

ANNUAL REPORT OF THE TOWN CLERK TO THE RESIDENTS OF WAREHAM:

Fifteen years as a town employee and eleven as your Town Clerk obligates me to report my assessment of another year. If you track political ups and downs, as residents you know we have all faced some pretty confusing and fractured times here in Wareham. With that in mind, we try to keep hope alive that this is just one of those storms before the calm.

My hope was that by the time I authored another of these reports to the community, I could say that the war in Iraq was over and the conflicts we are exposed to, such as in Afghanistan, had also been quelled to non-existence confrontations. As you know, that is not at all true, and we continue to witness the loss of our young men and women, even here in our small part of the world, the southeast region. Every time a meaningful life is lost, you either read a newspaper or hear the news broadcast, and then you wonder when will this end, and so we continue to pray for the families that are most affected by such alarming tragedies. So with a very heavy heart, we continue to reach out and extend our sympathies to the many American families who have been personally touched by such devastating losses as a direct result of these unfortunate wars. To all families in Wareham who have lost a loved one, we continue to keep you in our thoughts and prayers.

On the home front, we continue to struggle with a recession that just won't quit. We have been confronted with lost wages and double the work. We have watched fellow colleagues and employees getting laid off one at a time, and it isn't over yet. Even with such devastating losses and continued worry over such a bleak future, we in the Town Clerk's Office strive to always remember that our first priority, when we walk through our office door, is to provide an uplifting façade and the friendliest, efficient and most prompt service to all who grace our counter. If with a positive outcome we can touch just one person and make their day brighter, we have at least given a little back.

As with all departments in Town Hall, we continue to function under the constraints of yet another level-funded budget, fluctuating gas prices, higher taxes and the possibility of a new town administrator. But we continue to persevere. However, with the continued support of a consistent Board of Selectmen, Department Heads, Registrars, election workers, boards and committees we are optimistic that we are heading in the right direction. It is always important to remember the two constants in the Clerk's Office who assist me in making this all possible, Elaine Gonsalves and Donna Rhodes, who despite it all continue their genuine commitment and continued assistance to the town and this Town Clerk.

Several events remain consistent in the Clerk's Office, the first is to remind all residents that their dogs should be licensed every year. The licensing period is January 1st through December 31ST of each year. Due to budget shortfalls we were unable to send out reminder cards, as we are striving to be fiscally responsible. This year we witnessed a drop in dogs being licensed, for the first time since I became town clerk. We have used other means of reminding owners, we continue to advertise in the local newspapers and on our annual census forms about this legal requirement. Please get in and license your dog (state mandate/town regulations), as late fees are in effect beginning on April 1st (up \$10) and June 1st (up \$10). However, on August 1st and after, the late fee is a flat \$50 for renewals on any and all dogs.

Secondly is to report that our office, as a whole, enjoyed another successful year, beginning with the September 16th State Primary, the Fall Town meeting which was held on October 28, 2008, the

Presidential Election on November 4, 2008, the April 7, 2009 Town Election and the culmination of the Annual Spring Town Meeting on April 27, 2009. We also enjoyed the successful use of our new election voting machines, the Auto-mark. However, with the addition of this new voting equipment it has positively helped simplify the voting process for not only our physically handicapped voters, but any voter struggling with literacy issues. The Auto-mark not only speaks to the voter, but also offers the ease of touch-screen voting for any voter wishing to utilize this equipment. As always, our competent election workers are always available to lend a hand and/or assist voters of Wareham.

These machines are available at all six precincts. To that end, I would like to add an addendum and special **Thanks** to the sixty odd Poll/Election workers, who continue to strive to serve and continuously conduct professional, open and honest town and state elections. On a personal note, I know as Town Clerk I would be lost if not for their continued support and professional commitment to the Town of Wareham. I would also like to **Thank** our hard working and diligent Board of Registrars for their continued support in helping to ensure an efficient and honest election process.

Thirdly, we conducted the 2009 Census, beginning in December, 2008, and through had work and diligence was able to complete the process by the end of April, 2009. We were able to update voter information on the CVR System to the best of our abilities, with the assistance of all residents of the town. We continue to receive a few stray forms. approximately one or two per week. Please keep them coming, as we do accept them through the whole year. For the third year in a row, the Jury Commission sought our permission via the internet and received our most recent updates on the CVR System in order to compile a new Jury List for the coming year. The Street List is also one of the end results of the yearly census. We most recently placed an order for the Street List books and should receive them in late August.

Fourth, no matter the state of our economy, people remain interested in the past and actually enjoy the genealogy research into family. It is not important what our ancestors might have done or not done, the draw is uncovering how they engineered their own plans for themselves and family which so often changed their lives forever. This drastic change often involved severe hardship and unwavering determination to change their very existence, and that is why many of them braved the elements in order to relocate thousands and thousands of miles from their birth place or homeland. History shows, no matter your ethnicity or race, that our forefathers held fast to the dream of providing a better life for their children. Historical data provides us with many answers to their tenacity in achieving their goals and dreams, and how they survived the demands of their particular, often uneasy, era in time. We as a growing community strive to avoid past mistakes in order to make Wareham a successful and more tolerant community to serve the diverse population which has chosen to settle within our boundaries. Here in the Clerk's Office we respect and support this objective and continue to remain steadfast in presenting a balance regarding accurate records and delivery of same in a timely fashion and at a moderate fee.

Fifth, we in the Clerk's Office continue as agents for the Boston Passport Agency. We have had the pleasure of processing passports since April of 2003. For each passport processed, the town receives a \$25 processing fee. As you may note, this fee was reduced by the State by \$5. However, on the other end, the State increased the price of the passports by eight dollars or a fee of \$75 for adults sixteen and older and \$60 for anyone less than sixteen years of age. Since July 1, 2008 until June 30, 2009, we have processed 104 passports, which contributed about \$3,120 dollars to the town coffers. Since September 11, 2001, it has become highly important to identify American citizens when traveling. This can only be done with a valid passport or pass card. With our ever-changing world, it is now necessary to have a passport when traveling anywhere in the world, especially when re-entering the United States from any port.

Sixth, on June 10, 11 and 12, we were able to attend classes for Town Clerks at Sea Crest in Falmouth. It encompassed three days of training and classes; in some cases it involved pertinent review and in others we received new information. This year the Town Clerk was asked to serve on a panel of judges in order to give and take questions to filter to the experts at Vital Records in Dorchester, who also served on this panel. In order to serve to your full capacity in any position, it is imperative to continue educational training. This training enhances the Town Clerk's ability to keep pace with the many responsibilities required and put upon city and town clerks in Massachusetts. City and Town Clerks, along with affiliation with these prestigious organizations continue to elevate the responsibility and desire to further ones' knowledge, which allows clerks the opportunity to keep pace with the changing face of town government and state laws as it affects elections, census, town meetings, raffle permits, business certificates, zoning, planning, vital records (births, deaths & marriages), marriage intentions, and other added responsibilities that are required to serve our respective communities.. As Town Clerk, I continue to attend as many meetings as my schedule allows. It allows your Town Clerk to remain a member in good standing of several organizations such as the Association of City and Town Clerks; Massachusetts Town Clerks' Association; Tri-County Clerks' Association; Cape and Island Clerks' Association, and the International Institute of Municipal Clerks'. These organizations continue to offer their support, encouragement, and experience as tools to supplement and assist all Town Clerks in this endeavor.

Seventh, we continue to offer notary services and administer oaths of office, also. For the convenience of residents, we have three notaries public and three Commissioners to Qualify for Public Office. The Town Clerk also continues to serve as a Justice of the Peace and does so by appointment only.

As I conclude, as your Town Clerk, I encourage and support the residents and/or voters to utilize our office as a resource, whether it involves voting, vital records, census, business certificates, raffle permits, etc. either in person, by telephone or via the internet. In order to contact us the main number to our office is 508-291-3140 or via email at masilva@wareham.ma.us or clerk@wareham.ma.us. My assistant can also be reached at egonsalves@wareham.ma.us. The office secretary can be reached through her email at drhodes@wareham.ma.us.

There have been several occasions when residents have shared vital information or suggestions. In these trying times, we welcome all positive contributions and/or constructive coaching.

As we watch the horizon of another year dawning, we continue to strive for a positive, productive and successful year here the Clerk's Office. We wish you health, prosperity and many blessings in the upcoming fiscal year.

Respectfully submitted,
Mary Ann Silva, Town Clerk