

ONBOARDING AND OFFBOARDING EMPLOYEES: MUNICIPAL FINANCE LAWS



MARCH 2021

As part of its human resources function, municipalities should already have a thorough onboarding process that includes rigorous reference checks and a comprehensive offboarding process. This not only helps ensure a continuity of operations, but also helps safeguard a community's assets and information during times of transition. There are also several requirements set forth both in statute and by the Division of Local Services related to municipal finance that municipalities must follow when transitioning staff in certain positions, including:

- Ensuring the new official, before entering into his/her official duties, is sworn to the faithful performance of such duties by the town clerk or other appropriate official (oath of office) G.L. c. 41, ss. 15 and 107. (For example, an accounting firm cannot hold the office of town accountant; however, an individual within that firm may be appointed to that office.)
- Ensuring the new official has obtained a performance bond within 10 days of election or appointment, as required by statute (See G.L. c. 60, s. 13 for Collectors; c. 41, s. 35 for Treasurers, c. 41, s. 13 for Town Clerk. c. 41 s. 13A, for City Clerk)
- Notifying any applicable Division of Local Services Bureau of the change in personnel – Bureau of Accounts (BOA) and Bureau of Local Assessment (BLA)
- Updating the [Local Officials Directory in Gateway](#) as needed (This is ordinarily the responsibility of the city/town clerk.)
- Completing an audit of the previous collector as it relates to assessment and collection of taxes (See G.L. c. 60, s. 97)
- Assessors recommit the uncollected tax lists to the new collector to allow collection of those bills M.G.L. c. 60, s. 97
- Ensuring all appointed assistants and deputies have taken the oath of office and obtained performance bonds as necessary. (collectors – G.L. c. 41, s. 39C and c. 60, s. 92; treasurers – c. 41, s. 39A; accountants and auditors – c. 41, s. 49A; assessors – c. 41, s. 25A; town clerks – c. 41, s. 19; city clerks – c. 41, s.18)
- Granting and deactivating Gateway access as needed

In addition, there are numerous other best practices local officials should incorporate into their city or town's own comprehensive onboarding and offboarding processes. For example, the status of any unresolved financial matters should be reviewed and confirmed. Any applicable outstanding reconciliations, between a Treasurer/Collector and Accountant/Auditor as an example, should be completed, and any outgoing staff should ensure that any budget appropriations from town meeting or city council are recorded in the municipality's financial software system before departing.

There are also external parties that local officials should notify upon a change in staffing. For instance, a municipality's bank, independent auditor, financial advisors, investment managers, contracted/deputy collectors or assessors, and others should be notified of the change. If applicable, the notified parties should also be asked to revoke and/or grant access to any software, program, online service, or any other platform or information source available to staff as needed. The municipality should also notify their local veterans' agent of a vacancy on its staff.

In addition to the above, there are additional measures local officials should take regarding employee access to any municipal property or information. For example, access to computer systems, voicemail, online payment and banking platforms, accounting records and software, and other applications should be reviewed, granted, and revoked when needed. Any payment, administrative, or other capability a departing employee has regarding MassTaxConnect, retirement systems applications, or similar platforms should also be revoked. Furthermore, any applicable authorizing signatures on record should be amended as needed. Any municipal property, such as keys, access cards, or other electronic equipment should also be tracked and returned prior to an employee's departure.

If needed, a municipality should identify an individual to serve in a vacated position on a temporary basis. (See G.L. c. 41, s. 40 for appointment process.) In that case, similar legal requirements and best practices for preparing for new employees should be followed to confirm the individual has the information and access they need, but to also ensure it is transitioned when necessary if a new individual takes on the role on a permanent basis.