



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

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BOROUGH CLERK

### **2014 ANNUAL REPORT**

#### **INTRODUCTION**

The Municipal Clerk is the oldest of public servants in local government, along with the tax collector. The title "Clerk" as we know it developed from the Latin clericus. During the Middle Ages, 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, secretary, accountant and recorder. Today, the Municipal Clerk's office is considered to be the hub of government and the direct link between citizens and their government.

Professor William Bennett Munro, the eminent political scientist, wrote in one of the first textbooks on municipal administration: "No other office in municipal service has so many contracts. It serves the mayor, the town council, the town manager (when there is one), and all administrative departments without exception. All of them call upon it, almost daily, for some service or information. Its work is not spectacular, but it demands versatility, alertness, accuracy, and no end of patience. The public does not realize how many loose ends of town administration this office pulls together."

#### **CORE GOALS & OBJECTIVES**

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

Continually improve operational processes to promote efficient delivery of services to the public and internal record-keeping practices. Ensure the Borough Clerk's is customer-focused, proactive, consistent, and responsible, and serves as a model for other municipal offices to follow.

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

Comply with all local, statutory, regulatory and federal laws, such as the Open Public Meetings Act, the Open Public Records Act, and the Help America Vote Act.

##### **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 advancement and use 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.

#### **ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE BOROUGH CLERK'S OFFICE**

The Borough Clerk's office supports the activities of the Mayor and Council, the Borough Administrator, and all municipal departments. The office further serves the important role as the direct liaison between our public and local government. The "Six Core Duties" of the Municipal Clerk, as established by state statute (N.J.S.A. 40A:9-133), serves as a snapshot of the varying roles and responsibilities undertaken by the Borough Clerk's office.

### **Secretary to the Municipal Corporation**

As the secretary to the municipal corporation, the Borough Clerk is responsible for maintaining all Borough-owed property deeds, easements and titles, and maintains the official municipal seal. The Borough Clerk certifies official documents of the municipality, maintains receipt of service of legal documents, and attests to the signatures of municipal officials. The Borough Clerk administers oaths of office for elected officials and employees.

Pursuant to state laws, the Borough Clerk certifies to the municipality's Bond Counsel as to the proper advertising, filing of Supplemental Debt Statements and that no protests have been filed with the municipality as to the adoption of bond ordinances.

2014 Accomplishment: All vehicle titles were inventoried, preserved in protective sleeves and stored in a fire-proof file cabinet. The vehicle inventory was cross-checked with the Morris County Joint Insurance Fund's records to ensure vehicles no longer in service were deleted and new vehicles were added for coverage.

### **Secretary to the Governing Body**

The Borough Clerk prepares and coordinates the filing and publication of meeting and public notices, and public bid opening notices, in accordance with the Open Public Meetings Act, commonly known as OPMA. The Borough Clerk prepares meeting agendas at the discretion of the Governing Body, drafts proclamations and resolutions, and attends all meetings of the Mayor and Council. Official records of all meeting proceedings are prepared and original copies of all minutes, resolutions and ordinances are permanently retained and preserved.

2014 Accomplishment: The Borough's OPRA Request Form was updated. A fillable PDF form was created and uploaded to the website, allowing convenient completion and electronic submission. Since implementation of the new electronic filing, 92% of all OPRA requests are filed and processed electronically. The Borough Clerk's office achieved 100% compliance with the Open Public Records Act.

### **Chief Administrative Officer of all Elections held in the Municipality**

The Borough Clerk administers all elections held in the Borough in conjunction with the County Board of Elections and County Clerk's Office, and is responsible for the issuance and certification of candidate nomination petitions for municipal office. The Borough Clerk exercises quasi-judicial authority in determining the validity of petitions. The Borough Clerk certifies to the County Clerk persons elected to partisan county committee offices in each election district.

2014 Accomplishment: The Clerk's Office improved election results reporting. A new "Election" webpage was created, providing valuable information on voter registration, election dates and the election process.

### **Chief Registrar of Voters in the Municipality**

The Borough Clerk acts as the Chief Registrar of Voters for the town.

2014 Accomplishment: New fillable PDF Voter Registration Applications and fillable PDF Mail-in Ballot Applications have been created and uploaded on the "Elections" webpage, allowing the public convenient access to these important application forms. The forms can be readily completed, printed, signed, and mailed directly to the appropriate agency.

### **Administrative Officer for the Acceptance and Issuance of State-regulated Licenses**

The Borough Clerk administers the processing and issuance of a variety of state-regulated licenses e.g. liquor licensing, taxi and limousine licensing, and gaming licenses, upon approval by the Mayor and Borough Council. Processing and issuance of various permits as promulgated by ordinance are also administered by the Clerk.

2014 Accomplishment: The Clerk's Office continues to improve workflow processes in the acceptance and issuance of licenses and permits. All applications have been updated and posted on the "Forms and Applications" webpage.

### **Records Manager and Coordinator**

The Borough Clerk is the Records Custodian for the Borough, working with all municipal departments in managing record retention and maintenance of records in accordance with the Division of Record and Archive Management regulations. The Borough Clerk is the Records Custodian regarding public access to official town records under the Open Public Records Act, commonly known as OPRA.

The Borough Clerk acts as the Public Information Officer and manages the content of the Borough's official website. In the coming year, the Borough Clerk's Office will assume the responsibility of managing the Borough's Outlook 365 Email System.

2014 Accomplishment: The Borough Clerk's Office has become more engaged in the day-to-day management of website content and continues to improve the timely posting of informational updates.

In 2014, the Borough Clerk's Office was staffed by a Registered Municipal Clerk and a Deputy Clerk.

## 2014 - THE YEAR IN REVIEW

### GOVERNING BODY SUPPORT

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. The codification of adopted ordinances is now completed within days of adoption and immediately accessible and searchable via the eCode on the Borough website or downloadable mobile app.

	+/-	2014	2013	2012
Number of Mayor and Council Meetings	0%	20	20	22
Resolutions Adopted	-12%	353	400	399
Ordinances Adopted	-43%	13	23	18
Meeting Minutes Prepared and Approved	0%	20	20	22

### LICENSING AND PERMITS

The Borough Clerk's Office administers the issuance of the following licenses and permits:

	+/-	2014	2013	2012
Alcoholic Beverages, All types	0%	7	7	7
Social Affairs Permits	0%	2	2	3
Special Winery Retail Permit (Farmers' Market)	-	2	n/a	n/a
Taxicab and Limousine Licenses	0%	0	0	2
Red Light & Siren	-	2	n/a	n/a
Blue Light	-	9	n/a	n/a
Board of Health Food Vendor Permits	+2%	52	51	51
Board of Health Public Pool Operation Permits	0%	3	3	3
Garage Sale Permits	-26%	31	42	47
Block Party Permits	-12%	22	25	22
Annual Do Not Knock Registrations Processed [717 total registrants]	+10%	11	10	
Fireworks	0%	1	1	1

### RECORDS MANAGEMENT/OPEN PUBLIC RECORDS ACT

The Borough Clerk's Office is the Borough's Record Custodian under the Open Public Records Act (OPRA). In 2014, the OPRA Request Form was transitioned to a fillable PDF format. Since the electronic format became available to the public, 92% of all OPRA requests submitted have been filed and responded to electronically via email, eliminating the need for the public to visit Borough Hall.

	+/-	2014	2013	2012
Number of OPRA Requests Submitted and Completed	+87%	196	105	71
Number of Denial of Access Complaints filed with the Government Records Council	-	0	1	n/a
Number of Denial of Access Complaints with in Superior Court	-	0	n/a	n/a

### ELECTIONS

The Borough Clerk serves as the Chief Elections Administrative Official in the Borough and Chief Registrar of Voter Registration.

	+/-	2014	2013	2012
Number of Registered Voters, November General Election	+3%	6,207	6,038	6,158
School Election		✓	✓	✓
Primary Election		✓	✓	✓
General Election		✓	✓	✓
Special Election		None	✓	None

## **PUBLIC INFORMATION and WEB SITE CONTENT MANAGEMENT**

The Clerk's Office sets to take advantage of existing technologies to bring greater efficiencies to our delivery of information and records and enhancing government transparency.

The Borough Clerk acts as the Public Information Officer and manages the content of the Borough's official website. In collaboration with Borough Departments, the Clerk's Office continues to manage and improve webpage content, as well as, the timeliness of information posted to the Borough's website.

An "Elections" webpage was created in 2014 and provides valuable information on voter registration, election dates and the election process. A new fillable PDF Voter Registration Application and fillable PDF Mail-in Ballot Application can be readily completed, printed and mailed directly from someone's home or office, giving our public immediate access to completing and filing these important election forms.

In 2015, the Borough Clerk's Office looks forward to taking on the responsibility of managing the Borough's Outlook 365 Email System.

## **2015 GOALS & OBJECTIVES**

- 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 and train new staff.
- Create a records imaging and records retention program.
- Meet all continuing education requirements to maintain the Municipal Clerk license.