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## **Merrimack Valley Regional Inspectional Services Program Begins Operation**

### ***Program Provides Communities with Pre-qualified List of Inspectors Available for Electrical and Health Inspectional Services Work***

Municipal managers in Massachusetts frequently comment that providing inspectional services is one of the more challenging areas in municipal government. Municipal inspections in the Commonwealth involve a bewildering tangle of different laws, departments, and functions. The nature of the work is extremely specialized and requires highly professional staff with significant knowledge and experience. When a municipality's inspector is out sick, on vacation or seeks retirement, or when there is a sudden surge of work, it can be very difficult to manage the workload in a manner that serves and protects the public.

Recognizing these challenges, the Merrimack Valley Mayors & Managers Coalition, a group of communities that came together to identify common challenges and develop regional solutions, decided to provide professional inspectional services options to municipalities. The Merrimack Valley Planning Commission (MVPC), which provides administrative support to the Coalition, retained the Collins Center to develop the Merrimack Valley Regional Inspectional Services Program, to help Merrimack Valley municipalities streamline the process of retaining inspectors by identifying, vetting, and pre-qualifying a pool of professional inspectors. The first areas to be included in the program are electrical/wiring inspections and health inspections. This service can be used to augment current staff, provide inspectional services due to vacant positions, or provide qualified support on an as-needed basis for a member community.

Through a Request for Proposals (RFP) issued in May, the MVPC built an initial list of inspectors who are now available to MVPC members. Once the program has been operational for some time and MVPC has a better sense of demand for the services, MVPC will be issuing a follow-up RFP to expand both the types of inspections offered and the number of inspectors available.

"We're very excited about this program," said MVPC Executive Director Dennis DiZoglio. "We hope that it gives communities a high-quality and efficient way of supplementing their existing inspectional services, and we hope that it can serve as a model for other municipal governments and regions in Massachusetts."

This experimental program is one of a growing number of regionalization efforts around the state. Development of the program was funded with District Local Technical Assistance (DLTA) funds provided by the Commonwealth.

The fifteen cities and towns that make up MVPC's membership are: Amesbury, Andover, Boxford, Georgetown, Groveland, Haverhill, Lawrence, Merrimac, Methuen, Newbury, Newburyport, North Andover, Rowley, Salisbury, and West Newbury.

For more information about the MVPC regional inspections program, please contact MVPC

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