

Annual Report of the Town Treasurer/Collector
Brenda A. Herbeck

Staff
Sarah Piehler
Catherine Barrows
Alanna Carreiro

The Town Collector is responsible for the billing and collection of Real Estate & Personal Property Taxes, Motor Vehicle & Boat Excise Taxes, Water & Sewer User Charges, and Sewer Betterments. The Town Treasurer is responsible for receiving all Town departmental and state monies, managing all Town funds, managing the Town's debt obligations, administering payroll and benefits, managing Tax Title accounts and foreclosures. Beach/Wharf Parking Stickers and Shellfish Permits can be purchased in the Treasurer/Collector's Office, also.

Collector's Office

The number of real estate parcels billed in FY 2011 was 4,587, a decrease of 15 from FY 2010; the number of personal property bills was 774, an increase of 19 over FY 2010. Real Estate and Personal Property commitments totaled \$17,962,880; the outstanding balance on June 30, 2011 was \$189,880. The Town continued to enjoy a high property tax collections rate of 98.9% in FY 2011.

The number of Motor Vehicle Excise bills for FY 2011 was 7,597, a decrease of 372 from the total billed in FY 2010; from FY 2009 to FY 2010, there was an increase of 183. In FY 2011, there were 782 boats billed, compared to 743 in FY 2010. Tough economic conditions and the "Cash for Clunkers" program in 2010 may be reasons for the decrease in the number of vehicles purchased in FY 11.

We have been diligent in mailing a series of notices to delinquent taxpayers, and have arranged several payment agreements. We continue to offer online bill pay through MCC's eBill, and have seen the benefits of allowing taxpayers the ability to pay their property taxes, excise taxes and utility bills 24 hours a day from their computers. The ability to pay Water/Sewer User Charges via MCC's eBill became available in FY 2011. We have been working with the Tax Services by submitting delinquent property tax files regularly, which enables banks and mortgage companies to monitor accounts that become past due. For delinquent real estate taxes, state law allows for the recording of liens at the Registry of Deeds, and when a property is sold, the town receives full payment. For delinquent motor vehicle excise taxes, vehicle owners are marked at the Registry of Motor Vehicles, which prevents owners from renewing their license or registering a vehicle until all delinquent excise taxes are paid in full. For boat excise taxes and personal property taxes, other options are allowed for Collectors to collect funds due the town. We engaged the services of a collection agency to collect past due boat excise and personal property taxes, and have seen significant results.

Treasurer's Office

As of June 30, 2011, ninety-eight (98) parcels remained in Tax Title, of which twenty-eight (28) were assessed to Angelica Associates, Inc. and thirty-five (35) to Abbott Homes; twelve (12) parcels were paid in full. Land Court foreclosure decrees were recorded for two parcels. The foreclosure process through the Land Court is continuing for five other parcels; land of low value foreclosure through the DOR is continuing for two parcels. At fiscal year end, the Tax Title balance was \$266,823. As of June 30, 2011, three taxpayers had met the requirements and took advantage of tax deferral.

Mattapoisett's bond rating has increased significantly over the past five years. The increases are a direct result of implementing changes in the structure of town government, beginning with the appointment of a Town Administrator in 2003. In 2005 Moody's Investors Services assigned an "A1" rating, which was an increase from the "A2" the Town held for several years. In November 2007 Standard and Poor's assigned a "AA-"; and on July 27, 2010, Standard and Poor's Ratings Services assigned a "AA" rating. This increased rating is the result of Mattapoisett's sound financial management and strong reserves, stable property taxes, high income level and low unemployment, low debt burden with modest capital needs. Maintaining the "AA" rating will be a challenge over the next few years because of cuts to state aid, decreases in local receipts and certain fixed budget increases. The financial team, comprised of the Town Administrator, Treasurer/Collector, Town Accountant and Principal Assessor, continues to work together to establish new management practices and policies aimed at upgrading the town's bond rating.

At the Annual Town Meeting in May 2010, the Town voted to establish the Other Post Employment (OPEB) Benefits Liability Trust Fund. The purpose of this fund is to reduce the unfunded actuarial liability of health care and other post-employment benefits. According to the Town's Actuarial Valuation dated October 2010, the unfunded liability is over \$1.3M, which will increase as time goes on. Currently, it is not mandated that cities and towns annually fund the OPEB fund; however, S & P looks favorably on towns that establish a practice to annually fund a portion of the cost. Votes passed at two town meetings to transfer a total of \$75,000 into the

OPEB fund, a strategy that should have a positive effect on the Town's Bond Rating in FY 2012. Since OPEB funds are long-term investment funds, the Town placed them in a pooled investment portfolio managed by Bartholomew & Company, Inc.

The town's funds currently are invested in money market accounts and an occasional CD. Some funds are also invested in the Massachusetts Municipal Depository Trust (MMDT). Interest rates remained stable in FY 2011, but, obviously, interest income is still quite low.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank my staff for their cooperation, dedication, eagerness to learn and sense of humor. The Accountant's Office is a separate office within the Treasurer/Collector's Office; and I am grateful that, in such tight quarters, employees in both offices work well together to keep the departments running efficiently and effectively. I would also like to thank all Town departments for their cooperation and assistance throughout the year.

It is a pleasure and an honor to serve the citizens of Mattapoisett.

Respectfully Submitted:
Brenda A. Herbeck
Town Treasurer/Collector