



Town of Wareham

Financial Management Review

Municipal Data Management and Technical Assistance Bureau

March 2001





INTRODUCTION

At the request of the Board of Selectmen, the Department of Revenue's Division of Local Services (DLS) has completed a financial management review of the town of Wareham.

We have based our findings and recommendations on site visits by a Technical Assistance team consisting of staff from the Division's Bureau of Accounts, Bureau of Local Assessment, and Municipal Data Management & Technical Assistance Bureau. During these visits, the team interviewed the members of the board of selectmen and finance committee, the treasurer, collector, assessor and staff members, as available, in each office. Among others interviewed were the management information systems director, the chief procurement officer and newly appointed town administrator.

DLS staff examined such documents as the tax recapitulation sheet, town reports, annual budgets, balance sheets, cash reconciliation reports and statements of indebtedness in addition to other assorted financial records.

In reviewing the town's financial management practices, we have focused on: (1) town government structure in the context of the duties and responsibilities of financial officers; (2) the town's budget and capital planning processes; (3) the degree of coordination and communication that exists between and among boards, officials and staff involved in the financial management function; and 4) the general efficiency of financial operations measured by the town's success in maximizing resources and minimizing costs.

We encourage the board of selectmen, when formulating overall strategies for improving the town's financial management, to consider the observations, analyses and recommendations contained in this report. These are recommendations only and can be implemented, at the town's option, provided there is sufficient cooperation among town boards and officials.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

General - Wareham is a sea coast community with 57 miles of water frontage at the head of Buzzards Bay in Southeastern Massachusetts. The town is located approximately 50 miles south of Boston and close to 40 miles northeast of Providence. As a seasonal community, it experiences a population shift from about 40,000 residents in the summer to approximately 20,000 in the off-season. When Route 28 was heavily traveled as a major east-west highway, Wareham was prominently known as the "Gateway to the Cape" and tourism was its primary industry. However, with the construction of Interstates 495, 195 and Route 25, Wareham's substantial tourism industry declined. At the same time, Cape bound travelers, and the money they spent, began to by-pass the town's commercial corridor for the faster interstate routes.

Today, with approximately 6,000 acres of land associated with 1,500 working bogs, the cranberry industry remains a key component of the local economy. The town's tax base is enhanced by a slow return to occupancy of larger homes along the oceanfront and by the prospects for a major commercial-residential development on 2,451 acres of land along the interstate highway ramps. Standing as barriers to higher property values are a traditionally large inventory of small, seasonal homes, including over 1,000 mobile homes in 17 parks and static industrial growth. As evidence of these influences, Wareham has an equalized valuation per capita that ranks 196th among 351 cities and towns and an average single family tax bill that ranks 284th.

At present, the town of Wareham is governed by an open town meeting with a 5-member board of selectmen under a charter and by-laws. Day-to-day activities are managed by a town administrator with wide ranging power and responsibilities. A 7-member finance committee is appointed and has current membership which is generally new to the role. A new town administrator and a new collector will take office this spring. The accountant, management information systems (MIS) director, treasurer and director of assessing all have experience in their respective positions. Overall financial management is also impacted by two fire and water districts.

Town government has emerged impressively from internal problems in 1995 within the assessing department which caused intervention and other action by the state Department of Revenue. In 1994 and 1996, the town acted to convert the treasurer and board of assessors positions to appointed offices. A comprehensive community plan was completed in 1998 and in September 2000, a charter review study was published with recommendations that would strengthen the role of the selectmen. The town resolved technology issues with vendors and moved to new financial management software in 1999 (for all but the collector's office). Not insignificantly, the collector this year implemented new procedures that have removed obstacles to the flow of information out of his office. Residual benefits have streamed into other finance offices and generally improved the town's overall financial management practice.

Despite advances, the town finds itself grappling with other critical issues. The failure to produce error-free tax bills in the last two years has eroded confidence in the town administration. The allocation of fiscal responsibilities and the level of communication among finance officers, boards and committees must be addressed and resolved as the new town administrator takes office. With the decision of the incumbent collector not to seek reelection, it is timely to discuss whether this should also be an appointed position. Software performance must be critically examined, particularly relative to the collector's office. The town must also decide on the degree of its commitment to pursue and collect outstanding taxes.

In the body of this report, we have responded to these and other issues with recommendations. Below is a summary of our observations and recommendations followed by a more expanded discussion.

Financial Management - Tax collection is one of the most visible ways a town government interacts with its residents. It also provokes the most volatile reaction. Therefore, it is imperative that the town act to gain control over the tax billing process and take other steps aimed at preserving public confidence in local government. Part of the solution may lie in the appointment of a person, apart from the town administrator, to oversee the town's fiscal departments. A finance director, or assistant town administrator for finance, who reports to the town administrator, can be important, together with a financial management team in the achievement of fiscal control and accountability. For similar reasons, and with the decision of the collector not to seek reelection, the town should consider converting the office to an appointed position. Among other financial management topics, we have only addressed the payroll process and the benefits gained by shifting the end of the work week to Thursday.

Computers and Software Technology - Overall, the MIS department appears to function as an effective contributor to the daily operation of town government. What stands out is a need to address financial management software issues with the goal of attaining efficiencies and restoring public confidence in the ability of town officers to distribute bills and collect tax revenue. The process should begin with an objective evaluation of software in the collector's office. The town would benefit from outside input and advice in the development and refinement of a plan to accomplish short and long term technology goals. To ensure that staff learn and retain knowledge about the software they use, retraining should take place and procedure manuals should be produced in each department. Also, given the global nature of the MIS director position, it might be more appropriate that he report to the town administrator rather than to the accountant.

Accountant - It is our conclusion that the accountant's office functions well and efficiently. We have included a single recommendation that he review the town's revolving funds to ensure that they are correctly classified for balance sheet purposes and appropriate in terms of their use.

Treasurer - Overall, the treasurer's office performs competently as it fulfills its role in the financial management of the town. However, there are a few areas to which we would direct attention. A backlog of tax title accounts stands out as a major area of concern and should be addressed. We cite the need for greater commitment and an increased appropriation for Land Court costs to spur collections and reduce the number of accounts. We suggest that tax title accounts be grouped based on certain characteristics and packaged, in bulk, with substantial fee opportunities to attract outside legal assistance.

Second, although the treasurer is diligent and comfortable in a largely manual system for tracking the flow of town funds, there are inherent advantages to increasing computer spreadsheet utilization. There is a need also to create a cash book secured by appropriate back-up procedures. This would provide a basis for an internal reconciliation of cash with bank statements, before comparison of balances with the accountant's general ledger. We make recommendations to achieve these goals.

Third, the treasurer's clerks have reached a certain level of proficiency in the use of the HTE financial software, but there may be more potential here to improve operations. We have not made a formal recommendation in this regard, but suggest that the treasurer's staff clearly express where they believe deficiencies exist and that the MIS director respond, in kind, to identify where the software capabilities lie.

Collector - The collector's commitment to new procedures has gone far to accelerate the flow of information out of the office and to improve the town's overall financial management practice. However, computer issues continue to frustrate staff as well as consume the time of the MIS director. In regard to the reconciliation of receivables, the collector is regularly reconciling with the accountant, but the absence of a cash control prevents him from first reconciling internally.

Addressing the difficulties with tax bills, of concern was a tendency among those interviewed to deflect responsibility, after the fact, for action or inaction that may have contributed to the problems. Most observations pointed out how the process failed elsewhere. While there seems to be a consensus to process bills in-house for the last quarter of this fiscal year, we would encourage the town administrator to assign responsibilities, before the fact, to ensure that correct procedures are in place, that they are executed as and when required, and that they produce the result intended. On other issues, we recommend that the collector consider reorganizing staff time to create undisturbed periods for the accomplishment of required daily tasks and major projects. Noting that the prospects for collecting overdue taxes are typically better early, rather than late in the process, we also encourage the collector to issue demand notices and place properties in tax title as soon as the actions are permitted. As a matter of internal control, we recommend that the collector also establish a receivables control record.

Assessor - Current conditions in the assessors' office are in stark contrast to the early 1990s when internal deficiencies lead to DOR intervention. Under a restructured board and through

the initiatives of the town's first director of assessing, the office now functions efficiently with procedures in place to ensure completion of requisite tasks and compliance with state regulations. In this context, we have only recommended that the office cease accepting the pre-payment of apportioned betterments and instead direct taxpayers to the collector's office for this purpose. Otherwise, we underscore the role of the assessor in the tax process and his involvement on the financial management team.

Conclusion - Community government is a cooperative venture driven by common goals and held on course by commitment to a process. For guidance, procedures, checks and balances are interwoven into standards of financial management practice and imposed by state statutes. Local prerogatives are incorporated through the town charter and by-laws. Together, these help to provide a structure for the effective day-to-day administration of town government, and a framework for protecting the public interest and securing the confidence of the people.

With the start of a new town administrator in March and a new collector after the April elections, with a relatively new membership on the finance committee and with the experience of the remaining partners in government, there is the opportunity for Wareham to establish a consensus on goals and order town priorities. Agreement can be reached on internal procedures and expectations can be clarified relative to the performance of duties. However, success in the pursuit of a common interest in good government often turns on a willingness to engage in regular and open communication. It is our hope that the town will consider the recommendations of this report in this context and as a starting point toward these ends.

SUMMARY OF PRIMARY REPORT RECOMMENDATIONS

- 1) Financial Management: Devise a plan to review tax bills before distribution. [page 7]
- 2) Financial Management: Consider creating the position of finance director or an assistant town administrator for finance. [page 7]
- 3) Financial Management: Formalizing a financial management team [page 8]
- 4) Financial Management: Change the collector position to an appointed office. [page 8]
- 5) Financial Management: Shift the town employees' work week. [page 9]
- 6) Technology: Create a technology committee. [page 11]
- 7) Technology: Evaluate the collector's software. [page 11]
- 8) Technology: Develop office procedure manuals and offer retraining to staff. [page 12]
- 9) Technology: Assign oversight of the technology department to the town administrator. [page 12]
- 10) Accountant: Investigate revolving funds for proper coding and use. [page 14]
- 11) Accountant: Gather information and prepare a plan for the implementation of GASB#34. [page 14]
- 12) Collector: Review staff responsibilities and office procedures. [page 16]
- 13) Collector: Work with the MIS director to improve software performance. [page 16]
- 14) Collector: Issue demand notices and move properties to tax title quickly. [page 19]
- 15) Collector: Work with the MIS director to establish a receivables control and complete an internal reconciliation of receivables. [page 17]
- 16) Collector: Complete an audit upon departure of collector. [page 18]
- 17) Treasurer: Establish a cash book. [page 20]
- 18) Treasurer: Complete an internal reconciliation of cash. [page 20]
- 19) Treasurer: Reduce tax title accounts. [page 221]
- 20) Assessor: As a procedural matter, direct the pre-payment of apportioned betterments to the collector's office. [page 25]

FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT

In terms of its overall financial management, Wareham has the components in place to effectively administer the town's business. The absence of a town administrator and persistent computer problems have slowed the process, but at the same time, these events have prompted the town to look at how it functions, as well as the relationships between and among offices, boards and committees. Now, with the start of a new town administrator in March comes an opportunity to restructure relationships, emphasize procedures and redefine expectations in ways that will improve operations and accountability.

Much has been stated of the town's inability to deliver accurate tax bills in the last two fiscal years. In trying to understand what happened, the focus has been on Municipal Management Associates (MMA), the collector's office and on technology issues (discussed later in the report). However, the tax bill problem also reflects on the adequacy and execution of internal control procedures. A series of steps, carried out by the assessor, collector and MIS director, can serve as a reliable check to ensure that tax bills contain accurate information before final printing and distribution. Important to the implementation of these safeguards is the involvement of the town administrator or other person with overall fiscal responsibilities.

In regard to the town administrator, concerns have been raised about the wide ranging responsibilities granted to the position through the charter and by-laws, particularly as they relate to fiscal matters. In part, a precedent for strong management was established by the most recent town administrator. Some have expressed the opinion that his style was appropriate and effective for the town given its history. Others have taken the view that the town's selectmen and finance committee ought to be more informed and involved in decisions for the town. As a result, there have been discussions exploring how the flow of information between the town administrator and the town's committees could be enhanced, and on the merits of a realignment of fiscal duties. The intent would be to free the town administrator of direct, daily financial management duties so that he might concentrate on administrative matters.

A companion issue involves the collector's position and its status as an elective office. On two occasions, in 1994 and 1996, the town chose to convert elective offices - treasurer and board of assessors - to appointed positions. Today, the town's only remaining elected position, among finance officers, is that of collector. The appointed vs. elected issue has been informally debated, but it's our understanding that no action has been taken in deference to the current, elected collector who has served the town well for 25-years. With the collector's announced decision not to seek reelection in April, 2001, the issue should be more seriously considered.

The payroll warrant process represents another area of financial management that deserves attention. Currently, by ending on Saturday, the work week timetable delays the preparation of the town payroll warrant until the following Wednesday morning and after the regular selectmen's meeting on Tuesday night. Selectmen travel to town hall and individually sign the

warrant on Wednesday so that checks can be distributed on Thursday. Apart from the risk that selectmen may not get to town hall on Wednesday, this process denies selectmen the opportunity, in accordance with a statutory obligation, to review and question payments on the warrant that appear out of the ordinary, excessive or unexplained.

Communication issues also come into play in the manner and frequency that finance offices interact. To a large extent, this year's tax bill problem may have been avoided if a mechanism were in place earlier in the process allowing for information to pass between those involved, including the MIS director. Reaction to meetings called by the accountant, as acting town administrator, and involving several departments heads appears to have been well received. However, a more formal structure would be useful to further the progress that's been made in this regard.

RECOMMENDATION 1: SAFEGUARDING THE TAX BILL PROCESS

We recommend that the town administrator in cooperation with finance officers and the MIS director devise a plan to review tax bills before distribution. Among the steps to be taken:

- Complete a trial run of the tax bills;
- Confirm that the total tax assessment reflected in a trial run equals the total amount committed;
- Check detail ensuring that trial run totals for each tax type (i.e., water bills, committed interest, betterments, etc.) equals the amount committed;
- Once printed, spot check individual bills to ensure that all tax categories are included and that separate tax amounts on the face of the bill add up to the total indicated on the bill;

RECOMMENDATION 2: FINANCE DIRECTOR OR ASSISTANT TOWN ADMINISTRATOR

We recommend the town consider creating a position of finance director, or assistant town administrator for finance. Implementation of this recommendation would establish a position that oversees the accountant, treasurer, collector and assessor. He/she would supervise all matters relating to municipal finance on a day-to-day basis and report to the town administrator. He/she would execute the financial policies issued by the board of selectmen and finance committee, and would report periodically, or when requested, on the financial condition of the town. With fiscal responsibilities concentrated in one person, other than the town administrator, there would be greater assurance that requisite reports are produced, tax bills are processed and all other financial services and activities are accomplished.

MGL Chapter 43C, §11 directs how a town may create, through by-law, a consolidated department of municipal finance headed by a director of municipal finance. By statute, the director must also serve, ex-officio, as the accountant, treasurer or collector. The statute also

provides guidance on other provisions a by-law might include. An assistant town manager for finance can possess whatever duties and responsibilities are assigned to him/her by job description or town by-law. We would recommend that this position be created by by-law as well.

RECOMMENDATION 3: FORMALIZING A FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT TEAM

To advance the town's financial management process, we recommend that the town establish a financial management team. Effective financial management requires continuous interaction and cooperation between and among the town's policy makers and financial officers. The ingredients of success are reflected most by open and willing communication and by the systematic and timely exchange of accurate information. A financial management team is the first of many devices that advance these goals.

To create permanence, we recommend the town consider enacting a by-law to establish the financial management team, its membership and responsibilities. A statement of responsibilities should be both specific, i.e., to include revenue and expenditure forecasting, and broad to allow involvement in unforeseen financial matters.

A financial management team would include the finance director or assistant town administrator for finance, treasurer, collector, accountant, director of assessing, MIS director and a school representative. The finance director or assistant town administrator for finance should function as the committee's chair, but in the absence of this position, the town administrator should fulfill this role. The committee should meet once per month, or as deemed necessary. The financial management team would function as a resource to the board of selectmen, finance committee and school committee as each formulates policy. The periodic review of comprehensive financial data possessed by team members would produce a snapshot of the town's then-current financial status. The team would conduct cash flow analyses as well as analyze the financial impact of future events. It would identify critical junctures and offer early strategies to deal with anticipated areas of concern. It would also coordinate the collection of data and complete analyses that would serve as a basis for decisions by the town's policy-making bodies concerning debt limits, reserve fund levels, revenue/expense estimates and annual budget guidelines.

RECOMMENDATION 4: COLLECTOR AS AN APPOINTED POSITION

We recommend the town, as soon as practical, change the town collector position from an elective to an appointed office. Wareham has been well served by its collector during an extended period when demands on the office have become expansive and complex. A collector must be methodical and aggressive in the collection of revenue and accurate in the maintenance of records. As the town seeks to fill the collector position, it's interests are best served by expanding, to the extent possible, the pool from which a prospective candidate is likely to emerge.

As an appointed position, the town can solicit candidates from beyond its boundaries. The appointing authority can conduct interviews and make an informed judgment in filling the position. As an elected post, the office may, or may not, attract a person from within the town's population with the strongest credentials or most relevant professional experience. On balance, many communities justify a decision in favor of an appointed office because of the critical role municipal finance now plays in determining a town's fiscal security. In Wareham, the collector as an appointed position would also bring consistency to town hall relative to other finance positions, and in terms of the lines of communication and accountability.

RECOMMENDATION 5: SHIFTING THE TOWN EMPLOYEES' WORK WEEK

We recommend that the town shift the work week for town employees so that it ends on Thursday, rather than Saturday. A shift in the work week would not change the day when employees receive their paycheck. It would, however, allow preparation of the payroll warrant so that it could be presented and approved at the regular selectmen's meeting on Tuesday evening. Avoided is the risk that selectmen might not get to town hall to individually sign the warrant on Wednesday morning. Gained would be the opportunity for selectmen to review the warrant as required by law. For the accountant, efficiencies would be gained by having sufficient time to adjust time sheets for holidays around the week-end, and for routine employee absences.

TECHNOLOGY

Wareham's municipal offices are connected through a town-wide computer network using IBM hardware. Computer system and software maintenance are the responsibility of the management information systems (MIS) director, who also installs upgrades and provides support to staff. Other MIS services include data conversions necessary to issue the real estate/personal property commitment list and the processing of bills for motor vehicle and boat excise taxes, sewer charges and betterments. In recent years, real estate and district tax bills have been processed by MMA (Marlborough, MA), but problems with the FY00 and FY01 tax bills have caused concerns. In response, the town has decided to process the 4th quarter 2001 real estate bill in-house.

The MIS director has occupied his current position for 13 continuous years after having served in the assessors' office and as acting town accountant. He currently reports to the accountant. He shares space in a computer room with a full-time, data processor and with Leonard Monopoli, who as part of his software service contract, is on site one day per week. With the completion of a new town hall elevator, additional space will become available which is slated for use, in part, as a computer lab for staff training. In the past, instruction in the use of software has been provided by corporate vendors, the MIS director, or by Leonard Monopoli, who is a programmer by training.

The town purchased HTE financial management software in 1999 for all its financial offices. However, because installation obstacles caused delays and raised the risk that Y2K compliance deadlines might not be met, the plan to set-up HTE software in the collector's office was abandoned. Instead, the town concluded that it would be quicker and more economical to upgrade the older version of the Monopoli software which had previously been in use since 1990. The upgrade cost was \$75,000, plus \$20,000 per year for consultant/programming services.

Leonard Monopoli, a sole proprietor and only employee, developed the collector's software package which is used in Wareham and Fairhaven. Although the HTE software is installed elsewhere in town hall, Mr. Monopoli has been able to create code to ease the transfer of data between the two programs in the offices of the collector and treasurer. According to staff, periodic glitches have arisen when reprogramming decisions inadvertently disrupted the distribution and collection of tax bills, as well as the accounting of tax revenue collected. Although the town enjoys the unique benefit of a programmer on-site one day each week, it has also experienced the inherent downside of the relationship. Due to unanticipated circumstances, Mr. Monopoli was unavailable to the town at the end of 2000 when tax bills were being prepared.

Despite initial training and subsequent support, some staff members are not as proficient as they might be with the HTE or Monopoli software. As a means to track software issues and establish a response procedure, the MIS director instituted a request form system. The system

functions well when it is utilized. However, there are instances when it is not utilized with the result that the MIS director is unaware of problems or questions and staff are without useful information about software capabilities.

On a more global basis, lacking is a structure or process for reporting on the technology condition of the town, for evaluating the long term computer needs of government, or for assessing proposals aimed at improving computer-related operations. In the past, observations or recommendations in these areas, particularly from the MIS director, were presented to the town administrator who unilaterally accepted, rejected or tabled them.

RECOMMENDATION 1: CREATE A TECHNOLOGY COMMITTEE

We recommend the town form a technology committee. A technology committee can be a meaningful and objective contributor of information, analysis and insight for the town decision-makers as they grapple with immediate computer and software issues. A technology committee can also serve as a resource for the MIS director as he considers ways to enhance the town's computer capabilities, and how to most effectively present his recommendations to the town. Its members can work with the MIS director to produce a periodic report, or assessment, of the town's technology status. Such a report would serve as a useful tool to evaluate the performance of hardware and software in town departments, to identify and prioritize the need for upgrades, and to recommend the adoption of new technologies. The recommendations made or accepted from the report would then be incorporated into a long term capital planing program.

A technology committee might comprise five-to-seven members who have appropriate knowledge or work experience. To the extent possible, the town should recruit members from the town population, but the committee could be a mix of residents and town officials. In any event, the MIS director should be a committee member. For permanency and structure, the technology committee, and all relevant provisions, should be established in the town by-law.

RECOMMENDATION 2: COLLECTOR'S OFFICE SOFTWARE

We recommend the town move toward a decision on financial management software in the collector's office. The MIS director should be directed to prepare a report with recommendations addressing the issue of computer software in the collector's office. He should work with input from the collector and collector's staff and with the assistance of the technology committee, if formed. Otherwise, an ad hoc committee, including a representative of the collector's office, should be created to complete the task. The report should attempt, in part, to measure the capability and performance of the software against the needs and proficiency of the staff.

With the third of three, one-year contracts with Leonard Monopoli ending June 30, 2002, a window of opportunity exists to either set the parameters of a new agreement and commitment

to retain the Monopoli software or to phase-in software from a new vendor. However, the report should also identify other available options. From our perspective, options would, at least, include the Monopoli software, the HTE collector's software or a collector's package from another vendor. An analysis should compare vendor training and support, vendor reliability and resources, upgrade plans, compatibility with other town hall software packages, expansion capability, features and interface, as well as costs for the software, training and on-going support.

RECOMMENDATION 3: DEVELOP PROCEDURE MANUALS AND TRAIN STAFF

We recommend that the MIS director work with staff in the offices of the accountant, assessor, treasurer and collector in the development of procedure manuals. The manuals could take the form of a loose-leaf notebook and contain a printed page depicting the actual computer screen display for each step in a particular office procedure sequence. Text should be added identifying the page and describing the action required on the page. By walking through and documenting screen displays, staff will become more comfortable with regular procedures and knowledgeable of those less frequently used, or previously unknown. The manuals would serve as a ready reference for use in keeping an office operating when staff is short. Manuals can also be valuable training tools for new staff.

We recommend the MIS director schedule refresher sessions for town hall staff on the HTE and Monopoli software. Through the process of developing procedure manuals, the MIS director will gain insight into the knowledge level and proficiency of each office with the capabilities of the software in use. From this information, he can design software refresher courses with the appropriate focus. Whenever possible and practical, we would encourage the MIS director to engage outside instructors to teach staff. As trained and experienced professionals, they are likely to have greater success communicating with and holding the attention of staff than non-teachers. Over the long term, the MIS director should consider seeking an appropriation in his budget for a continuing technology education program.

In addition, as a result of developing procedure manuals, the MIS director may be able to work with staff to devise easier, more efficient and responsive ways of accomplishing requisite office tasks.

RECOMMENDATION 4: MIS DIRECTOR REPORT TO THE TOWN ADMINISTRATOR

We recommend that the MIS director report to the town administrator. The issues requiring attention from the MIS director can involve any individual office in town government, or can impact the whole of town government all at once. In this context, it is more appropriate that he, and his department, report to the town administrator who has a similarly global view, rather than to the town accountant.

ACCOUNTANT

The accountant's office operates with a full-time accountant and two, full time clerks. The office is equipped with the HTE financial management software and is connected through the town's computer network to all other departments, with the exception of the collector's office where a different software is installed. Utilizing the technology available, the office has successfully moved away from paper as a primary vehicle for the transfer of data, and as a mechanism for back-up, or corroboration. Achieving proficiency on the HTE software, the accountant and his staff are able to receive information from other departments, maintain the town's general ledger, prepare warrants and produce regular financial reports. For example:

- Each department batches its own invoices electronically and transfers them to the accountant for verification in advance of warrant preparation.
- Payroll time sheets for town employees are entered directly into ADP software and electronically transferred to ADP off-site for processing.
- The accountant receives the treasurer's schedule of receipts via HTE as soon as they're posted.
- The accountant receives purchase orders electronically from the chief procurement officer which allows the immediate encumbrance of funds.
- The accountant maintains a general ledger on the HTE software.
- Departments enter their budget appropriation request directly into the HTE software. The requests are transferred to the accountant and incorporated into the annual budget document which matches the town's chart of accounts.
- Using the HTE software, the accountant generates regular expenditure and revenue reports which are critical to monitoring the town's financial status.

In the recent past, the accountant has also functioned as the acting town administrator, but will relinquish that duty on March 5, when the new administrator begins. By job description, he retains responsibility for the MIS department, but characterizes his input on technology issues as not substantial. In other areas, concerns were expressed to us about the flexibility of the HTE budget package and questions were raised relating to allocation of costs in the town's enterprise funds. We did a cursory review of these issues, but in general, view them as areas of inquiry best satisfied through direct communication with the accountant.

However, in regard to revolving funds, we have offered a recommendation. The town's balance sheet lists 11 accounts, six of which are appropriately authorized for the current fiscal year. Fewer than eleven funds are listed on the town's Schedule A which is annually submitted to DLS, but more at issue are the five identified funds for which no statutory or town meeting authorizations were found.

As a final note, the implementation of GASB#34 will be a difficult and complex task for Massachusetts cities and towns. There will be start-up and ongoing costs associated, in particular, with establishing a depreciated value for the town's fixed assets and infrastructure. There will also be the need to adopt entirely new or modified accounting methodologies. We feel that it is important to underscore the need for early planning for GASB#34 implementation.

RECOMMENDATION 1: REVOLVING FUNDS

We recommend that the accountant investigate the legal authorization of each of the revolving funds listed on the town's balance sheet. MGL Chapter 44, §53E½ is a general statutory authorization to establish revolving funds. There are also other statutory authorizations permitting revolving funds for specific purposes. In each case, the rules for operating the fund are established within the statute, including restrictions on the collection and expenditure of revenue. Annual reauthorization of the revolving fund may or may not be mandated. Failure to reauthorize a fund causes the fund to expire and its account balance to flow to the general fund, unless otherwise directed in accordance with statutory language. Under MGL Chapter 44, §53E½, the board, department or officer having charge of a revolving fund is directed to make a report of receipts and expenditures to the annual town meeting or to the board of selectmen.

Of the eleven revolving funds listed on the town's Balance Sheet, only six were authorized by articles in the FY01 budget. Speaking with the accountant, it's possible that the funds were merely misclassified on the balance sheet. Therefore, the accountant should review each fund and where indicated, reclassify it to reflect their true status in the town's accounting system. In the future, the same list of duly authorized revolving funds should appear on the balance sheet, in the Schedule A, and if established under Chapter 44, §53E½, in a town meeting authorization article.

RECOMMENDATION 2: PREPARATION FOR GASB#34 IMPLEMENTATION

We recommend the accountant devise a plan to gather information about and implement GASB#34. Although the town will not have to reach full compliance with GASB#34 until the start of FY03, the accountant should begin now to gather detailed information relative to its implementation, requirements and potential costs. Written materials and seminar opportunities are already available from the Government Accounting Standards Board (GASB), from the Government Finance Officers Association (GFOA) and/or from the State Division of Local Services (DLS). He should also work closely with and utilize the resources of the capital planning committee as the fixed asset aspects of GASB#34 crosses over into both areas of interest.

COLLECTOR

The collector is a full-time, elected position which has been continuously occupied by the current office holder for 24 years. Recently, he announced his decision not to seek reelection in April, 2001 for another three-year term. A new collector will take-over an office that includes three, full-time and two, part-time positions with staff experience ranging from under a year to 12 years (assistant collector). All staff members assist at the counter and answer telephones as needed throughout the day. Office responsibilities are otherwise delineated, but the collector believes that staffing is inadequate for the office workload.

The collector's office receives payments for approximately 13,000 real estate and personal property tax bills quarterly, 30,000 motor vehicle and 2,000 boat excise bills annually, 5,000 sewer-related charges semi-annually and for water betterments. The collector also receives district tax payments, which are sent out with the real estate bills, for the town's two water/fire districts. Real estate and personal property bills, including water district taxes, betterments and committed interest are processed, printed and mailed by MMA, an outside contractor. Motor vehicle and boat excise bills and sewer bills are processed in-house by the MIS department and sent out for printing, stuffing and mailing. About 75% of the town's collections are received at its lockbox while the remaining 25% are received over the counter in the collector's office. There, scanning devices are available and are used as the need arises to facilitate posting payments.

Until recently, collections were deposited daily to the collector's account, but posting to the software, and turnover of the corresponding receipts to the treasurer lagged behind. Since our initial visit, the collector has implemented changes in procedure so that receipts are now posted, deposited and turned-over on a daily basis. As a result, the accountant has the data to generate up-to-date revenue reports and the information needed to reconcile cash and receivables with the treasurer and collector, respectively. The accountant has the means to close the town's books each month and at year-end, facilitating the preparation and submission of reports to the state. Among other postings, the collector has a current and accurate record of payments due fire districts.

Despite these advances, it remains difficult to gauge the efficiency of the collector's office due to the time and attention devoted to computer issues. The town has experienced computer-related problems with its tax bills in the last two fiscal years which have overwhelmed the collector's staff, strained inter-office relations and embarrassed town officials. The town's response was to by-pass MMA and process its real estate bills in-house for the 4th quarter, 2001. There also seems to be persistent tweaking of the collector's software program with the result that the regular operation of the office is often disrupted. Sometimes, these programming changes are in response to specific requests from the collector and, at other times, they originate in the MIS department. Areas affected have included the posting of receipts and the allocation of interest, the production of municipal lien certificates, credit balances and refund reports.

The Monopoli financial software produces a ledger displaying detailed collection activity (i.e., payments, refunds, abatements, new commitments), but as presently programmed does not provide the subtotal of each category for a particular period. The subtotals would be useful in the collector's internal reconciliation process. Finally, incompatibility between the Monopoli software package and the HTE software impacts the overall efficiency of the office and hinders the fluid transfer of data between the collector and other finance offices in town hall.

RECOMMENDATION 1: STAFFING AND OFFICE WORKLOAD

We recommend that the new collector review staff responsibilities and office procedures with a goal of improving efficiency. Given the software problems, it is difficult to assess whether the collector's office is adequately staffed or whether staff responsibilities are allocated in the most effective manner. However, in the context of general management, we offer the following suggestions:

- Identify the major, most time consuming or everyday responsibilities of each staff member and the demands on the office that obstruct the completion of those responsibilities;
- Create a block of time during the work day of each staff member which he/she knows will be private, undisturbed time intended for the completion of routine tasks and major projects. During this period, the staff person should not be responsible for answering telephones or for counter service;
- Create some privacy within the collector's office (i.e., 5 foot high partitions) or arrange for another location, if practical, where the staff can work in privacy and be insulated from the distractions of the office;
- Among remaining staff in the office, establish an order of responsibility to answer telephones and serve residents at the counter. A rotation that fairly divides the workload should be created, thereby increasing the amount of undisturbed time for all staff members during their time in the office;
- Work with staff to set priorities and regular deadlines for the completion of recurring tasks.

RECOMMENDATION 2: IMPROVING SOFTWARE PERFORMANCE

We recommend the collector identify for the town administrator and the MIS director the software goals of the collector's office. A discussion should follow establishing 1) office responsibility to produce routine and periodic reports, 2) office procedures necessary to accomplish requisite tasks, 3) significant deadlines during the fiscal year, and 4) the role of computer software in accomplishing all of the above.

From this analysis should emerge a list of what the present computer software does well in furtherance of office goals and what it doesn't do well. The MIS director, through the resources

of his office, should advise the collector in what ways the software can be made more responsive to office needs. For his part, the collector must recognize that solutions rarely provide the optimum result 100% of the time, and accordingly, he must commit to procedures and a computer work product that accomplishes the best result for most of the time.

Ultimately, the collector together with the MIS director have to reach an agreement to what extent the current software satisfies, or fails to satisfy, the immediate and long-range needs of the office. This becomes essential information in any decision by the town involving future software plans for the collector's office.

RECOMMENDATION 3: DEMAND NOTICES AND TAX TITLES

We recommend that the collector send demand notices to collect outstanding taxes as soon as the law allows. Now that the collector is posting receipts on a daily basis, the identity of tax delinquents is immediately known. Besides the obvious importance of collecting tax dollars, the huge number of properties already in tax title should serve as an incentive to increase collections. Taking firm action early in the process not only produces better results, but serves notice that the town is serious about tax collections.

We recommend the collector move as quickly as possible to place properties with outstanding taxes for FY99 and FY00 into tax title. Despite the long list of existing tax title accounts and the limited resources available to reduce it, there are still incentives to pursue delinquent taxpayers. As noted, a town's recovery rate is typically higher at the beginning of the collection process, then diminishes over time. Swift action is a message that as a matter of policy, the town intends to pursue tax delinquents. The collector has an obligation to secure the town's lien through the tax title process. A higher rate of interest applies to tax title accounts than to a receivable, and finally, there is the issue of fairness. When a property owner fails to pay real estate taxes, the burden to fill the resulting revenue gap is transferred to all other property owners. The outstanding real estate tax amount is recorded as a receivable on the town's books and, as a result, impacts free cash until it is collected.

RECOMMENDATION 4: ESTABLISH A RECEIVABLES CONTROL

We recommend the collector consult with the MIS director to determine the best means to establish a receivables control record and to generate collection subtotals as posted. The receivables control is a record of original entry where the initial tax commitment is reduced by total collections, abatements, exemptions and tax title transfers, and increased by total refunds. Evidence of each category should be a source independent of postings (i.e., turnovers sheets, abatement/exemption certificates, etc.). Before reconciling his receivables each month with the accountant, the collector should complete an internal reconciliation ensuring that the original commitment, payments, abatements, exemptions, tax tile transfers and refunds in the control document equal totals for corresponding categories as posted as well as equal the outstanding tax balance indicated by all open taxpayer accounts.

The collector should explore with the MIS director the capacity of the Monopoli software to generate collection activity by the subtotals indicated. A control record might be created and maintained in a Quattro spreadsheet. In any case, appropriate back-up procedures should be established to protect the data. A sample receivables control sheet is included in the Addenda to this report.

RECOMMENDATION 5: COMPLETE AN AUDIT UPON DEPARTURE OF COLLECTOR

We recommend that an audit be conducted of the collector's records, including his list of uncollected taxes. Under MGL Chapter 60, §97, if a collector ceases to hold office for any reason, all of his accounts records and papers must be audited by a competent accountant and turned-over to the assessor. The assessor recommits the uncollected taxes and turns the list of accounts, records and papers over, together with a new warrant, to the successor collector. This procedure prevents receivables that have not been reconciled by the exiting collector from appearing on the books of the new collector. The warrant authorizes the new collector to collect the outstanding taxes and relieves him of responsibility for any errors committed by the previous collector.

TREASURER

The Wareham treasurer took office in 1997, when it first became an appointed position, and serves full-time with two, full-time clerks. The treasurer and staff perform all the duties requisite to the office in accordance with sometimes generic, job descriptions that delineate responsibilities. For most tasks, reliance is placed on the HTE computer software which is connected through the town hall network to the accountant's office, but not the collector's office. As a result, data flows electronically between the treasurer and accountant, but is exchanged in hard copy and by hand with the collector. For certain purposes, the treasurer also uses Lotus spreadsheets.

The treasurer maintains check registers and additional handwritten ledgers as running, month-to-month records of bank activity and to track the movement of funds into and out of town accounts. Each account is assigned a ledger sheet from which she manually extracts and transfer entries for a given month, including the month-end balance, to a Lotus (master) spreadsheet. Combining the individual bank balances on the spreadsheet, she arrives at a total (internally reconciled) cash balance for the month which she then reconciles to the accountant's monthly worksheet. However, there is no formal cash book which, when matched to the bank statements, would provide a basis for an internal reconciliation before comparing numbers with the accountant. The cash position of the town on any given day can only be determined by totaling the individual cash balances as shown in the ledgers. A cash book would provide this information on a daily basis.

Among other responsibilities, the treasurer maintains a record of the town's debt position and manages the tax title accounts. Staff input departmental turnover information received on older state forms into the HTE software, process vendor checks, administer the health care plan for the town and schools, and prepare payroll deductions for health insurance. Once processed by ADP, payroll checks (200 in total) for town employees are signed via software, sealed in envelopes and returned to the office distribution. School checks (600) are similarly processed. The town originally contracted with ADP approximately four years ago when it was unable to produce accurate and reliable year-end, payroll reports. For its services, ADP charges the town \$0.55 per check, plus other fees. The total annual cost is \$25,000-\$28,000.

The treasurer's office has 532 tax title accounts on file, as of September 30, 2000, representing over \$2.4 million in outstanding real estate and personal property taxes owed the town. When interest and fees accrued to date are added, the amount exceeds \$3.7 million. Of the 532 accounts, 43 are in land court, 39 are on payment plans, 50 are listed as bad addresses, six are in bankruptcy, four are deceased, one is deferred and no action is ascribed to the remaining 389 accounts. Under current circumstances, the town is denied millions of dollars in potential revenue, and as bond rating companies take notice, runs the risk of a downward adjustment in its credit rating and higher interest rates on future borrowing.

The town's typical annual expenditure does little to reduce the number of tax title accounts when typical legal costs to foreclose on a property exceed \$1,000 per property. At the present pace, new properties placed in tax title each year generally outnumber accounts closed. It is our understanding that under an existing agreement, MMA sends a statement, on behalf of the town, every two-to-three months during the year seeking tax payment from delinquent owners. To perform this service, the town paid MMA \$33,804 in FY00 and \$12,799 during the first four months of FY01. Based on the information we have, it is unclear whether total annual collections exceed fees. In addition, notices of foreclosure, for those accounts to be pursued in Land Court, are mailed once per year out of the treasurer's office. In discussions about options to reduce tax lien receivables, the treasurer was receptive to new approaches, but also expressed concern about the ability of the office to carry the additional workload.

RECOMMENDATION 1: ESTABLISH A CASH BOOK

We recommend that the treasurer establish a cash book. Under state statutes, the treasurer is required to maintain a cash book that records 1) *receipts* as reflected in the turnover sheets received from the collector and department heads, 2) *deposits* which frequently equal turnovers, and 3) *disbursements* as represented by the total payments approved through warrants. Transfers between accounts can also be identified. Reference should be made to each payroll and expense warrant number, and to each department turnover as well.

The cash book is a record of original entry which reflects activity by day by account. It would incorporate information now manually maintained on the treasurer's account ledgers. However, rather than a continuous, multi-month record for each account, the cash book would be set-up as a one month record of activity for all accounts. The cash book would show a running daily balance of the town's cash status. As a source document, the cash book should be regularly backed-up on the network, or if not possible, by way of a free-standing procedure.

With the MIS director, the treasurer should explore whether the HTE software application already installed in the office includes a cash book module. If so, the treasurer would benefit from training in its set-up and use. If not, then a cash book could be created using a Lotus or Quattro spreadsheet application. A sample cash book is shown in the Addenda to this report.

RECOMMENDATION 2: COMPLETING AN INTERNAL RECONCILIATION TO THE CASH BOOK

We recommend the treasurer reconcile her bank statements to her cash book. At the end of each month, the treasurer should reconcile bank statements to her cash book which shows year-to-date activity and functions as the control. Disbursements for the most recent month represented by warrant totals in the cash book should equal disbursements indicated by a detailed list of both cleared and outstanding checks, as well as other charges in the bank statements. Monthly receipts in the cash book should match bank statement deposits. Where they fail to agree, variances may be traced to timing, overlooked charges, interest issues, etc..

The external reconciliation, and the one which is the basis of quarterly reports to DOR, occurs when the cash book is reconciled against the accountant's general ledger, or worksheet.

RECOMMENDATION 3: TAX TITLE REDUCTION

We recommend that the treasurer request and the town consider a substantial increase over prior appropriations (to \$50,000 to \$100,000) for legal costs to reduce tax title accounts. To reduce the number of properties in tax title and to collect any portion of the outstanding taxes owed the town, requires a commitment not just from the treasurer, but from the board of selectmen and town meeting as well. The town's annual expenditure to pursue tax titles has accomplished little toward increasing collections or discouraging tax delinquents. A well thought-out plan of action supported by an infusion of significant resources may be the only way to maximize collections and to convince current and potential delinquent taxpayers of the town's seriousness in the collection of taxes.

We recommend that the treasurer bundle tax title accounts and solicit services to pursue foreclosures in Land Court. By bundling accounts and soliciting legal services, the treasurer would attract attorney interest with a substantial compensation agreement. At the same time, the town should realize a cost savings in legal fees through a discounted charge because of the contract size. As another cost savings alternative, the town may engage title examiners, or assign the task of document preparation for submission to the Land Court to a new or current staff member. The treasurer is authorized, and need not be an attorney, to file the petitions with the Land Court. Procurement of these services are exempt from the provisions of Chapter 30B.

At the same time, a regular, coordinated program of communication with delinquent property owners should be pursued:

- With a demand notice, the collector should inform the property owner of his intent to publish a notice of taking as of a specific date.
- Once taken, he should write that the property has been taken into tax title by the town and will be secured by filing an instrument of taking at the registry within 60 days.
- Once filed, he should inform the owner that delinquent account has been moved to the treasurer's office in preparation of foreclosure proceedings.
- After six months, the treasurer should inform the owner of her intent to file a petition for foreclosure in Land Court in preparation of selling the property at auction to recover back taxes.

At each juncture, the delinquent property owner should be informed of additional charges applied to his account, and of his right to redeem title. Communications might also include an offer to negotiate a partial payment installment agreement as an alternative. We have attached in the Addenda to this report a simple partial payment agreement to serve as a guide.

The use of form letters, spreadsheet files and a word processing mail merge function together with the relatively small number of new tax title accounts each year should make this a manageable, easy-to-sustain program.

We recommend that the treasurer organize tax title accounts into groupings. The organization of tax titles should include the creation of a spreadsheet file that includes sortable data for all accounts. (See discussion below under next recommendation). Groupings should include the following:

- *Land of low value* - These properties, improved or vacant, can be placed on a fast track toward auction outside Land Court proceedings. To qualify, a tax title property must have a current assessed value less than \$10,000. The most recent tax bill should be a good indicator of a property's current assessed value.
- *Multiple parcels under single ownership* - On the town's list of tax title accounts, there are a few instances where individuals own multiple properties. Greater efficiencies can be gained by dealing with these properties together either in Land Court or during a negotiation of a partial payment agreement.
- *Accounts with bad addresses and deceased properties owners* - These accounts should be individually investigated to determine the likelihood of identifying legal owners, or person(s) in possession. If an owner is found, contact should be made. If after a diligent search, an owner cannot be found, alternative action should be considered. Available options include a petition to the Commissioner of Revenue under MGL Chapter 59, Section 11 seeking authorization to assess taxes to the person in possession of the property (if this is the case), or to assess the taxes to persons unknown.
- *Existing partial payment agreements* - Existing agreements should be reviewed to ensure that each is being honored and that payments are sufficient enough to pay down the outstanding tax balance within a reasonable time. If not, the agreement should be restructured or voided, and foreclosure proceedings should be initiated.
- *Remaining accounts* - These accounts are the most likely candidates for outside legal assistance. We recommend the treasurer identify the 100 properties with the highest outstanding balance and solicit legal services through a request for proposals. Let respondents provide details on how many accounts, on what basis and for what fee each would contract with the town. The process can be replicated as needed to reduce the number of tax title accounts.

We also recommend the town obtain data files from MMA. From MMA, the treasurer should obtain a spreadsheet computer file of tax title properties by account number, which would list the tax title properties by year of taking, and a second print-out by account status. In each case, additional information might include property address, map and lot designation, owner name, and account balance.

We are aware of concerns that MMA is unlikely to produce a workable data file. Irrespective of company justification in this regard, the town must decide whether the services provided by MMA (maintaining records and sending periodic letters) are effective in resolving the tax title

problem. If MMA fails to provide a spreadsheet file of the data, the town has the option to reconsider, or perhaps restructure, its relationship with the company. If it concludes that the money for MMA services can be better utilized, the town would have the resources to create a position responsible for tax title reductions, even if viewed as a short term assignment. Such a person could input data, establish spreadsheet files for the 532 tax title properties, devise and execute a program to reduce tax title accounts. The MIS director would be helpful in setting up the software and organizing the spreadsheet.

ASSESSOR

The town of Wareham elects a five-member, part-time board of assessors to guide and direct the overall policies of the assessing department. Day-to-day office responsibilities are carried out by a full-time director of assessing, who has held the position for six years. He is assisted by a chief assessor with 30 years experience, a full-time data collector with a strong computer background and three, full-time clerks. The office maintains ownership records and property data files, generates commitment lists, produces regular reports and provides over-the-counter service to the public. DLS records indicate that recap sheets are completed and commitment lists produced allowing for the timely mailing of tax bills.

The office relies primarily on Vision Appraisal Software, but the commitment list must be converted by the town's MIS department to a format required by software developed locally by Leonard Monopoli and in use by the collector. Once converted, the commitment list is transferred to the collector over the town hall computer network. Motor vehicle and boat excise, sewer and betterment records are maintained on the Monopoli software and bills are all processed in-house by the MIS department.

Board members generally review abatement/exemption applications and make inspections, as needed. This occurs after the data collector has inspected properties, with field cards in-hand, and after the director of assessing has formed an opinion and recommendation as to disposition of the application. Annual new growth estimates are completed by the director of assessing based on a similar inspection procedure. Beginning in FY02, the office plans to implement a program of interim year property value adjustments, where sale inspections will be completed by the data collector. It is anticipated that around 1,000 annual inspections of abatement, building permit and sale properties will form the foundation for an on-going cyclical re-inspection program. The last measure and list program was completed in FY97.

The assessors' office also receives applications from property owners and initiates a commitment procedure for the pre-payment of apportioned betterments. Amounts are collected over the counter in the assessors' office and, if necessary, stored in the office vault prior to turnover to the treasurer. The accessibility of the board members typically results in quick approval of the commitment and prior to the projected payment date.

The office has read-only access to GIS mapping data through a cd-rom produced by the town planning department. However, in recent years, town meeting has chosen not to approve funding to support GIS maintenance and data upgrading. As a result, GIS data tend to be inaccurate and has limited value to the assessors' office.

In this context, we have only one recommendation relative to the assessors' office.

RECOMMENDATION 1: PRE-PAYMENT OF APPORTIONED BETTERMENTS

We recommend that pre-payments of apportioned betterments be directed to and received by the collector's office. Although it is permissible for town departments to accept payments for various fees and charges over the counter, the collection of town taxes is generally reserved to the town collector. In this instance, the payment amount would tend to be significantly larger than fees and charges received by most departments. Prudent financial management dictates that payments be made to the collector where they can be posted, deposited on the same day.

The commitment procedure and payment calculation process in the assessor's office would remain unchanged. If the commitment were delayed because board members were not accessible, the payment date need not be changed to a later time. As long as the formality of a commitment follows within a reasonable period after payment is made, the spirit of legal requirements should be sufficiently satisfied .

ADDENDA

MEMORANDUM OF AGREEMENT

FOR THE PAYMENT OF OUTSTANDING TAXES

BETWEEN the town of Wareham ("the town") and _____
("the owner"), concerning real property located at _____,
("the property") in the town of Wareham and otherwise designated in the town assessors' records as
Map _____, Block _____, Lot _____.

IT IS HEREBY acknowledged and agreed by the town and by the owner that:

- The owner accepts responsibility to pay taxes, interest and fees which have accrued against the above referenced property which the tax collector took on _____, 2000, pursuant to an instrument of taking recorded on _____, 2000 as Book _____, Page _____, in the Bristol County Registry of Deeds;

- This agreement shall commence on _____, 2001 and shall continue until such time as all past due taxes, interest and fees which have accrued against the property are paid in full;

-The owner shall, by cash, bank or certified check, make partial payment to the town in the amount of \$ _____ per month, (XXXX-XXXXXXX dollars) no later than the first day of each month and until such time as the total amount remaining due is less than the per month payment hereunder. The treasurer may then accept a payment in the amount of the remaining balance as final payment whereupon this agreement shall terminate.

- All owner payments under this agreement shall first be applied to interest and fees, then to property taxes owed.

- In the event that a partial payment is not received by the town as of the due date, the town may immediately initiate proceedings in Land Court to foreclose the owner's right of redemption which is a prerequisite to the sale of the property at public auction;

- So long as the owner makes payment in accordance with this agreement, the town agrees to desist from Land Court proceedings to foreclose the owner's rights of redemption;

- The owner shall have the option to terminate this agreement by making a lump-sum, payment in-full, by cash, bank or certified check, of all past due interest, fees and taxes which have accrued to the property as of a pay-off date agreed to, in advance, with the treasurer.

Xxxxx XXXXXXX, Treasurer
Town of Wareham

Yyyy Yyyyyyy
Owner

Sworn and subscribed before me this _____ day of _____, 2001

Notary Public

My commission expires: _____

Sample of Treasurer's Cash Book

Created on a spreadsheet application.

Continues on next page.

In actual use, print out entire chart on legal size, or larger paper.

Alternatively, print out as two pages.

Sample of Treasurer's Cash Book

Continued from prior page.

Acknowledgements

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Patricia Pratt-McLeod, Board of Selectmen
Richard Cooley, Chair, Finance Committee
Jane Donahue, Finance Committee
Michael Hartman, Town Administrator
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Dale Zacamy, Treasurer
Robert S. Bliss, Accountant
John S. Foster, Director of Assessing
Matthew Underhill, MIS Director
Maureen Sullivan, Chief Clerk, Collector
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