US Housing Market Weekly

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Jobs Report Adds Fuel to Fed's Fire

Last week's newsletter was all about the Fed Minutes, which showcased a fairly detailed strategy for reducing the size of the Fed's balance sheet. It was generally more **rate-friendly** than investors expected. This week's jobs report added to the positive momentum--at least for rates!

Stocks, on the other hand, **don't** seem to be wanting for positive momentum. They've been moving steadily higher since November's Presidential election, slowly catching up to the massive spike in interest rates (which had already topped out by the end of 2016 as seen in the chart below).

Back in November, rates spiked faster than stocks because rates (which are driven by the bond market) had to read deeper meaning into the election results. **Not only** did rates have to adjust for economic growth and inflation potential, but **also** for the likely changes in Fed policy--specifically to the reinvestment policy (in which, Fed bond buying helps rates stay lower than they otherwise would be).

While Fed rate hike expectations definitely have an impact on longer term rates like 10yr Treasury yields and mortgages, it wasn't until the Fed began **demystifying** its reinvestment plans that rates were able to make a meaningful move back toward lower levels.

National Average Mortgage Rates

	Rate	Change	Points
Mortgage News Daily			
30 Yr. Fixed	6.43%	+0.02	0.00
15 Yr. Fixed	5.95%	0.00	0.00
30 Yr. FHA	5.82%	+0.02	0.00
30 Yr. Jumbo	6.62%	0.00	0.00
5/1 ARM	6.28%	-0.01	0.00
Freddie Mac			
30 Yr. Fixed	6.35%	-0.51	0.00
15 Yr. Fixed	5.51%	-0.65	0.00

Rates as of: 8/30

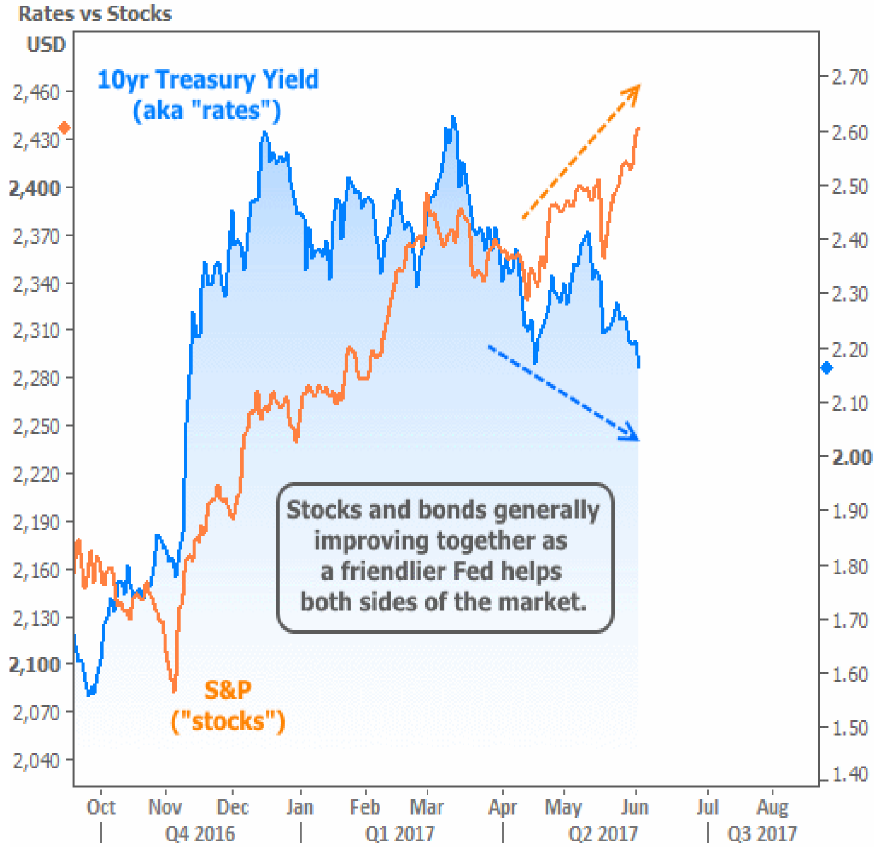
Market Data

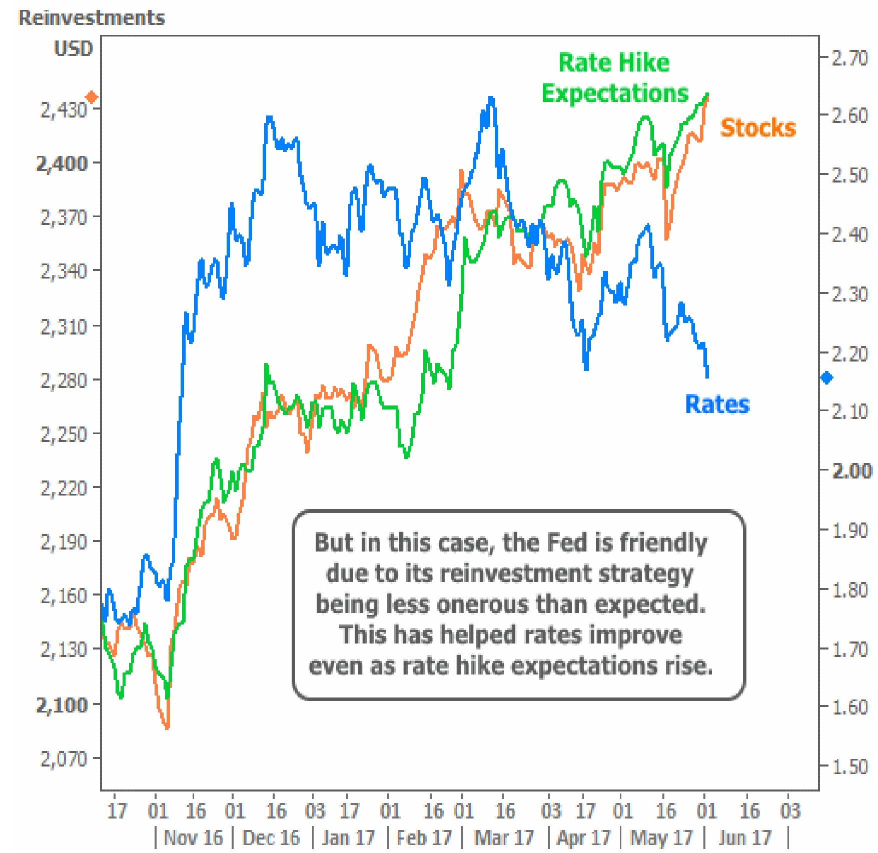
	Price / Yield	Change
MBS UMBS 5.0	99.37	+0.02
MBS GNMA 5.0	99.93	+0.02
10 YR Treasury	3.9068	+0.0029
30 YR Treasury	4.1960	+0.0028

Pricing as of: 9/1 7:34PM EST

Recent Housing Data

		Value	Change
Mortgage Apps	Aug 28	226.9	+0.49%
Building Permits	Mar	1.46M	-3.95%
Housing Starts	Mar	1.32M	-13.15%
New Home Sales	Mar	693K	+4.68%
Pending Home Sales	Feb	75.6	+1.75%
Existing Home Sales	Feb	3.97M	-0.75%
Builder Confidence	Mar	51	+6.25%


Rates vs Stocks
USD
10yr Treasury Yield
(aka "rates")
S&P
("stocks")
Stocks and bonds generally improving together as a friendlier Fed helps both sides of the market.
2,460
2,430
2,400
2,370
2,340
2,310
2,280
2,250
2,220
2,190
2,160
2,130
2,100
2,070
2,040
2.70
2.60
2.50
2.40
2.30
2.20
2.10
2.00
1.90
1.80
1.70
1.60
1.50
1.40
Oct
Nov
Dec
Jan
Feb
Mar
Apr
May
Jun
Jul
Aug
Q4 2016
Q1 2017
Q2 2017
Q3 2017


Reinvestments
USD
Rate Hike
Expectations
Stocks
Rates
But in this case, the Fed is friendly due to its reinvestment strategy being less onerous than expected. This has helped rates improve even as rate hike expectations rise.
2,430
2,400
2,370
2,340
2,310
2,280
2,250
2,220
2,190
2,160
2,130
2,100
2,070
2.70
2.60
2.50
2.40
2.30
2.20
2.10
2.00
1.90
1.80
1.70
1.60
1.50
17
01
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03
17
01
16
01
16
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16
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16
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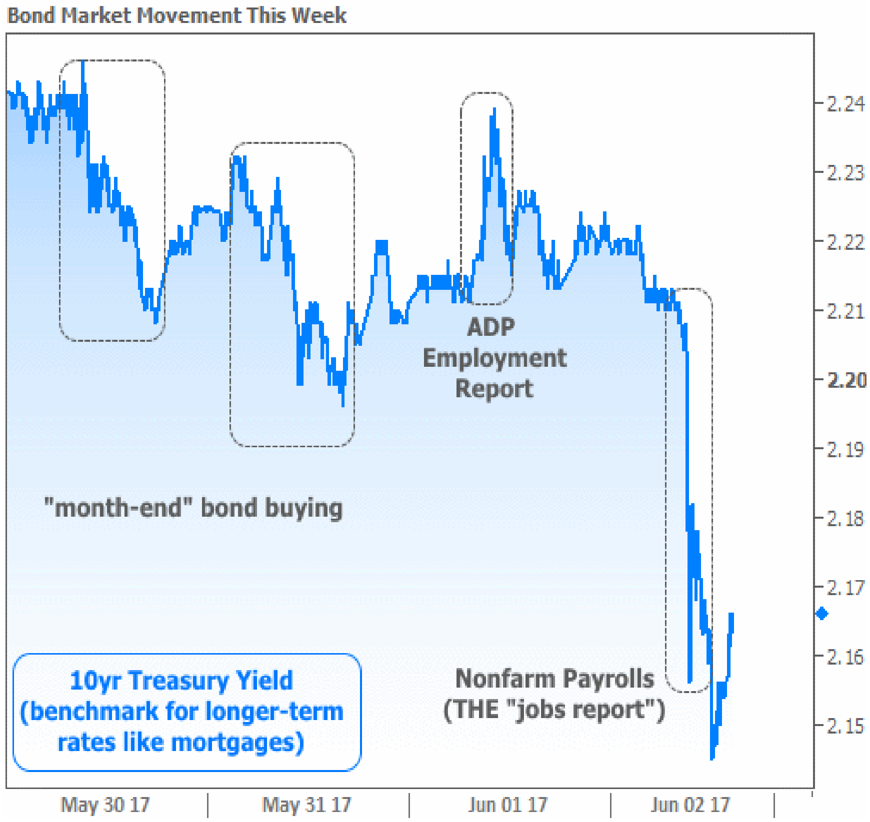
Nov 16
Dec 16
Jan 17
Feb 17
Mar 17
Apr 17
May 17
Jun 17

Fed policy often accounts for the **biggest** shifts in rate momentum, while the day-to-day events and headlines act more like fine-tuning adjustments. This week, those smaller adjustments took the form of "month-end bond buying" on Tuesday and Wednesday (compulsory trades from money managers who have to be holding a certain mix of bonds by the end of the month). On Thursday, there was some volatility surrounding the ADP Employment report, but it was **Friday's jobs report** that caused the biggest move.

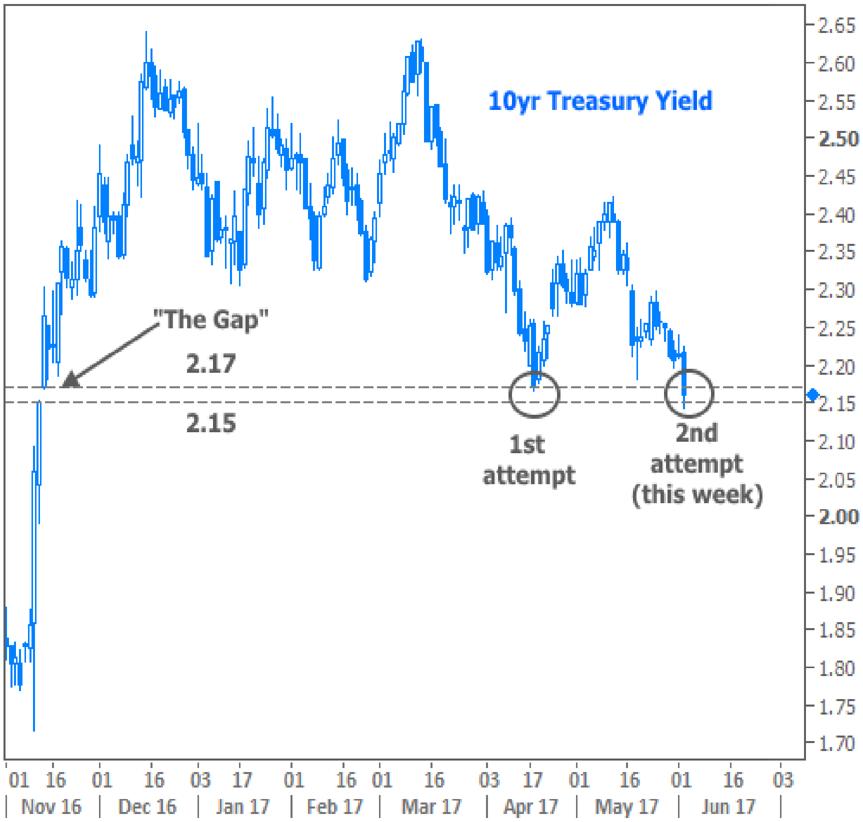


While "big" in the context of this week, Friday was still one of those "fine-tuning adjustments" in the bigger picture. The reason it's **more exciting than normal** is that it brings rates to a very important line in the sand.

Following the election, US 10yr yields (the quintessential benchmark for momentum in longer-term rates like mortgages) formed a prominent "gap" between the closing levels of one day and the opening levels of the next. This is typically only seen in the midst of major shifts in momentum.

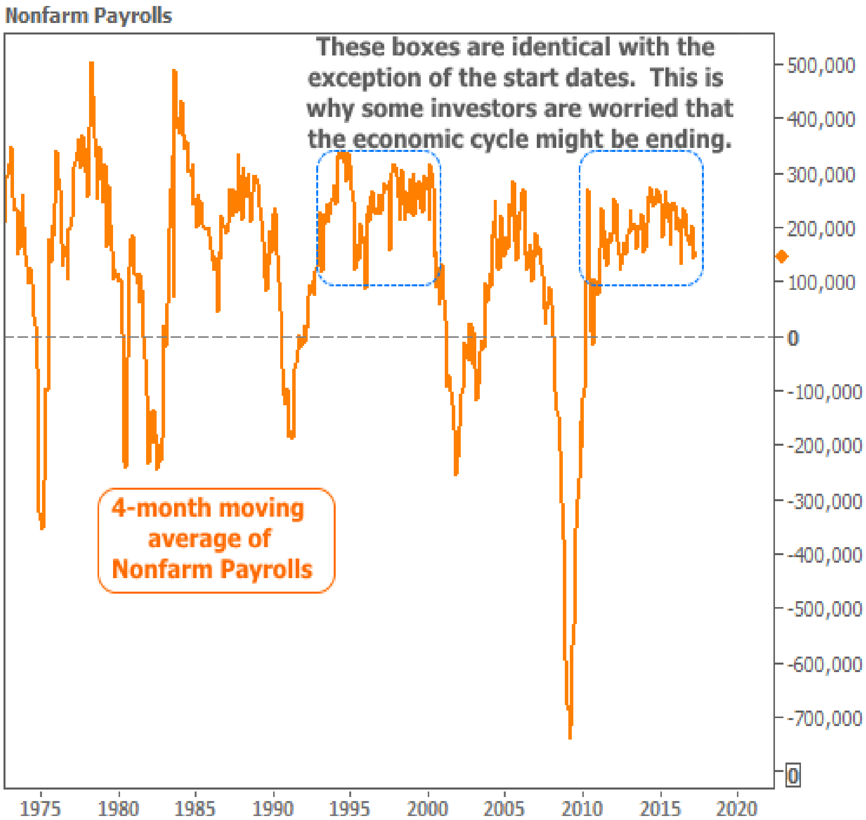
Breaking **THROUGH** the gap would be a big deal as it would suggest an end to this period of negative momentum. This week began with rates being fairly close to the gap. From there, weaker jobs numbers provided the final fine-tuning adjustment. In the chart above, it was as simple as getting below 2.17%. In the chart below, we see rates' second attempt since the election to storm the proverbial castle. The first attempt was unsuccessful. Will things be **different this time?** We'll know a lot more about that when we see how bonds trade next week.

The Gap

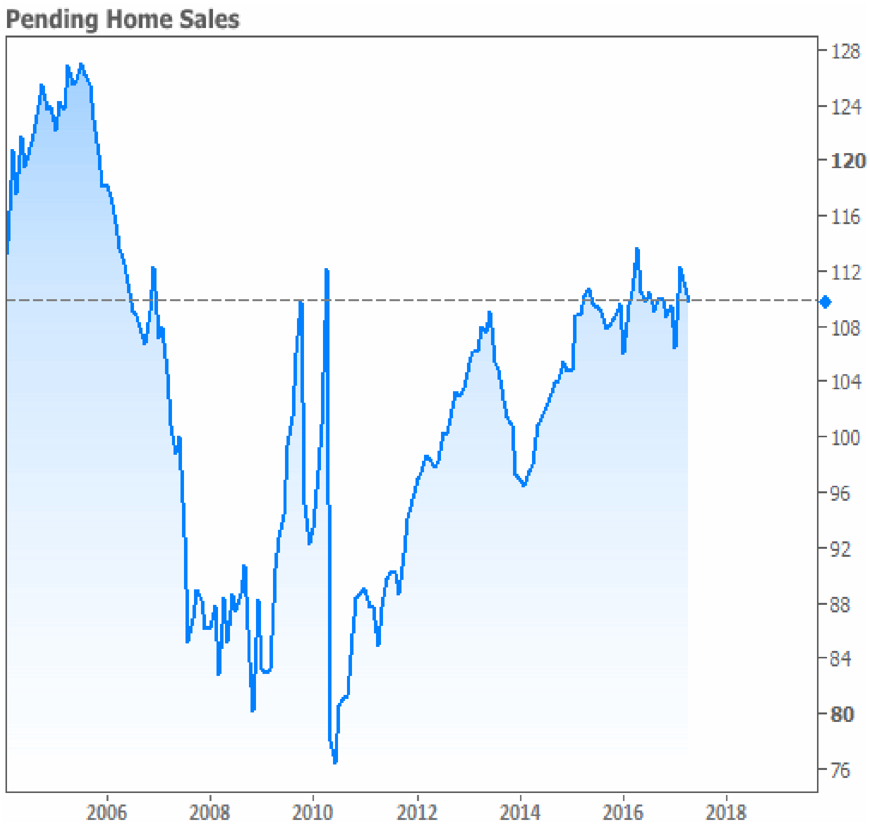


When/if this gap breaks, it **could merely be the beginning** of additional positive momentum. With fiscal policy plans hitting roadblocks this spring and some softness in the economic data, traders are once again considering the risk of the economic cycle "rolling over." This is a simple reference to economic expansions (adding jobs, positive changes in GDP) vs contractions (losing jobs, negative GDP).

The positive economic cycle in the 90's is often cited as a paragon of stability and staying power in terms of job creation. The chart below highlights that cycle compared to the current expansion. **Long story short,** this week's jobs numbers (nonfarm payrolls) did nothing to reject the notion that the current cycle remains at risk of rolling over--if not now, then soon.



This week's **housing-specific data** sang a similar tune, with Pending Home Sales falling in line with 2016's averages. This advance indicator of sales activity increasingly looks to be stalling-out since 2015.



Not all the housing news was bad, however. **Home prices** continued to defy the odds according to separate reports from Black Knight and Case-Shiller. At the same time, Fannie Mae implemented an underwriting change that could help a few more prospective homebuyers qualify for loans on these ever-pricier homes by **easing DTI** (debt-to-income) requirements.

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After completing my degree in finance at the University of Connecticut, I started in the mortgage business right out of college in 2004. With 15+ years of experience and a primary objective of thoroughly explaining all available loan options to my clients with what is typically the largest investment in their lives, I strive to always make myself available. I constantly educate myself with respect to the mortgage industry and underwriting guidelines for FHA, VA, conventional and jumbo financing. I deliver on the expectations discussed up front and provide the service level my clients deserve from day one. I will remain in touch throughout the process and continue to follow up with you after closing. My goal is to wow you and turn you into clients for life. I want you to be so impressed that throughout and after the process you share my information with your friends, family, neighbors and co-workers who may value from my services.

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