

## HISTORY OF THE OFFICE OF THE TOWN CLERK

Before there were Mayors, Town Councils and Town Managers, there were Town Clerks. The municipal Town Clerk, along with the Tax Collector, is known as the oldest of public servant in local government.

The title "Clerk" as we know it today, found its beginnings back in 1272 A.D. in the history of Old London. The term "Clerk" came from the Latin "clericus" and referred to one who could read, write and who could, therefore, serve as a notary, secretary, accountant, and recorder.

The profession of Town Clerk dates back before Biblical times; and here's an interesting fact, the modern Hebrew translation of Town Clerk is "Mazkir Ha'ir", which literally translated means city or town "reminder", the early "keepers" of archives. These early "keepers" were often called "Remembrancers" as before writing came to be, the "keepers" memories served as the public record.

The Office of the Town Clerk is the oldest in American History and was created with the landing of the early settlers in America. The first Town Meetings began 300 years ago, approximately in 1620 in the New England colonies in meeting houses whereas four officers, Board of Selectmen, were elected to carry on the business of the Town. The Town Clerk's duties at that time was to record plots of land granted to the settlers. However, the Town Clerk's duties have changed and increased since that time.

The Office of the Town Clerk continues with administrative duties, such as preserving and registering vital statistics occurring within the community i.e., births and deaths. The Town Clerk issues state licenses and permits including D/B/A's (Doing Business As), marriage licenses, raffle permits, fuel storage permits, local dog licenses and other such certificates and permits as mandated by State law.

The Office of the Town Clerk also serves as the recording officer by certifying and recording all official action of the Town including town meeting legislation and appropriation; planning and zoning board decisions; signs all notes for borrowing; is keeper of the Town Seal; conducts the annual town census; and prepares street lists, furnishes the school lists, jury lists and other such lists as requested through public records requests.

Today the Office of the Town Clerk also serves as the Chief Election Official and oversees polling areas, election officers, and the general conduct and organization of all local, state and federal elections; directs preparation of ballots, polling places, election equipment, voting lists; administers campaign finance laws; certifies nomination papers, initiative and local petitions; serves on the Board of Registrars; and supervises voter registration and its continual updating and purging, absentee balloting, and reports official election results to the Secretary of the Commonwealth.

The Town Clerk's position continues to evolve through many state and local mandates. The responsibilities of fulfilling Open Meeting Law requirements and State Ethic requirements are examples of the most recent upgrades to the Town Clerk's position. Through education and experience, the Town Clerk continues to meet the ever changing demands of the Town Clerk's position.

Over the years, the Office of the Town Clerk has become the hub of government and the direct link between the town's residents and their government. The Office of the Town Clerk, being the keeper of the town's records, will respond to inquires from the general public, providing knowledge and assistance in a fair and impartial manner to all. Many consider the Office of the Town Clerk as the central information point of the town; and it serves as the first stop in local government.

Assistant Town Clerk, Brenda McCann, and I welcome you to stop by the Town Clerk's Office at the Town Hall with any questions or for information. We are committed to excellent customer service, and upholding the values of open government by providing easy access to the town's public records.

Sincerely yours,

Geri Holland

Your Town Clerk

[geri@hopkintonma.gov](mailto:geri@hopkintonma.gov)

[bmcann@hopkintonma.gov](mailto:bmcann@hopkintonma.gov)

508-497-9710