



CSC CLOUD—COMING SOON

THIS MONTH

- **Cloud and condo updates**
- **New IGRs**
- **Online backup Part 3**
- **Tech Tip: Microsoft Word trick**

INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

Online Backup 2 Options, Part 3

Municipal Calendar 2

DLS Releases 3 Bill-related IGRs

Tech tips 4

Lots of exciting things are happening right now in the CSC. One reason for excitement is the fact that the CSC is just weeks away from placing the first member community (Royalston) in the CSC Cloud.

The hosting agreement with Stonewall Solutions, Inc. is in the signature phase, and they're preparing the host environment in the secure data center in Providence, RI (where the CSC's Web site currently resides.) As the lead community in the CIC grant



project, Royalston's real estate, personal property and collection data will go live in the Cloud mid-May. Ten additional CSC members will be added to the beta test in a sequence to be determined shortly. As this is still a test phase, DLS and the CSC will

proceed with due diligence; even during testing, the best interests of CSC communities and their taxpayers remain Priority #1 for all involved. Early test results were very positive, and we're all very excited to have the first town go "live" in the Cloud. Watch your email

for announcements in the coming weeks; the CSC is about to take several giant steps forward that will make you proud to be a member.

*Kirsten Shirer
Deputy Director of IT
Division of Local Services*

RPIS CONDO AND LAND REVISIONS

The CSC's Condo Revision Committee recently posted their proposal for modifying the RPIS condo record and associated programs to the CSC Web site. Although the comment period has passed, the proposal is still available at www.csc-ma.us. The CSC Board is currently waiting for a quote on the software changes from Thomson Reuters; CSC Assessors Tier members will vote on

the proposed changes once the information is received. These changes address both BLA's new requirements and the needs of members, many of whom have found it difficult to maintain accurate data on the many types of condos on the market today.

Thomson Reuters is also providing a quote on a minor enhancement to the Land

record: capturing the base lot value and the base rate. This data is computed for use on the Cost report, but is not currently stored. Saving it in each land record would aid in reporting and analysis. This revision will be presented to Assessors Tier members for a vote along with the condo revisions in the near future; watch your email for details.



ONLINE BACKUP—PART 3

Continuing our focus on online backup solutions, this month we'll look at SOS Online Backup and CrashPlan.

On the surface, **SOS Online Backup** (www.sosonlinebackup.com) looks like an expensive option—but unlike most competitors, SOS allows up to 5 devices per account, with support for Windows, Mac, Android, iPhone and more. Military-grade encryption is used to transfer and store data, which can be shared with others if you wish. Files are never deleted—ever—with only the most recent version counting towards your storage allotment. Data can be backed up automatically as it changes and/or according to pre-defined schedule. When recovery is necessary, files can be accessed via any Web browser. SOS Online Backup offers a free 14-day trial with 50G storage. Paid plans:

- ◆ One year, 100G, 5 devices \$9.99/mo. (\$119.98 year) or \$99.99 with advance payment; two years \$174.99 w/ advance payment

- ◆ 150G storage: \$15.99/mo., \$159.99/yr.

CrashPlan (www.crashplan.com) offers a dizzying number of plans, ranging from free to \$149.99/year. Strangely, though, their free plan is just a tool for local backup—no online storage included—so it's not very useful. CrashPlan+ (plus) plans and Unlimited plans offer online storage with no file size limit on uploads; files are never deleted and Windows, Linux and Solaris operating systems are supported (but not Mac.) Files can be accessed on mobile devices, but there's currently no backup option. Available plans include:

- ◆ CrashPlan+: 1 computer, 10G storage, \$32.99/year
- ◆ CrashPlan Unlimited: 1 computer, unlimited space, \$59.99/year
- ◆ CrashPlan Family Unlimited: up to 10 computers, unlimited storage, \$149.99/year

Next month: BackBlaze and a series wrap-up reviewing the plans and costs.

Dates to remember in May and June



FROM THE MUNICIPAL CALENDAR

May 1—Taxpayer Deadline for Payment of Semi-Annual and 4th Quarterly Tax Bill Without Interest

May 15—Treasurer Submits 3rd Quarterly Reconciliation of Cash

May 15—DOR/BLA Commissioner Certifies Telephone and Telegraph Company Valuations

June 1—Assessors Determine Valuation of Other Municipal or District Land

June 1—DOR/BLA Notification of State Owned Land Valuations (every 4th year after 2005)

June 10—DOR/BLA Concludes Public Hearings on Proposed SOL Valuations

June 15—DOR Commissioner Certifies Pipeline Valuations

June 15—Assessors-Deadline for Appealing Commissioner's Telephone & Telegraph Valuations

June 15—Assessors Make Annual Preliminary Tax Commitment

June 20—Final Date for Assessors to Make Omitted or Revised Assessments— assessment may not be made later than June 20 of the taxable year or 90 days after the date the tax bills are mailed, whichever is later.

June 30—Assessors Submit Annual Report of Omitted or Revised Assessments

DLS ISSUES FY 2014 TAX BILLING IGRs

DLS’s Municipal Finance Law Bureau has posted the annual Informational Guideline Releases (IGRs) relative to producing tax bills to the DLS Web site. Although no changes in the form or content of tax bills has been made since last year, we strongly encourage the downloading and reading of the FY 2014 IGR for your community’s billing method. These IGRs contain a wealth of valuable information about the entire bill generation and mailing process. They’re a great resource, so take a look and save a copy when you have a chance.

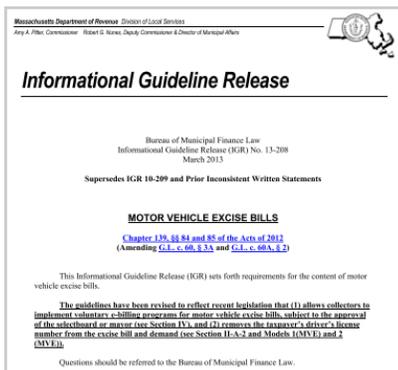
Quarterly billing: www.mass.gov/dor/docs/dls/publ/igr/2013/igr13-204.pdf

Semi-annual with annual preliminary bill: www.mass.gov/dor/docs/dls/publ/igr/2013/igr13-203.pdf

Semi-annual with optional preliminary bill: www.mass.gov/dor/docs/dls/publ/igr/2013/igr13-202.pdf

Semi-annual billing: www.mass.gov/dor/docs/dls/publ/igr/2013/igr13-201.pdf

E-BILLING: GUIDANCE FROM DLS



Issuing tax and excise bills in electronic format is permissible according to MGL Chapter 60, Section 3A. To assist municipalities with the actual implementation of e-billing, DLS addressed procedural questions in all recently issued IGRs dealing with issuance of tax or excise bills (in addition to those listed above, see [IGR13-209](#) for Boat Excise and [IGR13-208](#) for Motor Vehicle Excise.)

Summarizing the content, which is the same for all types of bills:

- ◆ Authorization to use e-billing comes from the mayor or board of selectmen. The type of bill(s) included in the program and the program’s duration are also decided locally.
- ◆ Taxpayer participation in an e-billing program must be completely voluntary. Taxpayers cannot be required to accept an electronic bill.
- ◆ The tax collector determines specific notification procedures, including the manner in which taxpayers sign up for e-billing and the deadlines for providing accurate email information. It is the taxpayer’s responsibility to ensure that

the collector has the information necessary to email a timely bill to the correct address.

- ◆ Taxpayers accepting e-billing will not receive a bill by any other means—it is not necessary to mail a paper bill in addition to emailing an e-bill.
- ◆ Bill content must be the same as mailed (paper) bills, but can be provided via emailed link, as an emailed attachment or within the body of the email itself.

For complete information on e-billing, please refer to the IGRs issued by DLS. Questions can be directed to DLS’s Municipal Finance Law Bureau:

dlslaw@dor.state.ma.us



Community Software Consortium

www.csc-ma.us

Training and support provided by
The Division of Local Services' IT Group

(617) 626-2350

DLSITGroup@dor.state.ma.us

CSC Connections is a publication of the
Community Software Consortium,
distributed by the Division of Local Services

shirer@dor.state.ma.us

(413) 452-3988

The Community Software Consortium is a self-governing municipal organization consisting of 60+ Massachusetts communities. It was established in 1996 under M.G.L. 40, § 4A to give every member access to quality technology products and services at a reasonable cost, through the power of joint purchasing. In FY 2012, the CSC was awarded a \$290,700 Community Innovation Challenge Grant by the Commonwealth to fund migration of its property appraisal and tax administration software applications to The Cloud.

For more information about the Community Software Consortium, contact the current Chairman of the CSC Board of Directors:

Tammy Blackwell, Principal Assessor, Town of Sheffield
(413) 413-229-7001 Ext. 155

tblackwell@sheffieldma.gov

TECH TIPS: FORMATTING WORD LISTS

Time for another Stupid Word Trick: have you ever wanted to format only the numbers in a numbered Word list, but had no luck doing so?

For example:

1. IGR13-208 Motor Vehicle Excise
2. IGR13-209 Boat Excise
3. IGR13-201 FY 2014 Tax Bills Semi-Annual
4. IGR-13-204 FY 2014 Tax Bills Quarterly

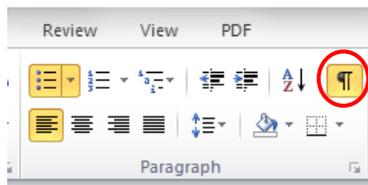
We want to make only the numbers in the list above larger, bold, red and a different font. We can't swipe just the numbers in the list with the mouse (everything is selected except the numbers):

1. IGR13-208 Motor Vehicle Excise
2. IGR13-209 Boat Excise
3. IGR13-201 FY 2014 Tax Bills Semi-Annual
4. IGR-13-204 FY 2014 Tax Bills Quarterly

To format only the numbers, you

need to use this non-intuitive but useful trick.

Click Word's Home tab, then click Show/Hide in the Paragraph group.



Paragraph marks will appear at the end of each list sentence.

- 1.→IGR13-208-Motor-Vehicle-Excise¶
- 2.→IGR13-209-Boat-Excise¶
- 3.→IGR13-201-FY-2014-Tax-Bills-Semi-Annual¶
- 4.→IGR-13-204-FY-2014-Tax-Bills-Quarterly¶

Now with your mouse, select only the paragraph mark at the end of the line.

The item number is attached to the paragraph mark, so *the trick is to format the paragraph mark*.

With one or more paragraph marks selected (use Ctrl-click to select more than one) now choose the formatting you wish to apply to the numbers. We'll use 12 point bold/red Lucida Calligraphy in the example.

- 1.→IGR13-208-Motor-Vehicle-Excise
- 2.→IGR13-209-Boat-Excise
- 3.→IGR13-201-FY-2014-Tax-Bills-Semi-Annual
- 4.→IGR-13-204-FY-2014-Tax-Bills-Quarterly

Click Show/Hide in the Paragraph section again to turn off the display, and you're done. Cool, huh? So there's another Stupid Word Trick to add to your collection.

1. IGR13-208 Motor Vehicle Excise
2. IGR13-209 Boat Excise
3. IGR13-201 FY 2014 Tax Bills Semi-Annual
4. IGR-13-204 FY 2014 Tax Bills Quarterly