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Are Markets Confused, Scared, or Just Waiting?

The US presidential election and the ensuing shift in tone on the part of the Federal Reserve were certainly **game-changers** for financial markets in the short term. But now that the dust is settling from the initial reaction, markets are looking like they're not entirely sure where they want to go from here. Are they confused, scared, or just waiting?

Some **confusion is to be expected**. After all, stocks and interest rates moved rapidly higher based on expectations for policies that would take years to fully filter through to the economy. Moreover, the move took place well before Trump ever took office.

Market participants are OK with that. It's their job to adjust **today's** stock and bond prices to reflect their best guesses about a **future** reality. They also did a good job of accounting for the increase in consumer optimism seen in recent surveys.

But markets can only run on optimism and expectations for so long. Eventually, **actual** changes will have to justify higher stock prices and interest rates. As some of President Trump's legislative efforts hit snags in recent weeks, fear set in about the sustainability of the initial reaction.

Here too, **fear is to be expected**. If policies fall short of expectations, everything might slide in the other direction for markets.

That leaves us with "**waiting**" as the most logical speed for market movements. Markets **do not like to wait**. Waiting means flat trading levels and less opportunity for profit. So markets key in on other available options to pass the time. Chief among these options for bond markets is Fed-Watching.

After the Fed unveiled a faster rate hike forecast in December, investors have become increasingly sensitive to Fed rate hike expectations. This is **especially true** for bond markets (i.e. "rates"), as can be seen in the following chart (10yr Treasuries are the best benchmark for momentum in longer-term rates like mortgages).

National Average Mortgage Rates



	Rate	Change	Points
Mortgage News Daily			
30 Yr. Fixed	7.07%	+0.02	0.00
15 Yr. Fixed	6.45%	0.00	0.00
30 Yr. FHA	6.51%	+0.02	0.00
30 Yr. Jumbo	7.26%	0.00	0.00
5/1 ARM	7.02%	-0.01	0.00

Freddie Mac

30 Yr. Fixed	6.86%	-0.01	0.00
15 Yr. Fixed	6.16%	+0.03	0.00

Rates as of: 6/28

Market Data

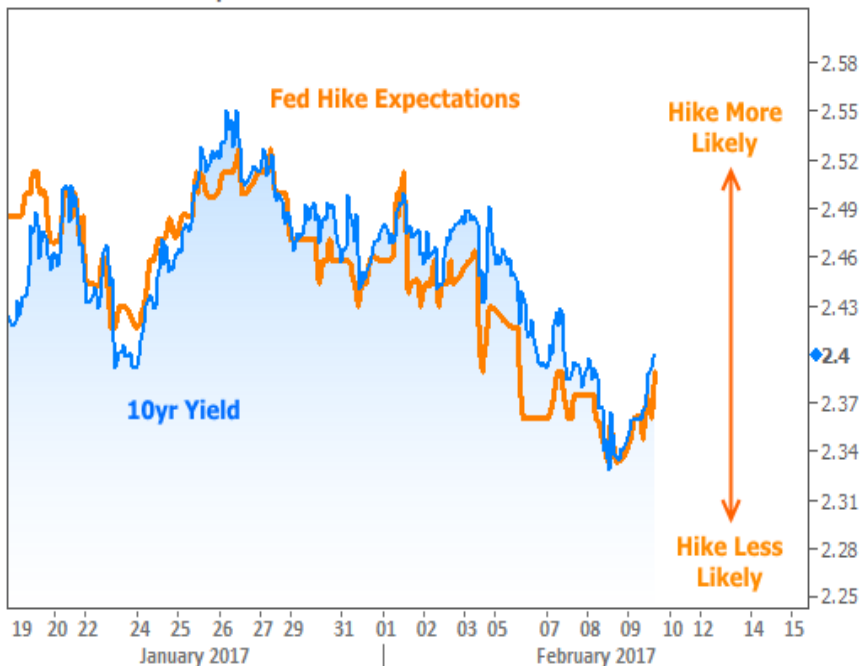
	Price / Yield	Change
MBS UMBS 6.0	100.11	-0.07
MBS GNMA 6.0	100.24	-0.09
10 YR Treasury	4.4395	+0.0415
30 YR Treasury	4.5981	+0.0341

Pricing as of: 7/1 8:50AM EST

Recent Housing Data

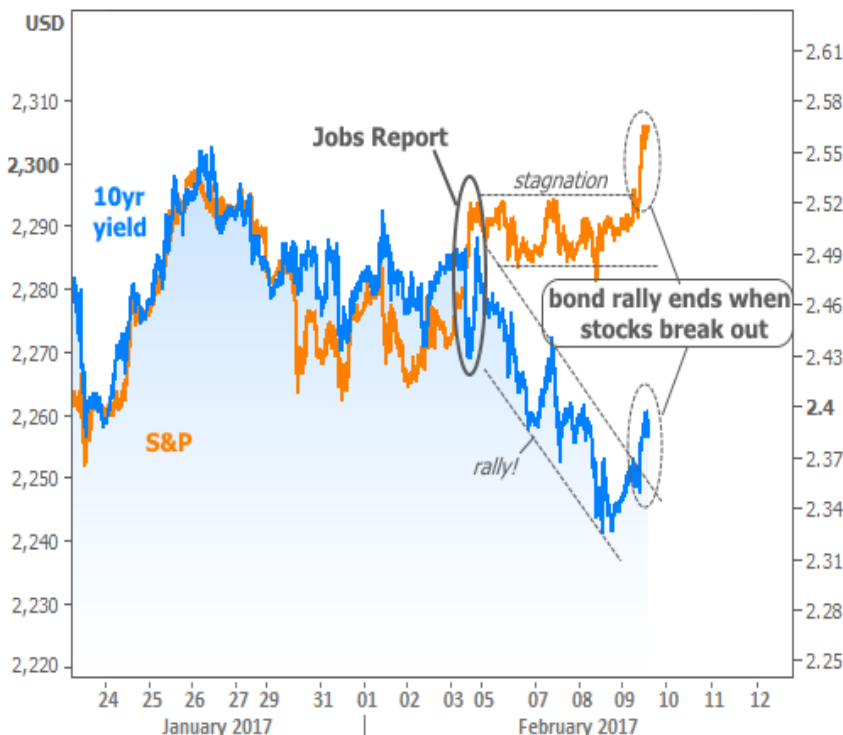
	Month	Value	Change
Mortgage Apps	Jun 12	208.5	+15.58%
Building Permits	Mar	1.46M	-3.95%
Housing Starts	Mar	1.32M	-13.15%
New Home Sales	Mar	693K	+4.68%
Pending Home Sales	Feb	75.6	+1.75%
Existing Home Sales	Feb	3.97M	-0.75%
Builder Confidence	Mar	51	+6.25%

Rates vs Rate Hike Expectations



One way markets attempt to read the Fed's mind is by watching the **economic data** that might cause the Fed to adjust its timing. Last week's jobs report was a great example of this phenomenon. Bonds rallied and stocks stagnated. That rally persisted for the first 3 days of this week, but ran out of steam on Thursday.

Stocks vs Bonds



Even though the previous chart highlights a potential connection between stocks and bonds, there are other, **simpler ways** to explain the recent movement. They go back to the notion of "waiting," and they're just as valid as any other explanation.

Quite simply, the bounce in rates fits perfectly with the prevailing consolidation pattern (discussed in [last week's newsletter](#)).



Remaining inside these lines is the bond market's way of "waiting." Given that the outer lines are converging, this obviously **can't go on forever**. When rates finally break out, if they look excited about the direction they're heading, that will be the first **real decision** they've made in months.

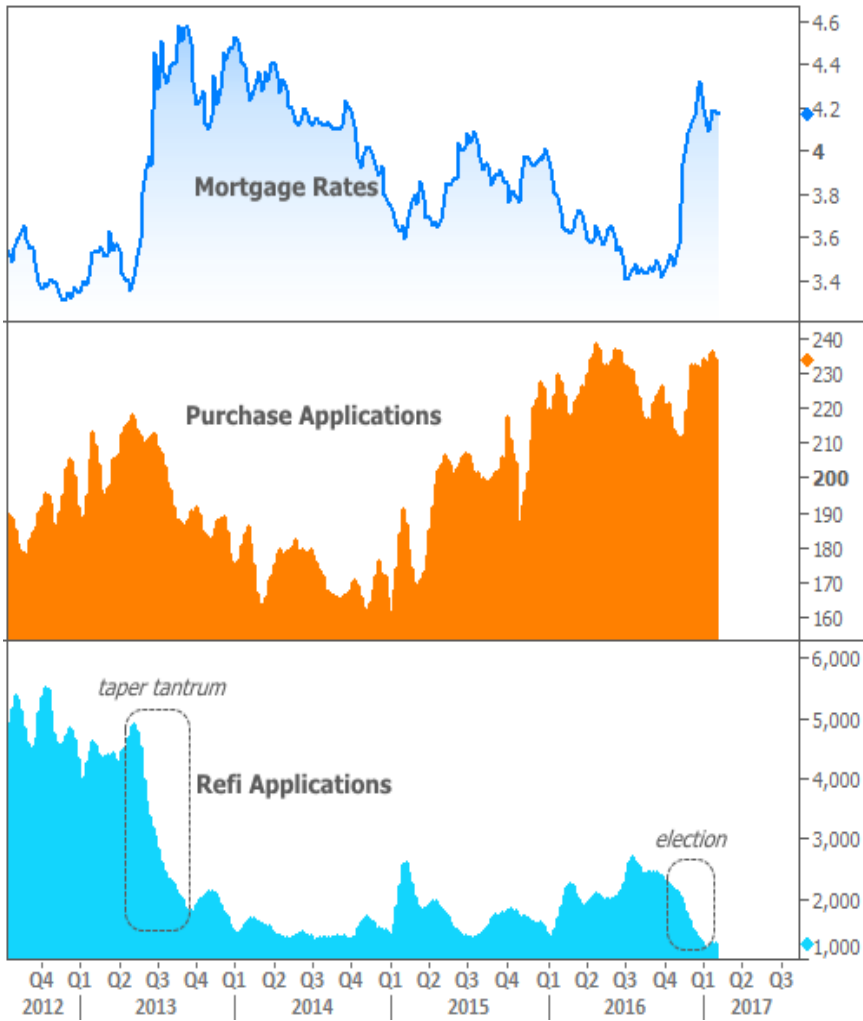
Housing and Econ Data

This was a very light week for scheduled data and events. US Treasury auctions dominated the calendar and caused a good amount of intraday volatility for rates. As such, lender **reprices** were more common.

Housing data was generally upbeat. Fannie Mae unveiled an improved [Home Purchase Sentiment survey](#) for January. The [National Association of Realtors](#) and [CoreLogic](#) both noted strong price gains, with the latter showing year-over-year gains of more than 7 percent.

In bigger picture news, the [Mortgage Bankers Association](#) (MBA) offered some historical data that suggests the somewhat troubling slide in home-ownership is a trend that may be reversible.

The MBA also put out its weekly report on Mortgage Apps. They didn't move much overall, but the share of refinance apps [fell to a 7.5-year low](#). This says more about the recent strength in purchase applications than it does about refi demand, which is merely falling in line with the levels typically seen during interest rate spikes. In any event, the damage has been nowhere near that seen after 2013's taper tantrum.



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Recent Economic Data

Date	Event	Actual	Forecast	Prior
Tuesday, Feb 07				
8:30AM	Dec International trade mm \$ (bl)	-44.3	-45.0	-45.2
1:00PM	3-Yr Note Auction (bl)	24		
Wednesday, Feb 08				
7:00AM	w/e Mortgage Market Index	393.6		384.7
Thursday, Feb 09				
8:30AM	w/e Initial Jobless Claims (k)	234	245	246
10:00AM	Dec Wholesale inventories mm (%)	+1.0	1.0	1.0
Friday, Feb 10				
8:30AM	Jan Import prices mm (%)	+0.4	0.2	0.4
8:30AM	Jan Export prices mm (%)	+0.1	0.1	0.3

Event Importance:

- No Stars = Insignificant
- ☆ Low
- ★ Moderate
- ★★ Important
- ★★★ Very Important

Date	Event	Actual	Forecast	Prior
10:00AM	Feb Consumer Sentiment Prelim	95.7	97.9	98.5
Tuesday, Feb 14				
8:30AM	Jan Producer Prices (%)	+0.6	0.3	0.2
Wednesday, Feb 15				
8:30AM	Jan Retail sales mm (%)	+0.4	0.1	0.6
8:30AM	Jan CPI mm, sa (%)	+0.6	0.3	0.3
8:30AM	Jan Core CPI Year/Year (%)	+2.3	2.1	2.2
8:30AM	Feb NY Fed manufacturing	+18.7	7.00	6.50
9:15AM	Jan Industrial Production (%)	-0.3	0.0	0.8
9:15AM	Jan Capacity Utilization (%)	75.3	75.5	75.5
10:00AM	Dec Business inventories mm (%)	+0.4	0.4	0.7
10:00AM	Feb NAHB housing market indx	65	67	67
Thursday, Feb 16				
8:30AM	Jan Housing starts number mm (ml)	1.246	1.222	1.226
8:30AM	Jan Building permits: number (ml)	1.285	1.230	1.228
8:30AM	Feb Philly Fed Business Index	43.3	18.0	23.6
Tuesday, Apr 11				
1:00PM	10-yr Note Auction (bl)	20		
Wednesday, Apr 12				
1:00PM	30-Yr Bond Auction (bl)	12		

Real Talk

At The Rate Shop, we're not your average mortgage banker. We specialize in bringing you ridiculously low interest rates that will make you wonder what the other guys are doing. In fact the ONLY objection we ever hear is "your rates sound too good to be true". Well they're not, and here is why...

After 15 years in the retail banking world I was frustrated with the high interest rates that came from that business model. As I looked around at all the bloated layers of management and their expensive salaries and the overhead of running a larger company (think rent costs, employee health and benefit costs, payroll taxes, and on and on) it dawned on me that I was a part of the problem, and the solution, for me at least, was so easy to see.

Start my own mortgage brokerage shop. No expensive executive salaries, no expensive building to pay rent at, no unnecessary employees and all the costs that are associated with that. What happens when you cut out all the fat? You can provide lower rates and lower closing costs. It's simple. Now here is the best part, you still get great service from a local Kansas City Lender. My mission is to let everyone know that low rates and great customer service are NOT mutually exclusive.

Thanks for coming along on this journey where Low Rates meet Great Service. The two do NOT have to be mutually exclusive. It's just a lie that the big box mortgage companies have been telling you for years. Don't believe me? Give me a call or shoot me a text on my personal cell phone today and compare my rates and costs up against any other lender in the country, and be prepared to be blown away.

Mike Baker

