

The Collector Treasurer

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MCTA's Annual Cape Conference at Sea Crest, June 8 to 11

MCTA's 59th Annual Conference on Local Taxation and Finance will be held at the Sea Crest Resort and Conference Center beginning on Sunday, June 8th. Registration at Sea Crest is on going till May 9, so please plan accordingly.

The Education Committee has been very busy assembling a well-rounded conference agenda to meet the needs of our Association members. Credit for Re-Certification will again be offered, so please review the program agenda for the schedule.

Our Program will begin on Monday morning with the Annual meeting of the Association, then the election of Officers followed by State Treasurer Tim Cahill addressing our membership. We will also have a Legislative Report from Steve Roche.

On Tuesday morning we will hear from educator and management consultant Norm Bossio, who will address our membership on Motivation and Leadership. The Program throughout the Conference will offer courses featuring various panels on relative and timely subjects including Group Insurance Commission and the Municipal Partnership, the Market Upheaval, Administration of 403b Plans, Collection of Delinquent Taxes as well as Cyber Crime and Check Fraud.

New Collectors and New Treasurers School on May 14 in Westborough

We have many newcomers entering the profession every year, and we know that the degree of expertise and knowledge demanded of the Treasurer and the Collector is increasing daily. For newcomers especially, MCTA's New Collectors and New Treasurers School represents the first step in your formal learning as a Collector or Treasurer. You will find this day to be a good orientation for the Association's Annual School at the University of Massachusetts in Amherst in August, and to our educational program that leads to designation as a Certified Municipal Collector or Certified Municipal Treasurer.

All New Collectors, Municipal Treasurers and District Treasurers are urged to attend. Collectors attending will receive Annual School credit for Course No. 160, Duties & Responsibilities of the Collector. Treasurers attending will receive Annual School credit for Course No. 101, Duties & Responsibilities of the Treasurer. Officially appointed assistants are welcome, but clerical staff is not permitted to attend. The Association conducts a separate School Program for Staff in September.

A copy of the Program can be accessed at MCTA's web site, www.masscta.com, with directions to the Forbes Municipal Building in Westborough and a registration form. The registration fee of \$30.00 includes a continental breakfast on arrival, all classroom material and lunch.

MCTA Announces New Web Site

After much effort and input from President Nancy Holt and 1st Vice President Joanne Savignac along with Vadar Systems/Virtual Town Hall, MCTA is pleased to present the Association's new web site. We will continue to add features to the web site and look forward to hearing from you.

38th Annual School at Umass in Amherst, August 12 – 15, 2008 .

Make your plans to attend the Annual School. New Student Orientation, School General Assembly and the Annual Legislative Program will be offered on Tuesday. Review of New Legislation(Course #201) will be on Wednesday, with the Certified Track on Tuesday and Wednesday. **Examinations will be held on Friday.**

The President's Page

By
Nancy Holt

Spring has sprung as witnessed by robins, forsythia and April showers! It was good to see everyone who took advantage of the good weather to come to Marlborough on April 16th to learn about the advantages available to municipalities through the state bid list and to receive an update from the DOR Bureau of Accounts on several issues.

It has been a year of changes and transitions for the Massachusetts Collectors and Treasurers Association. The Association has said goodbye to Nils Nordberg after nine years as Executive Director and hello to Michael Hanlon. I would like to take this opportunity to acknowledge all the hard work that Mike and Diane O'Donnell do behind the scenes to support the officers, Executive Boards, various committees and membership through mailings, e-mails and conference preparation.

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Association Calendar- 2008

May 14, 2008	New Coll/Treas Day Forbes Municipal Bld Westborough
May 31, 2008	PACT Form Deadline
June 8-11, 2008	59 th Annual Cape Cod Conference Sea Crest Hotel North Falmouth
Aug 12-15, 2008	38 th Annual School University of Mass. Amherst
Sep 10 & 24, 08	Annual Staff School Municipal Office Bldg Littleton
Oct 21, 2008	Fall Conference The Log Cabin Holyoke
Dec 10, 2008	Holiday Meeting Holy Cross College Worcester
Feb, 2009	Winter Meeting Location TBD
April, 2009	Spring Meeting Location TBD

The Executive Board has spent many hours over the last year looking at how the Association does business and looking for improvements that will benefit our members professionally, educationally and also from a budget perspective to make our programs more affordable. These improvements range from changing audit firms for the Association to upgrading technology to finding new and creative ways to offset conference costs.

The Association now has a new website to better meet the needs of the members. If you have not already taken it for a test drive, I encourage you to take a few minutes to see the new layout and make suggestions for improvements and content. The listserv which will enable members to e-mail questions to all participating members and receive feedback will be up and running soon as well. This will be a great help when you are looking for an answer or seeking information on how other municipalities handle a certain issue. The long awaited updating of the Collector and Treasurer manuals are nearing a close after several years and the updated manuals will be available from the website in a PDF version that you can download or print out.

The Education Committee has been hard at work all year looking for timely and informative topics to bring to you. Subjects over the last year have included economic forecasts, credit risk from sub prime mortgages, office security, procurement, health care reform, HIPAA, FLSA and DPPA to name just a few. And if you don't know what any of those acronyms stands for – you won't be prepared for DOR Jeopardy at the Cape Conference this year. Please keep in my mind if you have an idea for a topic, you should forward your input to any member of the Education Committee or to Mike Hanlon at the office so it can be investigated.

The Legislative Committee has been trying to draw attention to our legislative needs over the course of the last year but had a lot of

competition from health care reform, same sex marriage and casinos. They have not given up though and still persevere to get a few of our bills added to the House budget in hopes of achieving a legislative victory.

The Nominating Committee has returned their report and a new slate of officers and Executive Board nominees will be before you in June. I thank Tony Logalbo, John Nunes, Jean Berg, Tom Florence and Marilyn Sheehan for all of their hard work in that process.

This will be my final column as president of the Association and I have to thank all the members for the kind words and smiles received throughout the past year. I have met so many people that I would never have interacted with normally due to geographic location and it has been a pleasure as well as an ongoing learning experience.

I will end my last column with the same thoughts I shared with you in Falmouth last year. 'You are above all, among friends in this Association; you should feel at ease in calling any member and being met with support and if that person cannot help you with your question, most likely they will direct you to someone who can.'

It has been my honor and privilege to serve the Association and my peers for the last year. Thank you.

Nancy

The Collector-Treasurer

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Education Committee Report

By First V-P Joanne Savignac

So many topics, such limited time to present them all! That's the dilemma your Education Committee faces each time we meet to discuss meeting agendas. You know what your own "hot-button" issues are, and certainly they are not identical across the state or between collectors and treasurers. Therefore, if you don't see a topic of interest to you at one meeting, just wait, we're sure it will come up in the future. But to ensure that, keep submitting your ideas. How satisfied you'll feel when your topic is covered!

The calendar says it's spring and hopefully the weather will soon catch up. This season typically represents a time of new beginnings. If your attendance at past meetings has dropped off, why not consider re-joining us. Networking with your peers always has excellent results.

Also for the real "newbies", the Annual New Collectors and Treasurers Day will be held in Westborough on May 14th. If you took office after last year's Day, try to attend this year. Although I attended a number of years ago, I continue to exchange ideas with a lot of the great folks I met that day. Assistant Collectors and Assistant Treasurers may also attend. The smaller classroom setting will allow you to meet and ask questions of more experienced peers and representatives from the Department of Revenue before the sometimes overwhelming Annual School at UMass (Amherst) in August.

The Committee is finalizing the programs for the Annual June Conference in Falmouth (June 8th through June 11th). We are adjusting some of the schedules to allow more vendor time while maintaining the educational programs. In addition, we've made some changes in presenters in our "personal growth" area. We want to hear from you after the conference regarding these changes – so make sure you complete the conference questionnaire before you leave the Cape. We were also recently

informed that a different hospitality group is now running the Sea Crest facility; hopefully this will be a positive change.

On behalf of the entire Committee, we hope to see ALL of you soon!

Joanne

Comings - - - - - And Goings - - - - -

(This feature in *The Collector-Treasurer* is intended to help our members keep abreast of changes taking place within our professional community. With your help in sending us late-breaking changes by fax or e-mail, we will be able to keep current on the whereabouts of our members and friends. Please tell us of changes you have not yet seen in print)

Maureen E. Niemi is the new Collector in the Town of Barnstable, replacing Maureen J. McPhee, who has retired after 30 years of service to the Town.

Robin A. Reyes is the new Treasurer and Collector in the Town of Dedham, replacing Frank Geishecker who has retired after more than 15 years of service.

Katherine A. Milligan is the new Treasurer/Collector in the Town of Acushnet, replacing Laurie Avery.

Maureen Byron is the new Treasurer in the Town of Hinsdale; **Maureen Wheeler** is the Collector in the Town of Hinsdale.

Loretta Owens is the new Treasurer/Collector in the Town of Randolph, replacing Jack FitzGibbons who has retired after 25 years in office.

Bruce Turner is the new Treasurer in the Town of Palmer, replacing Roger Brach.

David P. McGurl is the new Collector in City of Lowell, replacing Mark Rosegard.

Legislative Committee Report

By Second V-P Paul Nowicki

The Legislative Committee has an opening for one (1) new member for a term to expire in December 2010. Any Certified incumbent Full, Unlimited member may serve as a voting member. Please contact either Executive Director, Michael Hanlon if you are interested in serving on the legislative committee or myself.

According to Article VIII of the By-Laws of the Massachusetts Collectors and Treasurers Association, "The Legislative Committee shall concern itself with all matters of legislative interest to the Association and its members. It shall keep informed of all proposed laws relating to management of public funds and other matters of concern to the Association and its members." Please refer to Article VIII of the MCTA By-Laws for further information.

As you may know, the House and Senate leaders announced on Monday, March 10, 2008, under a non-binding resolution, that local aid to cities and towns would rise 4.4 percent, or \$223 million, in next year's state budget. The projected increase matches the local aid hike recommended by Gov. Deval Patrick in January. The increase is larger than the projected 3.5 percent increase in state tax revenues for fiscal 2009. The local aid hike covers the three major categories of such aid: Chapter 70 funding for public schools, Lottery aid and additional assistance. In a press release, legislative leaders said the resolution will give municipal leaders reliable figures upon which to base their budgets. Local aid and property tax revenues are the primary sources of funding for local governments.

The next legislative committee meeting is scheduled for Friday, May 2, 2008 at 10:00Am at the Town of Ware town hall. Refreshments will be available.

What can you do to help? Your legislators may have offices within your community, or they may schedule office hours at your municipal facility. Introduce yourself, that way when you make a telephone call or send an e-mail, he or she can put a face to the name.

If you're not sure about approaching your legislator, there is a list of our

legislative committee members available at www.masscta.com who can assist. Also on our new website is a link to look up your state legislators from your district.

Remember that you can find the MCTA 2007-2008 legislative package and the text to our legislative proposals by visiting the new MCTA website www.masscta.com.

Paul

News From Beacon Hill

There are fiscal storm clouds gathering over the State House as I write this report; among the problems we are facing are:

- a structural budget deficit of \$1.3 billion
- the defeat of Governor Patrick's proposal to legalize casino gambling – he had included \$400 million in revenues from casinos in his FY2009 budget proposal
- rising costs due to the success of the health care access law
- the slowing of our national and state economies, meaning reduced revenues from state taxes, including income and capital gains taxes

The House passed a significant tax package (\$392 million) on April 10th to address the revenue shortfall, in part, by raising the cigarette tax by \$1/pack and closing corporate tax loopholes. The House package is similar to the Governor's budget proposals in these matters. The Senate is expected to pass its own tax package the week of April 14th; many believe that the Senate will be even tougher on corporate tax breaks than the House, with a price tag in excess of \$400 million.

The House Ways & Means (HW&M) Committee is scheduled to release its FY2009 spending plan on April 16th. HW&M Chairman Robert Deleo

has made it quite clear that his budget will include actual cuts in funding for state programs, not just level spending. House Speaker Sal DiMasi has stated the House would be making at least \$100 million in cuts.

Governor Patrick has also acted recently in response to our slowing economy. He has imposed a hiring freeze for most vacant state jobs while also stating his administration can save \$200 million using various tactics, including spending controls.

The Patrick Administration is talking about the "regionalization" of local services as another way to help municipalities, including shared services for education, public safety and financial management. Leslie Kirwan, the Governor's Secretary of Administration & Finance, suggested more regional school districts and "streamlined" public safety dispatches.

Secretary Kirwan stated, "that local treasurer and assessor functions may be better off under regional collaboration."

Senate President Therese Murray commented how these ideas sounded a lot like "county government" and that she expects communities would resist giving up "local control."

The Public Health Committee just reported out **Senate 2568**, a bill to facilitate the "regionalization" of health care services.

The House and Senate had each voted in March to increase Local Aid by 4.4 % but that could change given heightened concerns on Beacon Hill.

Will the increase in Local Aid stand? Will the House and Senate reach deep into our reserves to make up for revenue shortfalls? How far with the General Court cut programs in an election year? Is regionalization on its way? Stay tuned!

As stated above, The House budget is expected to be released on April 16th. Amendments would have to be

filed by House members by the close of business on April 18th and the full House will debate the budget starting April 28th.

MCTA Legislative Chairman Paul Nowicki has asked that I prepare several amendments to incorporate the text of the following MCTA 2007-2008 legislative proposals into the House budget:

Senate 1205 - An Act Relative to Municipal Borrowing

Senate 1813 - An Act Relating to the Collection of Personal Property Taxes

House 1372 - An Act relative to certain checks not cashed and deemed abandoned

House 2549 - An Act Relative to Voluntary or Optional Life Insurance for Municipal Employees

I have prepared a package that includes the amendments and summaries for each bill/amendment. This package has been hand delivered to approximately three dozen House members whom I have identified as "legislative friends" of the MCTA. This group is comprised of MCTA bill sponsors and other House members who have assisted us on matters or otherwise shown interest in our agenda on Beacon Hill.

On another front, I'm working with the House Rules Committee Chairman, Rep. Angelo Scaccia, on Senate 1205. Our objective is to incorporate the provisions of Senate 1205 into **House 4329**, "AN ACT RELATIVE TO BORROWING BY CITIES AND TOWNS."

The language in this bill is derived from the "Municipal Partnership Act" (MPA) filed last year by Governor Patrick. In addition to adding our borrowing authorization language to House 4329, we are attempting to add a MCTA representative to the special commission that would be established by the bill:

SECTION 14.

(a) There shall be a special commission to study the uses of state technology at a municipal level. The commission shall consist of:— the secretary of administration and finance or a designee, who shall serve as chair; a representative of the information technology division, a representative of the operational services division, a representative of the division of local services, representative of the office of geographic and environmental information, a representative of the Massachusetts Municipal Association, a representative of the Metropolitan Area Planning Council and the chairs of the joint committee on municipalities and regional government.

I know that a number of you are also interested in **House 2990**, “An Act Relative to Charges Associated With Condominiums in Tax Title.” This bill was recently reported favorably by the Revenue Committee and may be taken up in the House after it completes the budget debate. Here’s the bill text:

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives in General Court assembled, and by the authority of the same, as follows:

SECTION 1. Section 77 of Chapter 60 of the General Laws, as appearing in the 2004 Official Edition, is hereby amended by adding the following sentence at the end of the first paragraph:-

A city or town shall not be deemed to receive any benefit from such covenant or agreement unless it collects rent from property in tax title under Section 53, or occupies or rents the property after foreclosure.

Steve

The Patrick Administration is discussing a second MPA. We hope to convince the Governor and Lt. Governor Murray to add the provisions from several of the MCTA bills to MPA-2.

Who knows what we will see in MPA-2. At this time, the Governor’s folks are still trying to win passage of the other provisions of MPA-1, including the taxation of telecommunications at the local level. Maybe we’ll see the push for regionalization of local services in MPA-2.

Another issue we are tracking is *senior property tax relief*. It’s an election year, don’t forget! There are a number of different proposals out there at this time for tax relief for seniors, as well as for armed services personnel returning from duty in Iraq and Afghanistan.