CSC Connections

THIS MONTH

- *Stakeholder Bill of Rights*
- *DLS IT Advisor assignments*
- *CSC FY 13 Annual Meeting summary*
- *LA-4 and LA-13 Verification & Submission tips*

Exceeding Expectations—Your Rights as DLS IT Stakeholders

We've been devoting a lot of time in recent IT group staff meetings to discussing one important question: How do our clients define "superior customer service?" Before we could begin formulating an answer, we had to look at the services we provide from your perspective. When it comes to service, we're all customers as well as providers—so what makes us happy as customers? Having a problem fixed quickly and completely. Being thought of as a person, not a number. Expecting a technician at 9AM and seeing him or her approaching the door at 8:59AM. Having the situation patiently and thoroughly explained in terms we understand. Sound familiar? Sound like something we don't get very often anymore?

DOR360
ENGAGE. CONNECT.

DOR360 is the DOR's major FY13 initiative to continually connect with and engage its many stakeholders

We discussed the expectations and ideas for meeting and exceeding them over a series of meetings. The result was a document that you should read and use as a checklist the next time you need us: the Stakeholder Bill of Rights. You have a stake in DLS IT, therefore you have the right to expect certain things from us as service providers. They're listed in that document. Whenever we fail to meet your expectations, bring it up—either with your community advisor or with me, or both. And if you think we missed something, I'd like to know that, too. Drop me an email or give me a call.

Kirsten Shirer, Editor

www.mass.gov/dor/docs/dls/it/itstakeholderbillofrights.pdf

Contacting DLS IT Support

By now, you should have heard from your DLS IT Advisor—in some cases, this might be someone you haven't spoken to before. You may recall from the August edition of CSC Connections that we shuffled community assignments for FY 13. To make it easy to see the communities assigned to each IT team member, we've posted the list on the CSC Web site:

csc-ma.us/pdfs/DLSITCommunityAdvisors.pdf

Every community has an assigned "primary advisor." Many of you have told us that you value having a personal relationship with a specific support advisor, and we plan to continue that policy. Your assigned advisor will make sure your software stays up to date and will try to anticipate your training and support needs. That doesn't mean you have only one person to call, however—the entire DLS IT team is always ready to help. Call our main IT Support Line whenever your community's advisor isn't available: (617) 626-2350. Someone on the DLS IT team is always ready to help you.

CSC FY13 Annual Meeting October 11, 2012

The CSC's Fiscal 2013 Annual Meeting was held in Sturbridge, MA at the Publick House on October 11th, 2012. Assessors and tax collectors from member communities discussed and voted on FY 2014 dues, shared ideas for program enhancements and got a first look at the CSC's Cloud-based application suite.

Details from the meeting will be posted on the CSC's Web site soon. For those of you unable to attend, here's a brief meeting summary in the meantime:

Members approved an increase of $100 (from $500 to $600 annually) in FY 2014 General Membership dues. Assessor and Collector tier dues will remain at 2013 levels with no increase.

Phase I of the Cloud initiative (funded by this year's CIC grant) is nearing completion. Rebecca Krause-Hardie (project manager, CSC Board member and Town of Royalston Tax Collector) demonstrated the Web-based Collection system; Kirsten Shirer from DLS gave members a first look at the Cloud versions of RPIS and CSC Personal Property.

DLS Director of IT, David Davies, explained the next steps in the CSC's multi-year move

From the Municipal Calendar

Dates to remember in November & December

November 1 Semi-Annual Tax Bill — Deadline for First Payment

This is the deadline for receipt of the first half semi-annual tax bills or the optional preliminary tax bills without interest, unless bills were mailed after October 1, in which case they are due 30 days after mailing.

November 1 Semi-Annual Tax Bills — Application Deadline for Property Tax Abatement

According to M.G.L. Ch. 59, Sec. 59, applications for abatements are due on the same date as the first actual tax installment for the year.

November 1 Quarterly Tax Bills — Deadline for Paying 2nd Quarterly Tax Bill Without Interest

November 15 Treasurer Submit First Quarter Reconciliation of Cash

December 15 Deadline for Applying for Individual Property Tax Exemptions (bills mailed by September 15)

If tax bills are mailed after September 15, taxpayers have 3 months from the mailing date to file applications for exemptions.

December 31 Assessors Mail 3-ABC Forms to All Eligible Non-Profit Organizations

December 31 Collector Deadline for Mailing Actual Tax Bills – Preliminary billing system

For communities using the annual preliminary billing system (quarterly or semi-annual) the actual tax bills should be mailed by December 31st. Bills mailed after December 31st will be due May 1 or 30 days after mailing, whichever is later.

LA13 Gateway Tip—Uploading Supporting Documentation For BLA

Need to give BLA supporting documentation for your LA13 New Growth report? There's a new option for uploading a document available in the Gateway LA13 form. Comments of a few sentences can still be typed into the Comments box. For more extensive explanations, click the Browse button and locate the file you wish to upload. The filename and path will appear in the box to the left of the button (it might not be totally visible.) You must click Calculate & Save for the upload to take place. Sign and submit the LA13 as usual.

CSC FY13 Annual Meeting
October 11, 2012 (continued)

to the Cloud. Phase II will involve developing an integrated accounting and treasury module based on the programs used by the Town of Hanover.

Assessors from several member communities shared their need for an enhanced condominium Module in RPIS, based on BLA's new certification requirements. A committee was formed to study the issue and to determine the requirements. Grafton, Framingham, Needham and North Andover all volunteered to be part of that process (contact any of them if you're interested in partici-

pating.)

Reporting was also discussed; Business Objects and IQ Objects will remain available and supported for as long as they continue to work with modern operating systems (we don't yet know how they'll work with Windows 8.) Both assessors and collectors confirmed that having the ability to create custom reports remains very important. DLS will investigate a few report products recommended by members.

Creating an expanded selection of system-generated reports was also discussed as being important to members; DLS staff will investigate options for future development. A study committee of interested CSC members may be formed, so watch for details on the CSC Web site.

Rebecca Krause-Hardie gives CSC members a first look at their new Cloud system

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: Verifying Your LA-4 Report

Verifying the parcel counts and values on the LA-4 Assessment/Classification report before submission is one of the most important tasks in the tax rate setting process. It's also very tempting to skip this step when time runs short—don't do it! Mistakes in the LA4 can impact the year's tax rate, and that's not good for anyone.

After running the system generated LA-4, immediately run the verification report that's part of the IQ report library: "DLS LA4 Cross Check Report.iqr". Edit the filter for the current fiscal year then print the report. The total number of parcels as determined by IQ should match the total number of parcels on the

RPIS-generated report. The total value of all parcels in IQ should be within a few hundred dollars of the RPIS total; IQ uses the rounded figures from the Valuation record for mixed use parcels, and the RPIS LA4 uses the un-rounded figures from the residence, detached structure and land records. If the total number of parcels on both reports doesn't match, stop! Don't submit the LA4. The same goes for value discrepancies of more than a few hundred dollars; you should not submit the LA4 until you determine which report is accurate.

Need help reconciling your LA-4? Please call your community advisor or DLS IT Support . We work with these

reports daily this time of year and can quickly help you identify and fix whatever's wrong.