



October 19th, 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: 37

Final Certification: 12 (of 70 total)

LA4 Approved: 136 (162 submitted)

LA13/ New Growth Approved:  
136 (156 submitted)

Tax Rates Approved: 31

Balance Sheets Approved: 143

Total Aggregate Free  
Cash Approved: \$634,812,053

## Announcing Year Two of the Efficiency and Regionalization Competitive Grant Program

Lieutenant Governor Karyn Polito



As we embark on our fall schedules, I want to take a moment to thank you for your continued hard work on behalf of the residents of the Commonwealth and share with you some exciting news related to an important grant funding opportunity.

In the [August 17th edition of City & Town](#), I was pleased to announce the commencement of the third year of our Community Compact Cabinet (CCC) program. The Community Compact Cabinet elevates the Administration's partnership with cities and towns and allows the Governor's Office to work more closely with leaders from all municipalities. In conjunction with this initiative, it's my pleasure to share with you that the application round for the second iteration of the [Efficiency and Regionalization Grant Program is now open](#).

The purpose of the Efficiency and Regionalization competitive grant program is to provide financial support for governmental entities interested in implementing regionalization and other efficiency initiatives that allow for long-term sustainability. These grants will provide funds for one-time or transition costs for municipalities, regional school districts, school districts considering forming a regional school district or regionalizing services, regional planning agencies and councils of governments interested in such projects.

There will be one competitive application round for this grant program and the application period will run from October 16th through November 16th. Bonus points will be awarded to any municipality that has chosen to participate in [the CCC Best Practice program](#). Additional bonus points will be awarded if the subject matter of the application falls within any of the FY18 Best Practices. Lastly, if the application is associated with a municipality's chosen best practice, bonus points will be awarded.

If your community is not currently enrolled in the Best Practice program, I highly encourage you to consider joining. To learn more about the cities and towns in your area currently taking part, [feel free to view our interactive map](#). It highlights the ongoing collaborations between the Commonwealth and our colleagues in local

# MUNICIPAL Databank



## Other DLS Links:

[Local Officials Directory](#)

[Information Guideline](#)

[Releases \(IGRs\)](#)

[Bulletins](#)

[Publications & Training Center](#)

[Tools and Financial](#)

[Calculators](#)

government as we provide the resources and subject matter expertise necessary to facilitate and foster partnerships, practices and policies that reach across the Commonwealth to positively impact each and every city and town in Massachusetts.

Thank you again for your hard work and collaboration on behalf of our communities and Commonwealth. We look forward to continuing to partner with you toward our shared goals of efficiency, effective and responsive government.

## New Growth Tips for FY2018

**John Gillet - BLA Assessment Program Coordinator**

The simplest ways for an assessor to improve chances of a quick growth approval are:

- Review growth reports for reasonability
- Review growth forms (LA4 & LA13) for reasonability before signing
- Describe and provide support for any unusual numbers
- Ensure all required forms are signed and submitted

Whether your community assesses property in-house or hires a consultant, prudent assessors should review their data before submitting reports to the Bureau of Local Assessment for approval.

Our job as reviewers is to ensure that there is a substantial level of reasonability in the reports we approve. When data aberrations exist, reviewers may lose confidence in the accuracy of a community's reports. This generates more questions and slows the approval process. Additional explanations and supporting documentation helps expedite the overall process. Recently improved Gateway functionality has allowed assessors to attach this important supporting documentation.

Every community is unique, but how we review new growth in any given community is generally very similar. Here are several tips to help prepare.

### LA-3 Valuation Summary Report

First, we compare the LA-3 VSR (Valuation Summary Report), found in the LA-3 tab in Gateway, to the LA-13 (New Growth) Form. The VSR report displays the aggregate percent change for all sales.

Tracking Certification Taxrate District Taxrate Schedule A **LA-3** Misc Forms MDM

Help Mode

**LA-3 Upload Program**

- Search/Update/Delete
- Bulk Upload
- Single Record Upload
- Sign and Submit LA-3 Data
- LA-15

**LA-3 Process**

- Quartile Report - Cert
- VSR - Cert & Interim
- Final Statistics Approval - Cert

**LA-3 EQV Process**

- EQV Statistics Approval
- View LA-19
- Copy Data for EQV
- LA-11 Form
- Calculate/Approve C and I Ratio
- Upload Growth Rate...
- View/Edit Growth Rate...
- View/Approve EQV

**Reports**

- View Reports
- View Summary Report
- View Cert. Communities

**LA-3 VSR - Cert & Interim**

LA-3 VSR - Cert & Interim

Final Report saved with ASR range 0.50 to 1.50

Status: LA-3 Certification : FORM APPROVED

Final Statistics Approval : FORM APPROVED

Jurisdiction Truro - 300

Percentage Change Range From

Submitted with Time Trend ☐

Approved with Time Trend ☐ To edit, go to Final

Show 10 entries (Number of Records found)

Sale Date	Parcel Id
12/21/2015	42 191 0
12/18/2015	39 338 0
12/18/2015	22 45 11
12/17/2015	35 1 0
12/17/2015	34 1 0
12/16/2015	7 8 4
12/14/2015	42 29 0
12/10/2015	42 60 0
12/04/2015	39 45 0
12/02/2015	53 23 0

Showing 1 to 10 of 140 entries

Valuation Summary Report

The VSR's aggregate percent change is compared to the LA-13's COLUMN F (Reval Percent change). DLS recommends assessors take sample size into account. In smaller communities, just one parcel can have a large impact on the overall percent change.

DIVISION OF LOCAL SERVICES

City / Town / District

### Certification Valuation Summary Sheet - Fiscal Year 2017

Non Time-Trended Sales

Average Proposed Value of Valid Sales							
Class Analyzed	101	102	103, 109	104	105	111-112	130-132
Sample Size	48	41	2	0	0	0	10
Average Proposed Assessment	880,156	262,527	703,900				372,090
Average Sale Price	923,044	292,388	733,750				382,550
Agg Ratio	0.95	0.97	0.96				0.97

Average Proposed Value of All Sales FY 2016 Vs FY 2017							
Class Analyzed	101	102	103, 109	104	105	111-112	130-132
Sample Size	59	51	5	1	0	0	23
Average Proposed Assessment	862,941	281,131	859,460	570,600			310,096
Average Assessment	815,110	275,724	861,300	590,000			351,513
Agg % change	5.87	1.96	-0.21	-3.29			-11.78

The above statistics excludes any change in the value of more than 50.00% and the following excluded NAL codes ('D', 'O', 'P', 'G', 'M', 'R') (non-legacy) and ('O', 'P', 'R') (for legacy).

These statistics may be used only to approximate the revaluation effect on the values since any changes due to building improvements, class changes, subdivisions, etc. have not been specifically identified.

### LA-4 Comparison Report

In Gateway's Tax Rate tab, access the LA-4 Comparison Report. Review changes in values for reasonability. DLS will verify that the small personal property exemption amount and the Chapter 653 designation are correct.

**LA-4 Comparison Report**  
Assessment / Classification

Jurisdiction: [Redacted] Fiscal Year: 2017

Small PP Exemption: 20000 Certification Year: 2015  
Billing Cycle: Semi-Annually BLA Advisor: Ryan Johnson  
Chapter 653: No

Property Type	Description	FY 2016 Parcel Count	FY 2016 Assessed Value	FY 2017 Parcel Count	FY 2017 Assessed Value	Parcel Difference	Parcel % Difference	Assessed Value Difference	Assessed Value % Difference
101	Single Family	1867	663039700	1865	665306000	-2	-0.1%	2266300	0.3%
102	Condominiums	191	34512500	191	34419700	0	0%	-92800	-0.3%
103C 103, 109	Multifamily Residential	30	2946900	29	2918400	-1	-3.3%	-305300	-1.0%
104	Two - Family	93	23657700	94	23831100	1	1.1%	173400	0.7%
105	Three - Family	27	8426900	27	8416900	0	0%	-10000	-0.1%
111-125	Apartment	19	7821100	20	12509100	1	5.3%	4688000	59.9%
130-32, 106	Vacant / Accessory Land	304	38491300	295	38064500	-9	-3.0%	-426800	-1.1%
200-231	Open Space	0	0	0	0	0	0%	0	0%
300-393	Commercial	120	65481900	122	66269300	2	1.7%	787400	1.2%
400-442	Industrial	15	7313800	14	7207200	-1	-6.7%	-106600	-1.5%
450-452	Industrial Power Plant	0	0	0	0	0	0%	0	0%
CH 63 LAND	Forest	0	245169	23	253378	23	9.3%	8209	3.3%
CH 63A LAND	Agriculture	88	893792	56	537317	-32	-36.1%	-356475	-39.8%

On Page 2 of the LA-4 Comparison Report, check for flags and enter explanations in the comment fields.

MASSACHUSETTS DEPARTMENT OF REVENUE  
DIVISION OF LOCAL SERVICES  
BUREAU OF LOCAL ASSESSMENT

City / Town / District: [Redacted]

**LA4 Comparison Report - Fiscal Year 2017**

Small PP Exemption: 0 Certification Year: 2016  
Billing Cycle: Quarterly BLA Advisor: [Redacted]  
Chapter 653: Yes

Property Type	Description	FY 2016 Parcel Count	FY 2016 Assessed Value	FY 2017 Parcel Count	FY 2017 Assessed Value	Parcel Difference	Parcel % Difference	Assessed Value Difference	Assessed Value % Difference
Total Class 1	TOTAL RESIDENTIAL	2,809	908,960,675	2,805	938,595,775	-4	-0.1%	29,635,100	3.3%
Total Class 2	TOTAL OPEN SPACE	0	0	0	0	0	0%	0	0%
Total Class 3	TOTAL COMMERCIAL	205	268,385,097	200	264,733,097	-5	-2.4%	-3,652,000	-1.4%
Total Class 4	TOTAL INDUSTRIAL	77	54,872,400	77	53,729,100	0	0%	-943,300	-1.7%
Total Class 5	TOTAL PERSONAL PROPERTY	408	66,233,800	248	66,677,928	-160	-39.2%	444,128	0.7%
Total Taxable	TOTAL REAL & PERSONAL	3,499	1,298,251,972	3,330	1,323,735,900	-169	-4.8%	25,483,928	2.0%

LA4 Reviewer: [Redacted] Approval Date: 09/14/2016

Edits:

505 LA4 Value Not = Growth and Utility Value

Comments

No comments to display.

## LA-13 Statistics Report

For review, below is an example of the LA-13 Statistics Report in Gateway's Tax Rate tab. Red arrows compare this year's growth to the three-year average. Blue arrows point to actual value change by class. Green arrows point to the area that would include explanations and any additional documentation that might support the changes.

**LA-13 Statistics**  
New Growth/Summary Statistics

Final Tax Rate set.

Jurisdiction: [ ] Fiscal Year: 2015 [Go]

Small PP Exemption	5000	Certification Year	2015
Billing Cycle	Quarterly	BLA / BOA Advisors	Jennifer Silva / Andrew Nelson
Chapter 653	No		

Class	FY 2016 Growth	3 Year Avg. Growth	FY 2016 / Avg Growth Factor
Residential & Open Space	23,462,441	14,892,986	1.58
Commercial & Industrial	14,880,537	678,586	21.93
Personal Property	5,529,230	7,325,930	0.75
Totals	43,872,208	22,897,504	1.92

Total Growth as a % of Total Value = 1.87%

Residential			
Average FY 2016 101 Value			399,385
Change in 101 Parcel Counts			13
Estimated Growth - New Homes			5,191,999

FY 2016 - FY 2015 Changes	Commercial 300's Only	Industrial 400's Only	Personal Prop 500's
Parcel Change	2	0	-4
Value Change	18,059,000	-2,200	-2,084,940
New Growth	14,710,637	169,900	5,529,230
DOR Utility Growth			808,700

LA13 Edits	Rev & Omit	Abatements	Adjustments
Res % of FY 2016 Base	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%
Com % of FY 2016 Base	0.00%	0.39%	0.00%
Ind % of FY 2016 Base	0.00%		-2.15%

Growth Reviewer: Debra Joyce Approval Date: 10/05/2015

LA-13 Levy Amount (\$): 758,989  
LA-13A Levy Amount (\$): 0

Comments: No comments to display.

Current Documents: No documents to display.

Print

## LA-13 Tax Rate Levy Growth

In the below form, Column B autofills from the submitted Omitted & Revised Form. The Gateway system calculates the Reval Percent Change based on the other information entered on the form. These percentages should be reasonable when compared to the VSR report on the LA3 tab. If not, look to items missed in Column D (Other Adjustments) or Column C (Abatements). The community enters the new growth by property class in Column I.

On personal property growth reports, we sometimes see large growth without a corresponding increase in value. An established business with significant personal property growth will stand out to a reviewer. The reason for such a change could be attributed to equipment upgrades and confirmed by reviewing Forms of List.

Property Class	(A) FY 2016 Values	(B) Omitted and Revised Values	(C) Abatement No.	(D) Statement Values	(E) Other Adjustment No.	(F) Other Adjustment Values	(G) Adjusted Value Base
RESIDENTIAL							
SINGLE FAMILY (101)	1,137,181,300	0	10	138,400	140	-400,550	1,136,642,100
CONDOMINIUM (102)	168,142,500	0	2	97,000	2	-21,800	168,063,700
TWO & THREE FAMILY (104 & 105)	78,122,300	0	0	0	35	291,700	78,414,000
MULTI-FAMILY (111-125)	113,609,000	0	2	118,300	2	-82,400	113,694,900
VACANT LAND (130-132 & 190)	13,520,000	0	1	33,000	34	-1,318,300	12,234,700
ALL OTHERS (103, 106, 612-618)	25,518,814	0	0	0	4	-174,700	25,344,114
TOTAL RESIDENTIAL	1,518,664,814	0	15	347,600	207	-1,679,000	1,517,637,814
OPEN SPACE	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
OPEN SPACE - CHAPTER 61, 61A, 61B	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
TOTAL OPEN SPACE	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
COMMERCIAL	188,368,886	0	4	1,856,900	17	20,100	188,433,086
COMMERCIAL - CHAPTER 61, 61A, 61B	41,600	0	0	0	0	0	41,600
TOTAL COMMERCIAL	188,311,486	0	4	1,856,900	17	20,100	188,474,686
INDUSTRIAL	17,516,200	0	0	0	2	-83,100	17,433,100
PERSONAL PROPERTY	34,688,000	0	0	0	0	0	34,688,000
TOTAL REAL & PERSONAL	1,762,181,100	0	0	0	0	0	1,762,181,100
Property Class	Reval Percnt	(F) = (G) - (B) - (C) - (D) - (E) - (F)	(H) Total Adjusted Value Base	(I) CFF LA4	(J) New Growth Valuation	(K) FY Tax Rate	(L) Tax Levy Growth
RESIDENTIAL							
SINGLE FAMILY (101)	0.06201	78,481,800	1,207,124,000	1,214,814,600	7,690,600		
CONDOMINIUM (102)	0.04474	7,161,500	167,225,000	167,318,800	93,600		
TWO & THREE FAMILY (104 & 105)	0.18844	13,371,300	91,889,300	84,116,100	446,800		
MULTI-FAMILY (111-125)	0.01108	1,248,900	113,943,200	115,518,300	1,675,100		
VACANT LAND (130-132 & 190)	0.04138	516,400	12,995,000	13,626,000	625,000		
ALL OTHERS (103, 106, 612-618)	0.04040	1,130,700	26,495,917	26,610,821	114,904		
TOTAL RESIDENTIAL	0.06183	93,830,700	1,611,468,617	1,622,413,621	10,945,004	17.93	196,244
OPEN SPACE	0.00000	0	0	0	0		
OPEN SPACE - CHAPTER 61, 61A, 61B	0.00000	0	0	0	0		
TOTAL OPEN SPACE	0.00000	0	0	0	0	0.00	0
COMMERCIAL	-0.00106	-197,600	186,235,483	187,163,479	927,996		
COMMERCIAL - CHAPTER 61, 61A, 61B	0.00481	200	41,600	41,600	0		
TOTAL COMMERCIAL	-0.00106	-197,400	186,277,383	187,205,779	927,996	17.93	16,439
INDUSTRIAL	-0.00108	-486,800	16,783,300	17,836,600	1,152,700	17.89	26,668
PERSONAL PROPERTY							
PERSONAL PROPERTY							
TOTAL REAL & PERSONAL							
TOTAL REAL & PERSONAL							

Community Comments (Maximum 2000 characters can be entered)

Reviewers check growth reports on all use classes. One regular issue we see is incorrectly attributing growth to routine changes in construction grade and condition. Our [online New Growth Training](#) includes a slide for filling out the LA-13's Column D stating that it should not include positive value changes for parcels that increase due to quality and condition changes not attributable to new construction or revaluation. For example, new roofs, replacement windows, painting, and modest kitchen updates are considered routine maintenance. Actual new growth could be attributed to the construction of a deck, garage, family room addition, or newly finished basement. Adding a second heating system because of expanded living area would be growth, but replacing an existing heating system is not growth.

We hope this proves helpful to all the assessors out there seeking to shorten review time and increase the effectiveness of their own growth reviews. The BLA Staff looks forward to assisting you through the process. We appreciate communities' tight deadlines and with some due diligence on the assessors end, we hope to be able to speed up the process of new growth approval. To learn more about new growth, please see the links below and the "What's the Number: A Look at FY17 New Growth" series from the [February 2nd, 2017](#) and [May 4th, 2017](#) issues of *City & Town*.

**Useful Links:**

[Growth Presentation](#)

[New Growth and Column D Tracking Workbook](#)

[Audited Personal Property Worksheet](#)

[Guidelines for Annual Levy Limit Increase for Tax Base Growth IGR17-25](#)

## **Years of Bliss at DLS**

***City & Town* Editorial Board**

After nearly 25 years of public service, most recently as Regional Manager for the Division of Local Services (DLS) Worcester and Springfield offices, Bob Bliss will be leaving state government. A Worcester native with a passion and gift for the written word, Bob's wit, insight and experience will be missed by his DLS colleagues. His many years as a journalist along with various positions in state government, including stints at the Executive Office for Administration and Finance, the Massachusetts Turnpike Authority and the Department of Revenue, as its Communications Director, gave him a unique perspective that informed his approach to working with staff, both at DLS and in cities and towns across the state.

Bob joined DLS in May of 2012, where he built upon his existing advisory role on the *City & Town* Editorial Board to become a key contributor to articles ranging from staff interviews to analysis of the average single-family tax bill. Many of his contributions often went unrecognized as he quietly shepherded pieces to publication by working with subject matter experts to distill complex topics into digestible, newsworthy articles. His contributions to DLS were not limited solely to the communications field,



as he effectively leveraged those skills to jumpstart and guide the Taxpayer Assistance Program (TAP). As he recently said, "TAP was designed to create, with no additional cost or DLS resources, a program that would encourage the earlier setting of tax rates, and it has succeeded."

Bob played a major role in the success of TAP, the redesign and enhancement of this publication, and the smooth operation of our Worcester and Springfield offices. More importantly, his professionalism, approachability and intellect have been second to none. On behalf of all his DLS colleagues, the Editorial Board wants to express our best wishes to Bob Bliss and thank him for his contributions to *City & Town* and his broader service to the Commonwealth.

## ***Data Highlight of the Month: Stabilization Fund***

**Anthonia Bakare - Municipal Databank**

In FY2015, there was a total stabilization fund balance of \$984,241,728 statewide (4.24% of total statewide municipal budgets). In FY2016, that amount was \$1,069,538,723 (4.42% of total state-wide municipal budget). From FY2015 to FY2016, 258 communities experienced growth (an 8.67% increase) in their total stabilization fund balance. Total budget data comes from the tax rate recap. Click on the following links for [stabilization fund](#) and [revenue by source](#) data. This data is also available on the DLS [website](#) under [Municipal Databank \(Data Analytics\)](#).

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.

## **October Municipal Calendar**

- |   |           |  |
|---|-----------|--|
| 1 | Collector | <b>Mail Semiannual Tax Bills</b><br>Communities using the regular semiannual billing system should mail actual tax bills or optional preliminary tax bills by this date.   |
| 1 | Collector | <b>Mail Preliminary Tax Bills for 2<sup>nd</sup> Quarter</b><br>Collector mails these bills if the 2 <sup>nd</sup> quarter bills were not included in the July mailings.   |
| 1 | Taxpayer  | <b>Deadline to Pay the Semiannual Preliminary Tax Bill Without Interest</b><br>Per <u>M.G.L. c. 59, § 57C</u> , this deadline applies in semiannual communities using the annual preliminary tax billing system unless the bills were mailed after August 1. If mailed after August 1, the payment is due either November 1 or 30 days after the bills were mailed, whichever is later.  |
| 1 | Taxpayer  | <b>Deadline for Applying to Have Land Classified as Agricultural/ Horticultural Land or Recreational Land</b><br>Under <u>M.G.L. c. 61A, §§ 6 and 8</u> and <u>c. 61B, §§ 3 and 5</u> , this is the deadline to apply to the Assessors to have land valued, taxed, and classified as agricultural/horticultural or recreational land in the next fiscal year. Taxpayers who miss this deadline have until 30 days after the mailing of the actual tax bills to apply to the Assessors. |
| 1 | Taxpayer  | <b>Deadline for Submitting Forest Land Certification and Management Plan</b><br>As set by <u>M.G.L. c. 61, § 2</u> , this is the deadline to submit to the Assessors the State Forester's certification and approved management plan to have land classified as forest land for 10 years beginning in the next fiscal year.  |
|   |           | <b>Begin Working on the Tax Rate Recapitulation Sheet (the recap)</b><br>Assessors in communities that issue quarterly or annual semiannual preliminary tax bills should begin gathering data for the following tax recap pages in order to have enough time for the tax rate to be set and  |

actual tax bills mailed by December 31:

15 Assessors and Accountant

- Page 1 - Tax Rate Summary
- Page 2 - Section II: Amounts to be Raised and Section III: Estimated Receipts and Other Revenue Sources
- Page 3 - Local Receipts Not Allocated
- Page 4 - Certification of Appropriations and Source of Funding

31 Accountant

**Deadline to Submit the CPA Fund Balance Report (Form CP-2)**

[See July 15.]

31 State Treasurer

**Notification of Monthly Local Aid Distributions**, see [IGR 17-17](#) for more cherry sheet payment information, monthly breakdown by program is available [here](#).

**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](mailto:cityandtown@dor.state.ma.us).

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