



## **BOROUGH OF CHATHAM CLERK'S OFFICE**

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BOROUGH CLERK

### **2015 ANNUAL REPORT**

#### **INTRODUCTION**

The Clerk's office serves the Mayor, Borough Council, Administrator and all municipal departments without exception. All of them call upon the Municipal Clerk's office, almost daily, for some service or information.

The Municipal Clerk is the oldest of public servants in government, along with the tax collector. The title "Clerk" as we know it developed from the Latin *clericus*. When scholarship and writing were limited to the clergy, clerk came to mean a scholar, especially one who could read, write, and thus serve as notary, accountant, and recorder. Today, the Municipal Clerk's office is considered the hub of government and the direct link between citizens and their government.

#### **CLERK'S OFFICE CORE GOALS & OBJECTIVES**

##### **1. OPERATIONAL EXCELLENCE AND EFFICIENCY**

Continually improve operational processes and enhance our services through efficient and effective methods to ensure an organization that is customer-focused, proactive, consistent, and responsible.

##### **2. LEGAL COMPLIANCE**

Compliance with all federal and state laws and regulations such as the Open Public Meetings Act, the Open Public Records Act, the Citizen Services Act, and the Help America Vote Act to name a few.

##### **3. CUSTOMER SERVICE**

Provide services, government records, and public information in an open and transparent manner. Identify opportunities that will help improve the office's interaction with the public, such as the use and advancement of technological platforms and re-evaluation of workflows.

##### **4. CIVIC ENGAGEMENT**

Support and promote civic engagement through participation in public meetings, outreach to community organizations, and by providing administrative assistance whenever possible.

#### **OFFICIAL DUTIES AND RESPONSIBILITIES**

The Office of the Municipal Clerk provides many different and complex services. Legally mandated responsibilities prompt the role to be a key source of government information to the public and all levels of government. In a recent seminar attended, it was stated that over 75% of what a Municipal Clerk does is done for another municipal official, municipal department, or another unit of government (federal, state and county). No other office deals more with these units of government, making the Municipal Clerks the chief intergovernmental official in the municipality.

\* The title Municipal Clerk, Borough Clerk and Clerk's Office are used interchangeable in this annual report.

The Clerk's office responds to daily inquiries from the public and is a source of information on federal and state laws & regulations, as well as borough ordinances, rules and policies.

The official duties of a Municipal Clerk are prescribed by state law (N.J.S.A. 40A:9-133), the Revised Code of the Borough of Chatham, and further detailed in the Employee Policy Manual. Six "core duties" are as follows:

**1. SECRETARY TO THE MUNICIPAL CORPORATION**

As the secretary to the municipal corporation, the Municipal Clerk is responsible for maintaining and safeguarding all municipal-owned property deeds, titles, and easements.

The Municipal Clerk maintains and updates the Revised Code of the Borough of Chatham, and publishes required legal and public notices on behalf of the municipality.

The Municipal Clerk maintains the official municipal seal, certifies official documents of the municipality, and attests to the signatures of municipal officials. The Borough Clerk administers and records oaths of office for elected officials and employees.

The Municipal Clerk is responsible for the filing of the annual budgets, annual financial statements, and annual audit reports with the state on behalf of the municipality. The Municipal Clerk also certifies to the municipality's Bond Counsel as to the proper advertising and filing of annual debt statements and supplemental debt statements and further certifies that no protests have been filed with the municipality as to the adoption of a bond ordinance.

The enactment of the "Citizens Services Act" in October 2009 requires the Municipal Clerk to compile and maintain a directory of all local authorities, boards and commissions; also requires any persons interested in serving on a municipal authority, board or commission to file a 'Citizen Leadership Application' with the Municipal Clerk. The act further requires anyone newly appointed to a municipal entity must take an oath of office for that specific position.

**2. SECRETARY TO THE GOVERNING BODY**

The Municipal Clerk prepares meeting agendas at the discretion of the Mayor and Council, prepares proclamations and resolutions, and attends all meetings of the governing body. Official records (minutes) of all meeting proceedings are prepared. Upon approval or passage by the Council, minutes, resolutions and ordinances of the municipality are archived as permanent records and preserved.

**3. CHIEF ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICER OF ALL ELECTIONS HELD IN THE MUNICIPALITY**

The Municipal Clerk is the chief election official who oversees the polls and the conduct of all elections and election-related activity for federal, state, and local elections. The Municipal Clerk is responsible for the issuance and certification of candidate nomination petitions for municipal office and exercises quasi-judicial authority in determining the validity of submitted petitions.

The Municipal Clerk assists the County Clerk in the preparing of ballots and certifies to the County Clerk those persons elected to county committee offices in each election district.

The Municipal Clerk must be well trained to ensure that the administration of elections go smoothly and inspire confidence with the voters.

**4. CHIEF REGISTRAR OF VOTERS IN THE MUNICIPALITY**

The Municipal Clerk acts as the Chief Registrar of Voters for the town. This includes registering voters and maintaining accurate street and voter lists.

**5. ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICER FOR THE ACCEPTANCE AND ISSUANCE OF STATE-REGULATED LICENSES**

The Municipal Clerk issues a variety of state-regulated licenses such as liquor licensing, taxi and limousine licensing, and gaming licenses upon approval by the Mayor and Council and the authorized state regulatory agency.

The Clerk’s office also issues of various permits in accordance with Borough ordinances and policies.

**6. RECORDS MANAGER AND COORDINATOR**

The Municipal Clerk is the records manager for the Borough, working with all municipal departments in ensuring that Borough records are archived and maintained in accordance with state regulations. We are dedicated to the careful preservation of official government records documents of historical significance.

The Municipal Clerk further serves as the records custodian under the Open Public Records Act, commonly known as OPRA, and is personally liable for any knowing and willful violations of the provisions of the law.

**2015 YEAR IN REVIEW**

The Borough Clerk’s Office supports the activities of the Mayor and Council, including attendance at meetings, keeping meeting minutes, drafting resolutions and codifying adopted ordinances.

With the re-assignment of Liz Holler to the Clerk’s Office in 2015, agendas and minutes are prepared for each of the statutory boards and commissions and all provisions of the Open Public Meetings Act are complied with.

The Borough Clerk’s office achieved 100% compliance with the Open Public Meetings Act in 2015.

	<b>2015</b>	<b>2014</b>	<b>2013</b>	<b>2012</b>
Number of Mayor and Council Meetings	24	20	20	22
Resolutions Adopted	377	353	400	399
Ordinances Adopted	16	13	23	18
Meeting Minutes Prepared and Approved	24	20	20	22
Board of Health Agendas/Minutes	10			
Environmental Commission Agendas/Minutes	9			
Historic Preservation Commission Agendas/Minutes	12			
Planning Board Minutes	15			
Shade Tree Commission Agendas/Minutes	6			
Zoning Board of Adjustment Minutes	12			

**RECORDS MANAGEMENT/OPEN PUBLIC RECORDS ACT**

The Borough Clerk’s Office is the Borough’s Record Custodian under the Open Public Records Act (OPRA). The Borough’s OPRA Request Form is a fillable PDF document. Since the electronic format became available to the public, 95% of all OPRA requests submitted have been filed and responded to electronically via email, eliminating the need for the public to visit Borough Hall.

The Borough Clerk's office achieved 100% compliance with the Open Public Records Act in 2015.

	2015	2014	2013	2012
Number of OPRA Requests Submitted and Completed	206	196	105	71

2015 was a productive year for records management. We re-vamped the Borough's record retention program and moved the annual records purging date to June so that we could utilize the additional help of summer interns. 124 boxes of records were identified, logged, and submitted to the state for records destruction approval using the ARTEMIS software. State approvals were attained electronically and a shredding company was retained for secure records disposal. Sensitive police and administrative records were shredded on-site, while all other records were shredded off-site, yielding an additional saving on costs.

We have begun the process of researching the best cost-effective system of digitizing and indexing the records in the Clerk's Office to make records retrieval more efficient and to further preserve permanent and historic records.

## LICENSING AND PERMITS

The Borough Clerk's Office is responsible for the issuance of the following licenses and permits:

	2015	2014	2013	2012
Alcoholic Beverage Control Licenses	7	7	7	7
Social Affairs Permits	8	2	2	3
Special Winery Retail Permit (Farmers' Market)	2	2	n/a	n/a
Taxicab and Limousine Licenses	0	0	0	2
Red Light & Siren	0	2	n/a	n/a
Blue Light	1	9	n/a	n/a
Board of Health Food Vendor Permits	55	52	51	51
Board of Health Public Pool Operation Permits	3	3	3	3
Garage Sale Permits	24	31	42	47
Block Party Permits	19	22	25	22
Annual Do Not Knock Registrations Processed [731 total registrants]	14	11	10	
Road Opening Permits	38	19	n/a	n/a

Forms and applications have been updated and created into PDF fillable forms. Users have access to all forms and applications on the Borough's website and can easily complete the forms on their PC and email them to the Clerk's office for immediate processing.

## ELECTIONS

The Borough Clerk serves as the Chief Administrative Elections Official in the Borough and Chief Registrar of Voters in the Borough. As always, it is our goal to see that all elections run smoothly and according to the letter of the law.

	2015	2014	2013	2012
Number of Registered Voters, November General Election	6,113	6,207	6,038	6,158
School Election	✓	✓	✓	✓
Primary Election	✓	✓	✓	✓
General Election	✓	✓	✓	✓
Special Election	None	None	✓	None

## **CUSTOMER SERVICE, PUBLIC INFORMATION, and WEB SITE CONTENT MANAGEMENT**

The Clerk's Office sets to take advantage of existing technologies that can bring greater efficiencies to providing services, government records, and public information in an open and transparent manner. We are always identifying opportunities that will help improve our office's interaction with the public, such as the use and advancement of technological platforms and re-evaluation of workflows.

### **CUSTOMER SERVICE**

Exceptional customer service is the hallmark of our office. In 2015, our office began tracking the number of customers contacting the Clerk's office - whether in-person, by phone or email - to determine the best way to utilize existing resources and re-evaluate workflows.

	<b>2015</b>	<b>2014</b>	<b>2013</b>	<b>2012</b>
Walk-ins	866	n/a	n/a	n/a
Phone Calls	2,703	n/a	n/a	n/a
Email Communications	18,078	n/a	n/a	n/a

With the restructuring of office personnel in January 2015, the Clerk's Office assumed the role as the Borough receptionist. Of the 866 walk-in customers, on average, 29% of those customers were re-directed to other municipal departments. Our metrics further revealed that, on average, 65% of all incoming phone calls were re-directed to other municipal departments. Understanding what information our customers are seeking also helps us to determine what information and records can be added to the Borough's website for full public access.

### **WEB SITE CONTENT MANAGEMENT**

Without doubt, the Borough Clerk acts as a public information officer. In collaboration with all Borough Departments, the Clerk's Office continues to manage and improve webpage content.

In 2015, the Borough's Twitter account was re-activated. News and events posted to the website are automatically tweeted out to followers. There are almost 1,000 twitter followers as of this report.

Working with the Communications & Technology Advisory Committee, a quarterly electronic newsletter was inaugurated in 2015. Citizens can subscribe to the newsletter by a quick registration process on the website.

The "Elections" webpage, added in late 2014, provides valuable information on how individuals can register to vote and provides information on where they should vote. A great feature allows voters to complete their Voter Registration Application or Mail-in Ballot Application on-line. Once completed the voter signs and mails the self-addressed applications directly to the county. No more visits to Borough Hall. Lastly, to assist first time voters, we have uploaded an informational video link produced by the Hall Institute of Public Policy in cooperation with the League of Women Voters of New Jersey, which provides a step-by-step guide to the voting process at the polls.

### **OFFICE 365**

In 2015, the Borough Clerk's Office took over the responsibility of managing the Borough's Outlook 365 Email System. The Madison IT Department previously handled responsibility, but untimely updating of user email accounts and associated information necessitated that the administration and management of the Outlook 365 be directed in-house.

2015 saw a full year of training for both Liz Holler and Margie Lowe. This includes many different types of work and understanding compliance issues relative to the Open Public Meetings Act, Open Public Records Act, New Jersey Ethics Law (Annual Financial Disclosure Statements!) and has kept us very busy.

## **2016 GOALS & OBJECTIVES**

1. Looking forward to 2016, we will be welcoming our new Deputy Clerk/Administrative Assistant. A professional development plan has been prepared to help meet the training goals of this demanding position.
2. Modernize and, where possible, automate Clerk's Office functions using existing technologies and open source web-based platforms to enhance operating efficiencies and the delivery of services to the public.
  - Continue to reevaluate workflow protocols.
  - Develop a Clerk's Office Desk Reference and Handbook.
  - Create a records imaging and records retention program.
  - Meet all continuing education requirements to maintain the Municipal Clerk license.

Respectfully submitted,



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