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CITY & TOWN

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

"Circuit Breaker" for Low and Moderate Income Seniors

written by Bruce Stanford

With outside sections of the FY2000 state budget,¹ the Legislature instituted a new tax credit program to assist low and moderate income, elderly persons in paying property taxes and utility charges relating to their domiciles. Under this program, eligible homeowners and renters can receive a refundable credit on their state income taxes.

To qualify for a credit, a person must be at least 65 years of age, occupy the subject property as his or her principal residence, and have had an income below a prescribed ceiling amount for the relevant calendar year. The initial ceiling amounts defined in the legislation are \$40,000 for a single individual who is not the head of a household, \$50,000 for a head of household, and \$60,000 for a husband and wife filing a joint return. In addition, the assessed valuation of the person's residence cannot exceed \$400,000.

The amount of the credit to which a qualifying person is entitled is the amount by which the taxpayer's property taxes, together with the eligible amount of that taxpayer's water and sewer charges, exceed 10 percent of the taxpayer's income. For communities that include water and sewer debt service in their property tax assessments pursuant to M.G.L. Ch. 59 §21C(n), the eligible amount of water and sewer charges is the sum that taxpayer paid as part of his or her tax bill for water and sewer debt service. For other communities, the eligible amount for each taxpayer is 50 percent of the water and sewer charges in the tax year for which credit is sought.

A taxpayer, however, may not necessarily receive the full amount by which property taxes and utility charges ex-

ceed 10 percent of income. Rather, the legislation imposes limits on the credit amount. It also phases in the amount of the credit. In the initial year of the program (i.e., for the tax year beginning January 1, 2001), that maximum is \$375. The maximum increases in subsequent years to \$750.

Let us consider, as an example, an unmarried, elderly homeowner with an income of \$35,000. Ten percent of that person's income would equal \$3,500. Consequently, the senior would receive an income tax credit in the amount by which his or her property taxes plus eligible water and sewer bills exceeded \$3,500, up to \$375 in the first year and \$750 in following years. Of course, if the aggregate of the senior's property taxes and eligible water and sewer bills was under \$3,500, the senior would not be eligible for any credit in that year.

A senior who rents his or her domicile may also qualify for an income tax credit under this new legislation. For calculation purposes, the statute presumes that 25 percent of a person's rent is for property taxes and water and sewer bills. Therefore, the program entitles a senior who rents his or her domicile to a credit if 25 percent of that senior's rent exceeds 10 percent of his or her income, again up to the statutory limits. A renter whose rent is subsidized by the state or federal government through a rental assistance program, however, is not entitled to a tax credit under the program.

Tax credits received by qualifying seniors are not considered income for the purpose of obtaining eligibility or benefits under other means-tested assistance programs, including food, med-

ical, housing, energy, and educational assistance programs.

Seniors who are not obliged to file a state income tax return because they do not owe taxes may, nevertheless, obtain a credit. To do so, however, they must file a return.

In order to safeguard the benefits of the tax credit program from the effects of inflation, the legislation contains language which automatically increases both the benefit amount and the eligibility limits in future years. The income, valuation and credit limits, set out in the statute, adjust automatically in synchrony with the consumer price index.

The new "circuit breaker" program will provide helpful assistance to low and moderate income seniors when its provisions become effective. However, since the program first becomes effective with the tax year beginning January 1, 2001, its benefits will only be realized when eligible seniors file state income tax returns in 2002. ■

1. Ch. 127 §§ 80 and 81 of the Acts of 1999.

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LEGAL

in Our Opinion

History of Property Tax

As we prepare to enter the twenty-first century, it might be appropriate to review the historical development of property taxation from colonial times to the present. A property tax can be defined as an enforced contribution of money or other property imposed according to some reasonable rule of apportionment, by a sovereign state, on property within its jurisdiction in order to defray the public charges. A property tax differs from an excise, which is an assessment on an event or privilege. For example, our present day motor vehicle excise is imposed for the privilege of registration. A tax is involuntary, unlike a fee that is charged for a service.

In 1630, the King of England gave the Massachusetts Bay Company a charter to govern a colony. Although the charter did not expressly confer the power to tax, the Massachusetts Bay Company, needing money to run a government, imposed property taxes. They perceived that the power of taxation was included in the terms of the charter by implication. After reorganization of the province in 1691, a new charter gave the general court the power to impose and levy "proportionable and reasonable assessments, rates and taxes" upon the property and inhabitants of the province. The power to tax was vested in the legislative branch of government.

Our present governmental structure, which consists of legislative, executive and judicial branches, also reserves to the Massachusetts Legislature the exclusive power to tax. This concept can be traced to the conflict between the King of England and Parliament over the right to levy taxes, at the time of the colonial settlements.

Interestingly, the Massachusetts Constitution, which dates from 1780, also empowers the General Court "to impose and levy proportional and reasonable assessments, rates and taxes."¹ Cities and towns in Massachusetts have no inherent power to tax, but rather have only those powers to tax that have been expressly conferred by the Legislature.

As first stated in 1780, the two goals in taxation were assessments at market value which were also proportional. To achieve proportionality, all property should be assessed at the same percentage of value. An unequal assessment would result in the taxpayer's paying more than his just share of taxes.

The Supreme Judicial Court (SJC), however, later ruled that a taxpayer could seek an abatement only if his property was assessed at more than its fair cash value. There was no legal remedy if other similar property in the community was assessed at less than the taxpayer's property. In its decision, the court held that disproportionate assessment was not a cause for legal action.² Over 30 years later, the United States Supreme Court held that a taxpayer whose property was assessed at a greater percentage of fair cash value than his neighbor's property could receive an abatement of the tax to the same percentage of full value as that of other taxpayers.³

Notwithstanding the U.S. Supreme Court ruling, there continued to be disproportionate assessment in Massachusetts because communities seldom revalued property, maintaining the historic basis rather than periodically reassessing to current, market value. Also, different classes of property were often assessed at varying percentages of fair cash value. This practice of disproportionate assess-

ment was contested by a Springfield taxpayer who sued to recover his real estate taxes, complaining that property in the city was assessed at vastly different percentages of fair cash value. The taxpayer claimed assessments for the entire city should be void since the assessors did not comply with the state constitutional requirement of proportional assessment. The SJC, however, denied relief ruling that the taxpayer did not show evidence of a widespread scheme of disproportionate assessment.⁴

Undeterred by this decision, another group of taxpayers challenged assessing practices in Springfield a year later. They showed convincing evidence that assessments for different classes of property were disproportionate. Single family houses, which comprised 43 percent of the total fair cash value of taxable property, were paying only 33 percent of the property taxes. Yet, public utility, commercial and industrial parcels, which represented 28 percent of total taxable fair cash value, were paying 37 percent of the property taxes. The SJC found that there was a complete failure to comply with the constitutional and statutory requirement of proportional assessment and ordered the revaluation of all property.⁵

The Springfield decision resulted in other communities revaluing to bring assessments up to current market values. However, since equalized values (EQVs) are an important factor in distributing local aid, certain municipalities became concerned at the inequities caused by the slow speed by which the fair cash value standard was being implemented. Local officials noted a disparity in the EQVs for the years 1972 and 1974. In most communities, the equalized values were far

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FOCUS

on Municipal Finance

A Look at Proposition 2½ Referenda by Category

City & Town periodically reviews Proposition 2½ referenda questions to see what types of questions communities are placing before their voters and for what reasons. This article looks at referenda from FY1994 through FY1998 to see which types of referenda questions are meeting success and whether certain categories of expenditures win voter approval more often than other categories.

There are three common types of referenda: overrides, capital exclusions and debt exclusions. An override permanently increases the local levy limit to cover spending purposes that are considered ongoing expenses. The override ballot question specifies the dollar amount and the spending purpose of the vote, and requires a majority vote of the electorate for approval. Once approved, an override increases the levy limit and, in subsequent years, is included in the levy limit base that is increased annually by 2.5 percent. In FY1994 only 34.5 percent of the 304 overrides attempted were successful. The number of proposed overrides has decreased each year since then. In FY1998, there were only 94 attempts. Interestingly, 45.7 percent of those attempts were successful – the highest rate of approval in the 1990s! During the five-year period from FY1994 to FY1998, there was a total of 837 override attempts with a 36.3 percent success rate.

Capital expenditure exclusions allow voters to raise property taxes, for a single year only, in excess of the levy limit to fund certain capital projects such as fire trucks, computer equipment, or re-

pairs to municipal buildings. For capital expenditure exclusions, the approved amount of the exclusion is added to the levy limit only for the year in which the project is undertaken or acquisition made. The number of attempted capital exclusions was highest in FY1995 (103). This was a sharp increase from the 65 attempts in FY1994. After FY1995, the number of attempts decreased through FY1997 (53 attempts) and then increased to 64 in FY1998. The success rate climbed to 76.6 percent in FY1998. For the five-year period, there was a total of 358 attempted capital expenditure exclusions with a 57.5 percent success rate.

A debt exclusion allows voters to approve a temporary increase in the levy limit to fund the payment of special debt service costs. The additional amount for debt service, for borrowing with an approved debt exclusion vote, is applied to the levy limit for each year of the life of the obligation. Because debt exclusions are for a multi-year period, DLS records them in the calendar year (CY) they are first approved. More debt exclusions were attempted in CY1996 (201) than in any other year in the five-year period. Although 75.1 percent of those attempted debt exclusions were successful, in CY1997 only 85 were placed on the ballot and the success rate dropped to 51.8 percent. From CY1993 through CY1997, there were 847 attempted debt exclusions with a 66.4 percent success rate overall.

Are voters more likely to approve referenda questions for certain purposes? Referenda questions have been grouped into eight categories: culture and recreation, general government, general operating, health/human services, public safety, education and other. From FY1994 through FY1998, there were more referenda questions of all three types for education (568) than for any other category, but public

works (524) was not far behind. The number of school related questions put before the voters has declined from 129 in FY1994 to 69 in FY1998. Until FY1998, more than 50 percent of all school related questions were successful. In FY1998 only 49.3 percent of the questions were successful. Although there have been a number of proposed overrides dealing with schools, in every year in our sample there were more failures than successful votes. Only 40.6 percent of overrides for education were successful. On the other hand, 69.9 percent of debt exclusions for school purposes have been approved. Capital exclusions have been attempted for educational purposes 42 times in the five year period with a 59.5 percent approval rate.

Public works projects appear to be gaining support by voters. The overall success rate has increased from 48.8 percent in FY1994 to 62.5 percent in FY1998. Similar to education, attempted overrides for public works purposes have generally failed (only 32.2 percent have been successful.) Proposed debt exclusions have won 67.6 percent approval. Capital exclusions appear to be used more often for public works proposals than for any other category with 128 questions from FY1994 through FY1998. Other than in FY1994 when there were only seven successful capital exclusion referenda with nine losses, voters have given their approval when capital exclusions are for public works (60.2 percent).

Voters usually support referenda questions for public safety. In FY1994, 44.7 percent of the 103 questions (all three types) dealing with public safety were approved. The approval rate climbed to 58.2 percent in FY1995, then dropped to 44.9 percent in FY1996.

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Proposition 2½ Referenda By Category, FY94 to FY98

Type	FY94 overrides		FY94 capital outlay expenditure exclusions		CY93 debt exclusions		Total wins	Total	Percent
	Wins	Losses	Wins	Losses	Wins	Losses			
Culture and Recreation	6	19	4	2	6	6	16	43	37.2
General Government	7	31	3	2	11	14	21	68	30.9
General Operating	12	23	2	3	3	2	17	45	37.8
Health/Human Services	9	5	1	0	1	1	11	17	64.7
Public Safety	21	38	13	6	12	13	46	103	44.7
Public Works	20	34	7	9	36	23	63	129	48.8
Education	28	45	10	3	30	13	68	129	52.7
Funds	2	4	0	0	0	0	2	6	33.3
Totals	105	199	40	25	99	72	244	540	45.2
Total attempts	304		65		171				
Successful attempts (%)	34.5		61.5		57.9				

Type	FY95 overrides		FY95 capital outlay expenditure exclusions		CY94 debt exclusions		Total wins	Total	Percent
	Wins	Losses	Wins	Losses	Wins	Losses			
Culture and Recreation	11	10	7	3	11	2	29	44	65.9
General Government	9	12	5	10	10	8	24	54	44.4
General Operating	13	16	1	0	3	1	17	34	50.0
Health/Human Services	1	6	1	1	0	1	2	10	20.0
Public Safety	13	10	11	16	22	7	46	79	58.2
Public Works	9	23	20	15	35	21	64	123	52.0
Education	15	24	3	10	50	22	68	124	54.8
Funds	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	0.0
Totals	71	102	48	55	131	62	250	469	53.3
Total attempts	173		103		193				
Successful attempts (%)	41.0		46.6		67.9				

Type	FY96 overrides		FY96 capital outlay expenditure exclusions		CY95 debt exclusions		Total wins	Total	Percent
	Wins	Losses	Wins	Losses	Wins	Losses			
Culture and Recreation	7	10	2	1	10	7	19	37	51.4
General Government	4	22	2	3	11	10	17	52	32.7
General Operating	3	6	1	2	2	2	6	16	37.5
Health/Human Services	1	0	2	0	1	1	4	5	80.0
Public Safety	7	18	7	15	21	10	35	78	44.9
Public Works	9	32	16	16	34	13	59	120	49.2
Education	23	25	4	2	58	17	85	129	65.9
Funds	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	0.0
Totals	54	114	34	39	137	60	225	438	51.4
Total attempts	168		73		197				
Successful attempts (%)	32.1		46.6		69.5				

Type	FY97 overrides		FY97 capital outlay expenditure exclusions		CY96 debt exclusions		Total wins	Total	Percent
	Wins	Losses	Wins	Losses	Wins	Losses			
Culture and Recreation	5	1	3	0	16	4	24	29	82.8
General Government	0	6	1	3	15	3	16	28	57.1
General Operating	0	12	0	2	5	2	5	21	23.8
Health/Human Services	2	1	0	1	0	0	2	4	50.0
Public Safety	4	13	12	6	14	6	30	55	54.5
Public Works	7	10	17	5	44	13	68	96	70.8
Education	13	22	2	1	57	22	72	117	61.5
Funds	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	2	0.0
Totals	31	67	35	18	151	50	217	352	61.6
Total attempts	98		53		201				
Successful attempts (%)	31.6		66.0		75.1				

Type	FY98 overrides		FY98 capital outlay expenditure exclusions		CY97 debt exclusions		Total wins	Total	Percent
	Wins	Losses	Wins	Losses	Wins	Losses			
Culture and Recreation	4	3	3	3	5	3	12	21	57.1
General Government	1	5	3	1	5	2	9	17	52.9
General Operating	12	14	6	1	2	5	20	40	50.0
Health/Human Services	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0.0
Public Safety	6	4	14	3	4	7	24	38	63.2
Public Works	6	8	17	6	12	7	35	56	62.5
Education	12	17	6	1	16	17	34	69	49.3
Funds	2	0	0	0	0	0	2	2	100.0
Totals	43	51	49	15	44	41	136	243	56.0
Total attempts	94		64		85				
Successful attempts (%)	45.7		76.6		51.8				

Total wins/losses	304	533	206	152	562	285	1072	2042	52.5%
Number of questions/ percent wins	837	36.3%	358	57.5%	847	66.4%			

Proposition 2½ Referenda by Category ➔ continued from page three

The number of proposed referenda in this category has declined steadily to only 38 in FY1998. The voters approved 63.2 percent of those requests. Attempted overrides have been successful 38.1 percent of the time. Capital expenditure exclusions are frequently used for public safety purposes although not as often as for public works (103). They have met with mixed results with 55.3 percent winning approval. Debt exclusions for public

safety purposes (136) have a 62.9 percent approval rate.

The health and human services category has had the fewest proposed referenda in the past five years (36) with a very uneven rate of approval. In FY1994 voters approved 64.7 percent of the 17 questions. They approved only 20 percent of 10 questions in FY1995 but then approved 80 percent of the 5 proposed for FY1996. In FY1997 the approval rate was only 50 percent of four ques-

tions. Perhaps local officials thought that was a message from the voters – not one referenda question for health and human services was proposed in FY1998. Most of the proposals in this category were for overrides (52 percent of 25 questions approved), but 66.7 percent of the six proposed capital expenditure exclusions were approved. Only 40 percent of the debt exclusions found support.

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History of Property Tax → continued from page two

below fair market value. EQVs approximated market values only in those municipalities that had undergone complete revaluations. Communities that had revalued had 1974 EQVs almost double those for 1972, resulting in a steep decline in local aid. The Town of Sudbury sought a judicial determination that the Commissioner of Corporations and Taxation, as the Revenue Department was then called, was responsible for enforcing the constitutional valuation requirements. In the landmark decision of *Town of Sudbury v. Commissioner of Corporations & Taxation*, the SJC ruled that the Commissioner, in administering and enforcing the laws relating to equalized valuation, could *require* local assessors to assess property at full and fair cash value.⁶ The ruling gave the Commis-

sioner an authoritative role, not merely an advisory/educational function, in producing uniform assessments throughout the Commonwealth.

When certain communities failed to appropriate funds for reassessment, the Commissioner sought court-ordered revaluations. In the aftermath of *Commonwealth v. Andover*, the Legislature enacted M.G.L. Ch. 58 §§ 4A-4C which expanded the Commissioner's power by authorizing him to contract with revaluation firms and deduct the cost of the services from the community's local aid if a community failed to contract on its own.⁷

After a constitutional amendment in 1978, the Legislature enacted a law permitting the classification of real property by use.⁸ If the Commissioner

has certified that the community is assessing property at full and fair cash value, the city or town can shift some of the tax levy from residential to commercial and industrial property, resulting in lower tax bills for residential property owners. Residential exemptions, open space exemptions, and small commercial exemptions provide other legal ways to shift the tax burden. Special property tax treatment for agricultural/horticultural, forest and recreational lands is also permitted in the State Constitution. ■

written by James Crowley

1. Part II, c.1. §.1, art. 4.
2. *City of Lowell v. County Commissioners of Middlesex*, 152 Mass. 372 (1890).
3. *Sioux City Bridge Company v. Dakota County*, 260 U.S. 441 (1923).
4. *Stone v. Springfield*, 341 Mass. 246 (1960).
5. *Bettigole v. Assessors of Springfield*, 343 Mass. 223 (1961).
6. 366 Mass. 558 (1974).
7. 378 Mass. 370 (1979).
8. M.G.L. Ch.40 § 56.

Proposition 2½ Referenda by Category → continued from page five

Referenda for culture and recreation have also had a checkered history. The approval rate has ranged from only 37.2 percent in FY1994 to a high of 82.8 percent in FY1997. The number of proposed questions seems to be declining. There were 44 attempted referenda in FY1995 but only 21 in FY1998. Overrides seem to be the preferred referenda type for this category with a total of 76 attempts, of which only 43.4 percent won approval. There were almost as many attempted debt exclusion questions (70), but the success rate was 68.6 percent! Although there were only 28 proposed capital exclusions, they won 67.8 percent approval.

Neither the general operating category nor the general government category has fared well with voters. The highest rate of approval was for general government in FY1997 (57.1 percent). The lowest approval rate was for general operating expenses in the same year (23.8 percent). Attempted overrides were the least successful: 21.6 percent approval for general government and 36 percent approval for general oper-

ating expenses. General operating questions met success 55.6 percent of the time whether the question was presented as a capital exclusion or a debt exclusion, but more debt exclusions were attempted (27 debt exclusions, 18 capital exclusions). For general government, debt exclusions have won approval more often than not, (58.4 percent), but proposed capital exclusions have not fared as well (42.4 percent approved.)

It is clear that voters are more likely to support debt exclusions than any other type of referenda question. Looking at all three types of referenda questions, the most popular categories are education with an overall success rate of 57.5 percent, culture and recreation with 57.4 percent approval, and public works (55.2 percent approved). The types of referenda least likely to be approved are general government (37.7 percent approved), general operating (39 percent approved), and public safety (49.3 percent approved). ■

written by Jean McCarthy

Municipal Finance Glossary

The Division of Local Services has a new publication entitled *Municipal Finance Glossary*, which will be distributed to local officials in mid-January. A tool for experienced as well as new officials, the glossary defines terms encountered by local officials in their daily work. The booklet includes a comprehensive list of acronyms, as well as the Internet addresses of websites of interest. The *Municipal Finance Glossary* is three-hole-punched so that it can be incorporated into existing manuals, but it can also stand alone.

DLS welcomes comments and suggestions. Contact Jean McCarthy by phone at (617) 626-2405, by fax at (617) 626-2330, or by e-mail at mcCarthyjm@state.ma.us. The DLS website address is www.state.ma.us/dls. ■

DLS UPDATE

Special Awards to DLS Employees

Kathleen Colleary, an attorney with the DLS' Property Tax Bureau, received a special award from the Massachusetts Association of Assessing Officers at its November 18, 1999 meeting. Hugh Smith, president of the MAAO, presented Kathleen with an engraved plaque. The award reads:

"In recognition and appreciation of her continuing efforts in dispersing her knowledge of the laws to assessors and their personnel, thereby providing the education necessary for them to better perform their duties."

Kathleen began her professional career with DLS' Bureau of Local Assessment, and then transferred to the Property Tax Bureau where she has been ever since, a total of almost 20 years service. Although knowledgeable in all aspects of municipal law, Kathleen specializes in areas relating to assessment. She is also expert in interpreting Proposition 2½ and advising on the proper wording of referenda questions.

The Plymouth County Assessor's Association presented the Richard Weaver Award to **Lorraine Reilly** at its Annual Meeting on December 8, 1999. Lorraine recently retired from DLS after 14 years of state service. A staff appraiser in the Bureau of Local Assessment (BLA), Lorraine served as the BLA field representative for many local communities in Plymouth County. According to Mary Quill, President of the Plymouth County Assessors Association, Lorraine received the award in recognition of her capable, reliable and caring service to local communities. "We are really going to miss, Lorraine," said Ms. Quill. The Weaver Award is given annually to a person associated with Plymouth County who has made an outstanding contribution to assessing.

Harry Grossman Leaves DOR

Harry Grossman was appointed General Counsel to the Secretary of Administration and Finance, Andrew Natsios effective December 20, 1999. Harry left the Department of Revenue (DOR) after almost 20 years, having served as Chief of the Property Tax Bureau and Acting Deputy Commissioner of the Division of Local Services before his promotion to DOR First Deputy Commissioner in charge of special litigation. Bruce Stanford, Chief of the Property Tax Bureau, praised Harry's integrity and leadership at a well attended reception for Harry. "The word that comes to mind when talking about Harry is gentleman, in the best sense of the word," said Bruce.

Harry has received numerous awards throughout his career. Most recently, Banker & Tradesman recognized him as a Leader Making a Difference. The award stated, "His peers and co-workers say Grossman, the DOR's First Deputy Commissioner, is one of the most admired and respected people in the organization." Harry also received a special award from the Massachusetts Association of Assessing Officers in November 1999. In addition to his service at DOR, Harry serves on the Marblehead Board of Appeals and is a member of the evening faculty at Suffolk University. Harry lives in Marblehead with his wife and two children.

DOR Announces Quicker, Easier Tax Filing Options

The Massachusetts Department of Revenue (DOR) is pleased to announce that it has expanded its e-file eligibility requirements so that more taxpayers and practitioners can take advantage

of quicker, easier income tax filing options. This year, DOR has opened e-file to accept returns for full-year nonresident taxpayers, as well as first time resident filers. In addition to making e-file available to more taxpayers, DOR has also instituted a number of administrative changes to ensure privacy and streamline the filing process.

Feedback from last year's filing season seminar indicated that practitioners were interested in seeing DOR expand its e-file capabilities to allow them to file electronically for more of their clients. This year, DOR will accept Telefile and PC File returns for first time resident filers. Practitioners can file these returns using their own Department-approved software, or by using DOR's Telefile or PC File programs. In addition, the Department has upgraded its PC File software to allow for all schedules and worksheets, as well as full-year nonresident returns.

As always with these e-file options, taxpayers and practitioners can rely on 24 hours a day, seven days a week availability, and a four day refund turnaround time. The PC File software, which operates on personal computers running Windows 95 or above, is free and easy to download from DOR's website at www.state.ma.us/dor. Once installed, the software performs all the necessary calculations and guides taxpayers through a secure return transmission process. Taxpayers also will receive confirmation that the return was received by DOR. ■



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Municipal Fiscal Calendar

February 1

Taxpayer: *Deadline for payment of 3rd quarterly tax bill without interest (if mailed before January 1).*

Taxpayer: *Quarterly tax bills — application deadline for property tax abatement. For FY2000 only, communities can extend the date of mailing to January 15, 2000. If the actual bill is mailed after December 31, 1999, applications for abatement are due 30 days after the bills were mailed.*

February 15

Treasurer: *2nd quarter reconciliation of cash (due 45 days after end of quarter).*

February 28

Finance Committee: *Continue budget review and develop recommendations. (This date will vary depending on dates of town meeting.)*

Where in Massachusetts?

Many communities in Massachusetts have sections with their own place names. Test your knowledge of Massachusetts' unofficial place names with this short quiz.

1. What two Massachusetts communities have sections known as "Academy Hill?"
2. Which three towns have areas known as "Allen's Corner?"
3. Where is Artichoke, Massachusetts?
4. Where would you find Annasnoppet?
5. Where is Antassawamock?

Answers: 1. The Brighton section of Boston, and Westminster; 2. Amesbury, Marlon and Walpole; 3. Newburyport; 4. Carver; 5. Mattapoisett. ■

Data Bank Highlight

The Municipal Data Bank is a primary source of financial and demographic information on Massachusetts' cities and towns. There are a number of reports that summarize the results of override, debt exclusion and capital exclusion referenda. The Proposition 2½ Levy Capacity Report, available on the website through the Community Report Builder, allows users to construct reports online that compare communities in terms of override votes and the ability to raise the tax levy through referenda (Levy Capacity). Spreadsheets, which summarize the results of referenda and their impact on tax rates, are available through the Proposition 2½ spreadsheet databases. Other data can be requested from the Data Bank staff.

To obtain Municipal Data Bank information contact Dora Brown or Debbie DePerri at (617) 626-2300. For technical assistance contact Burt Lewis at (617) 626-2358. The World Wide Web address is listed below. ■

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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. DLS offers numerous publications on municipal law and finance, available by calling (617) 626-2300, or through the DLS website at www.state.ma.us/dls or by writing to PO Box 9490, Boston, MA 02205-9490.

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