CPA is to help communities preserve open space and historic sites, create affordable housing and develop outdoor recreational facilities. The CPA statute, [M.G.L. 44B](#), provides a state match to eligible

communities from revenues collected by the registry of deeds for surcharges on fees charged for recording various documents.

In FY2018, the available balance in the CPA state trust fund was \$26M, and the local surcharges committed by cities and towns totaled \$120.9M, which provided for a 17.2 percent base state match. Chapter 44B provides for an additional state match if a community adopted a three percent surcharge or the "blended" CPA by voting a surcharge of at least one percent and appropriating other funds to the community preservation fund so that the total equals three percent of the real estate tax levy. For FY2018, 76 communities are eligible for the second round or equity distribution and third round surplus distribution. The equity and surplus distributions use population and equalized valuation (EQV) to determine a ranking that would provide a greater portion of the balance of the state trust fund after the initial calculation to poorer and more densely populated communities. However, only those that committed a three percent surcharge whether by adopting a three percent surcharge or the blended CPA (as stated above) are eligible for these additional distributions. The decile ranking used to determine the equity and surplus rounds can be found by clicking [here](#). The distribution summary can be found in this [report](#).

The state community preservation trust fund was created in 2000 and revenues from the registry of deeds started funneling into the trust fund right away. In FY2003, communities started collecting the local CPA surcharge. The first state match occurred in FY2004 based on those local surcharges. In FY2003, 34 communities adopted the CPA and were eligible for the state match. In FY2018, 162 communities were eligible to receive the state match. Until FY2009, the state trust fund was sufficient to provide communities with a 100 percent state match. Due to increasing participation and declining registry collections, DLS has not been able to provide a 100 percent state match since then.

In FY2018, ten additional communities will begin assessing the local CPA surcharge and will be eligible for the state match in FY2019. In the spring of 2018, DLS will project the first round state match for the 172 communities eligible for the state match in FY2019. The ten new communities are Billerica, Boston, Holyoke, Hull, Norwood, Pittsfield, Rockland, Springfield, Watertown and Wrentham. For a complete list of all communities that have adopted the CPA, please click [here](#). As of today, only one other community has scheduled a ballot question to adopt the CPA. Voters in the town of Northbridge will decide next spring whether to add the CPA surcharge at one percent. For the up-to-date listing of communities considering adoption of the CPA, please refer to the Community Preservation Coalition website at [www.communitypreservation.org](http://www.communitypreservation.org) or by clicking [here](#).

## Data Highlight of the Month: [CPA](#)

Anthonia Bakare - Municipal Databank

There are currently 172 cities and towns that have adopted the CPA. The Databank offers a full range of information and

resources on the Community Preservation Act [page](#). Data is available from fiscal year 2003 to 2018. Reports include a CPA rank, decile and percent of base figure calculation. The CPA State Match reports breaks down the year adopted, total surcharge committed, less: abatements & exemptions, less pfy abatements exemptions, blended CPA appropriation. The report details CPA calculation in order to illustrate how the final match is obtained. See the above article for this year's update.

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](mailto:databank@dor.state.ma.us) or (617) 626-2384.

## November Municipal Calendar

1	Taxpayer	<b>Semiannual Tax Bills - Deadline for First Payment</b> Per M.G.L. c. 59, §§ 23D and 5Z, this is the deadline to pay the first actual or optional preliminary tax payment without interest in a semiannual community that mailed tax bills by October 1. If the bills were mailed after October 1, the deadline is 30 days after the mailing date.
1	Taxpayer	<b>Semiannual Tax Bills – Deadline for Property Tax Abatement Application</b> Per M.G.L. c. 59, § 59, applications for abatement are due on the same date as the first actual tax installment for the year.
1	Taxpayer	<b>Quarterly Tax Bills - Deadline for Paying 2nd Quarter Tax Bill</b> Per M.G.L. c. 59, § 57C, this is the deadline to pay the 2nd quarter tax payment without interest.
1	Selectmen and Assessors	<b>Hold Classification Hearing (recommended date)</b> The Board of Selectmen holds a public hearing at which the Assessors present information to assist it in determining whether to apply uniform or different tax rates to the various classes of real and personal property.
30	Accountant	<b>Deadline to Submit Schedule A</b> Failure to file Schedule A to BOA by November 30 may result in the withholding or forfeiture of state aid.
30	Assessors	<b>Submit Tax Recap and all Schedules to BOA</b>
30	State Treasurer	<b>Notification of Monthly Local Aid Distributions</b> , see <a href="#">IGR 17-17</a> for more cherry sheet payment information, monthly breakdown by program is available <a href="#">here</a> .

**Editor:** Dan Bertrand

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Contact *City & Town* with questions, comments and feedback by emailing us at [cityandtown@dor.state.ma.us](mailto:cityandtown@dor.state.ma.us).

To unsubscribe to *City & Town* and all DLS alerts, email [dls\\_alerts@dor.state.ma.us](mailto:dls_alerts@dor.state.ma.us).