

MEMORANDUM

DATE: December 3, 2007
TO: Town Council
FROM: Anne Gregory, Assessor
RE: Cumberland County Shared Assessing Feasibility Study

In 2006, the County received a \$10K State grant (plus \$6K matching funds), to study the feasibility of shared assessing. I was asked to serve on the grant committee with three municipal managers, five assessors, one state legislator, one county commissioner and three county employees. Gordon Billington, Standish Town Manager, served as Chair.

December of 2006, the County issued an RFP.

January 10, 2007, the committee met, reviewed the three responses and chose Robert J. Finnegan, Real Property Tax Consultant of Acton, Mass, to conduct the study.

August 15, 2007, Mr. Finnegan submitted his final report (copy attached). He concluded (pg 6 ¶4) that *a county wide system would cost half as much to operate and increase standardization, fairness and online access to information*. The cost saving conclusion is based on his comparison to one county - Erie County Pennsylvania.

Some comments regarding study:

- Good data collection; Mr. Finnegan contacted officials from 26 of the 27 municipalities and Maine Revenue Services Property Tax Division director & staff.
- Partial success in isolating assessing costs for each municipality. Mr. Finnegan was not able to gather budget costs from other municipalities with same detail as Falmouth's budget detail; specifically costs attributable to in-house revaluations, employee benefits & reserve accounts (pages 15 & 16).
- Limited to one county unit of comparison (Erie, Pa); some areas of comparison similar but others not so much (page 17):
 - Building permits 1,900 (Cumberland) v 700 (Erie).
 - Equalized full value \$27.7M (Cumberland) v \$9.4M (Erie).
 - Median 2003 Income \$48K (Cumberland) v \$37K (Erie).
- Erie County Assessing Department costs (pages 17 & 18):
 - 19 personnel @ \$531K = \$27,900 per person seems low.
 - Telephone cost @ \$600 seems low.
- Study does *not* include any start-up costs for office space, equipment, data conversion, CAMA software and maintenance fees, etc.

I will be available at the meeting with additional comments and to answer any questions you may have regarding the study.