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Following is an excerpt from an article that will be published in the November REview Newsletter

Preserving the Goal of a Smooth Transition

It's not the news anyone wanted to hear regarding the start-date for a Regional MLS, but the latest word coming from our software vendor is: DELAY.

As MLS Managers, we feel it is important to be as transparent as possible during this process and keep our members up-to-date so as to leave little doubt about "what's happening with the MLS?" We also want to ensure your expectations are in-line with a realistic time line for a fully operational and fully integrated system.

Following the latest discussions on conversion progress with Black Knight, the implementation team recommends a 60-day delay before we can have a Regional system with data from both markets up and running. The two-month delay follows an extensive examination of both MLS system's data structure and content. In the end, Black Knight's implementation team recommended the postponement to ensure a smoother transition.

According to Jessica Fox, Project Manager for Black Knight MLS Solutions, "When laying out initial merger time lines, we do not yet have access to the new data that will be imported in the merger process. Therefore, we make certain assumptions based on past experience with MLS organizations of similar size regarding the number, and type, of changes that will be required. During our initial data-mapping phase, where the new incoming data was thoroughly analyzed and compared to the existing system, it was determined that additional changes would be required beyond what was originally anticipated."

The goal of the conversion team is to ensure a good experience with the final cutover. Adjusting the cutover date helps safeguard a fully-functional system when the merger is complete.

"These additional changes are needed to ensure the most seamless, and complete, transition of Lincoln's listing data, as well as to improve the end user experience for existing Omaha members. Due to the nature of these changes, specifically the Residential Property Subtype revisions and Room & Unit additions, additional time is needed to implement these changes in Omaha's system prior to bringing in the Lincoln data," Fox stated.

Over 75 different technology vendors currently access MLS system information under broker supervision and an approved data use agreement. These vendors provide office and agent websites, as well as broker back-office systems. Protecting website vendors from any unnecessary downtime, that blocks consumer access is a priority.

"The delayed cutover date includes additional time added to allow for software vendors to access these upfront changes in a test environment, and update their data-mapping accordingly, prior to the changes going live." Fox stressed the importance of the delay saying, "This will help ensure as little disruption as possible to member and third-party websites."

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The new time line will result in agents having a first look at the merged data in February, with training for Lincoln area agents beginning the end of February and carrying over into March, and subject to change, the merger will be completed during March...

Read the full article in the November REview Newsletter.

When does the Regional MLS go Live?

Before we see a completely integrated MLS, there are hundreds of details and tasks to be completed. So, even though all decisions are not complete, you can expect:

- Communications to continue preparing all regional users for the changes ahead.
- Current Paragon users will see some changes and enhancements in the system as early as December 3. (Dates are subject to change.) The biggest changes will improve Paragon search and consumer website functionality, double the characters in public remarks (500 to 1000), and nearly triple the number of photos (36 to 99) you can upload on a listing. At that time, only the listings of current Paragon users will be visible.
- All agents can expect an email requesting they reauthorize their ACH auto-payments. This will be closer to the final cutover date.
- The Regional MLS Board of Directors confirmed that monthly MLS fees for the Regional service would be \$30 per month for agent-subscribers, and \$71 per month for broker-participants.
- Some MLS Rule changes will be made as the two sets of rules are reconciled and made into one. A number of changes have already been implemented into your current rules, so the number of changes should be minimal between now and the final conversion.
- On February 25, we are expecting to see the consolidated data from both Lincoln and Omaha in Paragon. At that time, agents from the Lincoln MLS will be operating in parallel, meaning they will continue to enter listing data into their existing system, however, the listing data will be automatically pushed directly into the Paragon system. Lincoln's existing system will continue to operate as normal, but all users will have access to listing information from both markets. During this time, any data accuracy or mapping issues will be resolved and the consolidation team will check for any flaws in the system operation. (Dates are subject to change.)
- From February 25 through March 8, on-site training will be provided in Lincoln for all users new to the Paragon system. This training will include lessons using the CRS Data public records and tax tools. (Dates are subject to change.)
- Once training is completed, the two systems will continue to run in parallel.
- Around 12-Noon, on Friday, March 22, the final cutover process will begin. At that point, listing changes and new listing entry will be blocked on Lincoln's existing system until data entry is unlocked on the new system on Monday, March 25. (Dates are subject to change.)
- On March 25, the final cutover will conclude and the Great Plains Regional MLS system will be operational with all listings from both markets. All listing input and listing changes will then be made in the Paragon system. (Dates are subject to change.)
- Following final cutover, users will no longer access Lincoln's existing system.

Be sure to read the full article in the November REview newsletter, and check for weekly email updates with the Wednesday REconnect. If you have not been receiving REconnect in your inbox, contact Diane@OmahaREALTORS.com or 402-619-5557.

