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## Upcoming Holiday Closings

**Memorial Day, MONDAY, MAY 25<sup>TH</sup>**

## 91<sup>st</sup> Annual Meeting



MCU held its 91<sup>st</sup> annual meeting in February, which was called to order by Chairman of the Board, E. Bernard Plante. President and CEO, Joseph Barbato, reported on the challenges and successes of 2025 for MCU and its subsidiaries; Security First Mortgage Funding, MCU Commercial Services, and Dealer First Lending Solutions. During the meeting, President Barbato acknowledged our employees, whose hard work and commitments contributed to the success of 2025. Of special note was the recognition of Elaine Dupuis for 40 years of service, and Michelle Katz and Amy Orsi for 25 years.

## *Tax-Saving Strategies for 2026*

Proactive tax planning can make a meaningful difference in your overall financial picture. Whether you're building wealth, preparing for retirement, or managing a business, a few smart adjustments now can help reduce your tax bill and strengthen your overall financial plan.

**Maximize Retirement Contributions:** One of the simplest ways to lower taxable income is to contribute to retirement accounts such as your employer-sponsored 401(k) or an IRA. If you haven't increased your contributions in a while, consider increasing them even by 1%. Over time, a small change can make a meaningful difference. If you're 50 or older, take advantage of catch-up contributions to help you accelerate savings as retirement approaches.

**Review Your Withholding:** Major life changes such as marriage, divorce, a new job, or a growing family can affect your tax liability. Reviewing your withholding early in the year can help avoid underpayment penalties, minimize unexpected tax bills, and improve monthly cash flow. Business owners and self-employed individuals should ensure that quarterly estimated payments align with projected income.

**Consider Tax-Efficient Investing:** Holding investments longer than a year may reduce capital gains taxes. Using a Tax-loss Harvesting strategy may also help offset gains. Placing tax-inefficient investments in tax-advantaged accounts may improve long-term after-tax returns.

**Take Advantage of Education and Family Tax Benefits:** Families may qualify for several tax-saving opportunities, including Child-related tax credits, Dependent care credits, Education credits for higher education expenses, and 529 college savings plans for tax-advantaged education funding. Review eligibility requirements early to ensure you're maximizing these available benefits.

**Seek Professional Advice:** The benefits of having an experienced tax professional and financial advisor on your side are numerous. Please consult with your own tax professional, attorney, or advisor before making any tax-related or financial decisions.

\*For more information, **please feel free to contact Financial Advisor Joseph Murphy at 508-865-8774.**



*Joseph D. Murphy*  
Financial Advisor

Sources: IRS.gov, Vanguard.com

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# Security Corner

## Recognizing TAX SCAMS

By Patrick King,  
MCU Information Security Officer



Another tax filing season is upon us. It's the time of year when scammers often contact individual taxpayers (which could be you!) purporting to be representatives from the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) or Department of Revenue (DOR). The scammers will use several communication channels for these impersonation schemes, including texts, phone calls, emails, or even physical mail. When a scam is crafted poorly it's easy to identify and dismiss, but it's important to stay alert because scams are not always crafted poorly.

In the unusual instances where these regulatory agencies do need to contact you, they will primarily do it via physical mail, or at times, via a phone call. This is usually in response to a mailing that was sent to them or returning a call that you placed to them first. This means that it's almost certain that if you are receiving a text message or an email which claims to be from the IRS or DOR you can almost certainly dismiss it as a fraudulent impersonation. Some other key indicators that the message is not authentic include:

- Demands for immediate payment
- Threats of imminent arrest or legal action
- Requests for payments to be made in gift cards (or any form of payment that's not US Dollars)

The best way to handle these types of messages is by not interacting with them. If you receive any text messages, emails, or phone calls like this, do not respond to them. If you suspect that the message may be legitimate, there are official ways of contacting these agencies, including the resources below:

- The IRS provides the following resources: <https://www.irs.gov/help/let-us-help-you> or the taxpayer assistance line: (800) 829-1040
- The Massachusetts DOR provides Contact Resources on their website: <https://www.mass.gov/info-details/contact-dor>

If you have fallen victim to a tax scam you can file a Form 14242 with the IRS, available at <https://www.irs.gov/dmaf/form/f14242>, and report Identity Theft and get a personal recovery plan at [IdentityTheft.gov](https://www.identitytheft.gov).



## Using Tax Season to Strengthen Your Homeownership or Refinance Plans

As tax season begins, many members will soon receive their annual tax refund. While it may be tempting to use these funds for short-term purchases, your refund can play a meaningful role in helping you prepare for a home purchase or evaluate whether refinancing is the right step. Thoughtful planning during tax season can improve your financial readiness and position you for long-term success. Below are several ways your tax refund and tax documents can support your homeownership goals.

### Increase Your Down Payment

Applying your tax refund toward your down payment can enhance your overall financial profile as a buyer. A larger down payment may help you qualify for more favorable loan terms, reduce your monthly mortgage payment, and strengthen your offer in today's competitive housing market.

### Offset Closing Costs

Closing costs typically range from 2% to 3% of the purchase price. Allocating your tax refund to these expenses can reduce the upfront financial burden and help ensure a smoother path to closing.

### Buy Down Your Interest Rate

Members may choose to use their refund to purchase discount points, which can lower the interest rate on their mortgage. This strategy can provide meaningful long-term savings by reducing monthly payments over the life of the loan. This strategy can be applied for Purchase and Refinance loans.

### Reduce Debt to Improve Loan Qualification

Your debt-to-income (DTI) ratio is a key factor in determining your purchasing power. Using your tax refund to pay down credit cards, auto loans, or other obligations can improve your DTI and potentially increase the amount for which you may qualify.

### Apply Your Refund Toward Your Mortgage Balance

If you are close to reaching a key loan-to-value (LTV) threshold—such as removing mortgage insurance—using your tax refund to reduce your principal balance may help you qualify for improved refinance terms.

### Organize Key Financial Documents for a Streamlined Refinance

Your tax documents are an essential component in the refinance process. Having your tax information readily available, along with using your refund to address small debts, can help ensure a smoother and more efficient review.

### We're Here to Support Your Financial Goals

Whether you are preparing to purchase a home or exploring refinancing options, thoughtful use of your tax refund can help you move forward with confidence. Our team at Security First Mortgage is available to answer questions, review your options, and guide you through the next steps.



*Dustin Wirzburger  
Senior Vice President*