

MUNICIPAL ASSESSMENT POLICY

ADOPTED BY THE NRPC BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS (12/18/13)

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Each year, the NRPC assessment rate will be raised by 3% or the percent change in the employment cost index for New England (US Bureau of Labor Statistics), whichever is lower. In years where population figures are adjusted the per capita rate will be set so that the total amount collected will increase by a similar percentage.

The NRPC Board may adopt an increase that is greater than this amount. Reasons for a higher increase will be detailed in any recommendation from the Finance Committee to the Board of Commissioners, after consultation with the Executive Committee. Potential reasons include known or anticipated decreases in funding from other sources that would impact an NRPC program, or funding a special project or program supported by the municipalities.

The NRPC Board may adopt an increase that is less than this due to known increases in funding that will alleviate the need for municipal contributions. Reasons for a lower increase will be detailed in any recommendation from the Finance Committee to the Board of Commissioners.

BACKGROUND

NRPC has two flexible sources of funds: municipal assessments and regional planning funds provided from the State of Vermont.

Municipal Assessments

Of these two sources, the municipal assessment funds are the most flexible- they are provided to the RPC with the trust that they will be used wisely for local and regional planning and implementation programs. Once received by the municipalities, these funds are controlled and managed by the NRPC. They are used to match other grants sources, make up shortfalls or reductions in grants and contracts and help to support our ongoing operations and professional staff. State officials and legislators look to municipal assessments (both the rate and the overall participation) as one indicator of the success of a regional planning commission.

Through this policy NRPC seeks to ensure that municipal assessments continue to be an integral part of the NRPC budget, that the buying power of this resource is not diminished over time, and that the funds continue to keep pace with the increasing state and federal interest in higher percentages of local match.

Setting the Assessment Rate

The NRPC bylaws require that the municipal assessment rate be set each year by a vote of regional commissioners. For many years, Commissioners were reluctant to raise the rate, as the goodwill of maintaining a level request was more valuable than the amount of money each increase would bring to NRPC. This led to the municipal assessment becoming less and less

effective as a source of funds, in terms of buying power and as a portion of the NRPC budget. This coincided with reductions in regional planning funds and higher match requirements on both state and federal dollars. Because of this, the NRPC Board has voted to increase the assessment in recent years. In order to attain consistency in approach for future years, the NRPC Board has adopted this policy to guide its decisions in future years and allow municipalities to anticipate and plan for future budget requests.

Municipal Assessment History

	Per Capita Rate	Dollars Raised	Increase
FY16	.99	\$53,999.00	\$1,472.00
FY15	.96	\$52,527.00	\$2,735.00
FY14	.91	\$49,792.00	\$1,799.00
FY13	.88	\$47,993.00	\$1,430.00 (new Census population)
FY12	.89	\$46,563.00	\$1,570.00
FY11	.86	\$44,993.00	\$0
FY10	.86	\$44,993.00	\$2,092.00
FY09	.82	\$42,901.00	

Regional Planning Funds

The regional planning funds provided by the State of Vermont are set in statute as a percentage of the property transfer tax. This ‘formula’ amount is regularly reduced by the legislature when passing the yearly State budget. The overall amount provided to regional planning is further distributed to the RPCs based on a funding rule that allocates dollars based on population, number of municipalities and portion of the overall state property transfer tax. Expenditure of these dollars is somewhat flexible, but increased scrutiny and accountability has led to tighter restrictions and more detailed guidance on how these funds can be spent. Therefore these funds are not as flexible as municipal assessment dollars. These pass through grant dollars are managed by the Agency of Commerce and Community Development- Department of Housing and Community Development through a yearly contract.

FY15	unknown
FY14	\$239,814.00
FY13	\$217,985.00
FY12	\$217,985.00
FY11	\$217,985.00
FY10	\$228,542.00
FY09	\$228,861.00