

# REGIONAL ASSESSING AN OPTION FOR FALMOUTH

January 13, 2014

# Background

- ❑ Regionalization dialogues with other communities have increased in the last ten years.
- ❑ Cumberland County and many communities within the County expressed enough interest in regional assessing to initiate a feasibility analysis in 2007.
- ❑ An inventory of regionalization efforts in 2010 cited the ongoing interest of regional assessing (reference 2013 Comprehensive Plan).
- ❑ In the spring of 2013:
  - Cumberland and Yarmouth lost their Assessor to another community.
  - Cumberland, Falmouth and Yarmouth reached out to the County to revive the regional assessing discussion on a much smaller scale.
- ❑ The Falmouth Assessor is retiring this year. This is the time to review options.

# Complements the Falmouth Comprehensive Plan

## ▣ Implementation Items

- Leverage regionalization opportunities to help broaden fiscal flexibility by (a) Seeking to regionalize non-priority cost-centers for the Town, (b) Freeing up Town resources to control mil rate increases or enable other Plan projects, and (c) Endorsing the goals of the Economic Development Plan to broaden the Town's tax base.
- Actively seek partners for future regional coordination.

## ▣ Goals

*State Goal:* Maine's Growth Management Act recommends that a regional coordination program be pursued with other communities to manage shared resources and facilities.

*Proposed Goal:* Maximize opportunities for regional coordination.

*Proposed Policies:* Maximize regional approaches to economic development. Educate the public about the benefits of sharing Town services with our neighbors. Maintain Falmouth's participation in regional coordination committees, especially concerning marine resources, utilities and transportation.

# A Projected Four Town Model

## Explain bottom line numbers

4 Towns- Cumberland, Falmouth, Yarmouth & Town X

Position Assessor - Lead		Position Assistant Assessor		Position Admin Assistant		Miscellaneous Expenses	
Wage	\$95,000	Wage	\$55,000	Wage	\$20,000	Telephone	\$ 2,500
MSRS / ICMA - 7.5%	\$6,175	MSRS / ICMA - 7.5%	\$3,575	MSRS / ICMA - 7.5%	\$1,300	Membership Dues	\$ 2,500
Health Insurance	\$12,000	Health Insurance	\$12,000	Health Insurance	\$6,000	Printing	\$ 6,000
Dental Insurance	\$0	Dental Insurance	\$0	Dental Insurance	\$0	Publications	\$ 400
Life & LTD	\$503	Life & LTD	\$503	Life & LTD	\$503	Reg Of Deeds	\$ 5,000
Long Term Care	\$106	Long Term Care	\$106	Long Term Care	\$106	BAR & Hearings	\$ 10,000
Vision	\$136	Vision	\$136	Vision	\$136	Office Supplies	\$ 5,000
Car Allowance	\$1,200	Car Allowance	\$1,200	Car Allowance	\$0	Vision & Office Soft	\$ 17,000
Annual Convention	\$3,300	Annual Convention	\$0	Annual Convention	\$0	Travel Expenses	\$ 5,000
FICA- .0765	\$7,268	FICA- .0765	\$4,208	FICA- .0765	\$1,530	Assessing Maps - Per	\$ 20,000
Workers comp	\$812	Workers comp	\$812	Workers comp	\$812	Training	\$ 5,500
Unemployment .5%	\$475	Unemployment .5%	\$275	Unemployment .5%	\$100	Other	\$ 10,000
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$126,974</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>\$77,814</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>\$30,487</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>\$ 88,900</b>

<b>Total Cost</b>	<b>\$324,175</b>	<b>Town X</b>	<b>\$30,000</b>	<b>Shared Costs</b>	<b>\$294,175</b>
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# A Projected Four Town Model

4 Towns- Cumberland, Falmouth, Yarmouth & Town X  
RECOMMENDED ALLOCATION

10% Baseline, 30% Valuation, 30% Parcel, 30% Personal Property (County)

Town	Cost		% of Total
Cumberland	\$65,030		20%
Falmouth	\$130,988		40%
Yarmouth	\$98,157		30%
Town X	\$30,000		9%
Total Cost	\$324,175		100.00%

# Cost Savings

A likely cost savings scenario is calculated as follows:

2014 Assessing Budget	\$213,443
Consultant Position - reduction of 50%	<u>19,250</u>
Adjusted FY14 Budget	<b>\$194,193</b>

Projected Falmouth Costs from the Four Town Cumberland County Model	\$130,988
Internal Remaining Costs for Admin Support	<u>\$7,000</u>
Regionalized Assessing Costs	<b>\$137,988</b>

Projected Savings for the year	<b>\$ 56,205</b>
	<b>29%</b>

# Cost Savings for Revaluation Under Regionalization

- Revaluations occurred in 1997, 2000, 2003 and 2008 to align properties with approximately 100% of market value.
- Revaluations are expected to occur every six to seven years.
- Cost of last revaluation can fluctuate depending on the level of detail. The 2008 revaluation was very comprehensive and cost approximately \$70,000 over a two year period.
- The Regional Assessor has estimated that revaluations in Falmouth can reoccur, within the County service model, at similar frequencies and at similar costs.

# How will this be accomplished?

## Formation

- ❑ This department will exist as a County Enterprise Fund, regardless of the number of communities that join.
- ❑ This will be a two and one half full-time equivalent model that would expand to accommodate additional communities in the future.
- ❑ County will invest in office space and IT needs at the inception.
- ❑ Assessors will be Cumberland County employees serving communities on a contracted basis. The Assessor will still be a direct appointment of each participating community.
- ❑ The main office will be on Pearl Street in Portland, with satellite offices maintained by each community.
- ❑ Communities must first meet minimum standards to contract for County assessing services.

# How will this be accomplished?

## Staffing Levels/ Customer Service

- ❑ Some existing town personnel will continue to be partially assigned to assessing functions in Falmouth including customer service.
- ❑ Actual schedules of staff will be determined with individual municipalities.
- ❑ Revals are not part of the base staffing level, and will be priced separately.
- ❑ A primary Assessor will exist for each Town.
- ❑ Customer service will be a priority.
- ❑ A public computer workstation will be located at each Town Hall for residents without access to personal computers. Current practice of hosting data for public access via the Town's website will continue.

# How will this be accomplished?

## Operations

- ▣ No loss of local control. From a control standpoint, the job is a State of Maine statutory position not a municipal one.
- ▣ Assessments will be by individual community and not assessed as a region.
- ▣ Assessor will still visit and have appointments at the Town Hall.
- ▣ Town will continue using current MUNIS and Vision software.
- ▣ The same records will exist including a same or similar looking website.
  - Paper records remain at Town Hall.
  - Electronic records exist on our server.

## Quality Control

- ▣ Monitored by the local Bureau of Assessment Review (BAR)
- ▣ Annual State Audits
- ▣ Regular review and oversight by Town management

# What are the risks?

- ▣ **Will customer service diminish?**
  - Current on-site customer visits can be addressed with remaining staff or coordinated with County staff.
  - The Town will provide a customer computer workstation.
  - County staff will provide on-site offices hours based on demand.
  
- ▣ **Personal property is managed at different levels when comparing communities. Will Falmouth be assessed differently than current practice?**
  - Personal property will be assessed and managed the same as the current practice in Falmouth. The County will be held responsible through a contract for service.
  
- ▣ **Will valuation comparisons be skewed based on the incorporation of a wider geographic area?**
  - “Comps” will be used appropriately based on best practices and mostly contained within each community – no different than current practice in Falmouth.

# What are the risks?

- ▣ **What will happen if the Town is not satisfied with the service?**
  - The Town can reestablish the internal shop if results are undesirable. Contract provisions will allow the Town to terminate the relationship.
  - The Town will own its own data and software license which will allow for a smooth transition toward regional service delivery or reverse it to current practice.
  
- ▣ **Will there be a learning curve?**
  - A learning curve will be present no differently than if the Town hired a new Assessor to work only in Falmouth similar to current practice.
  
- ▣ **Loss of control**
  - State laws offer protection along with maintaining locally appointed Board of Assessment Review. Town managers will oversee services and have influence on the level of service.

# The Value Added Future

- ❑ Currently two towns are participating with success.
- ❑ By the time Falmouth could decide to participate, it is expected there will be four participating communities.
- ❑ Improved coordination and closer proximity to the County Registry of Deeds.
- ❑ Improved and more frequent coordination with other communities to compare best management practices and trends in the region.
- ❑ There is room for future growth. The models have demonstrated that there will be larger economies of scale resulting in reduced costs.
- ❑ Larger entities can develop better succession planning, cross training, and have the ability to expand recruiting efforts.
- ❑ A larger staff can provide specialized personnel in addition to cross training.
- ❑ The Lead Assessor will be available to supplement other staff working in/for each participating community as deemed necessary.

# Questions