



Township of Hamilton
Office of the Municipal Clerk

2014 Annual Report

What Does the Township Clerk's Office Do?

The Municipal Clerk's Office administers various township licensing/permitting processes and coordinates public notices and legal publications.

The Township Clerk is the Open Public Records Act Custodian for the township, managing retention, maintenance and access to official township records. The Township Clerk's Office supports the Township Council and is responsible for recording all activities relating to the Township Council meetings, including meeting minutes, ordinances and resolutions.

Election filings and other notices and details of elections are administered by the Township Clerk and coordinated with the County Election Office. The Township Clerk administers oaths of office for elected officials and employees.

Council Meetings

In 2014 the Township Council met twenty-two (22) times for which Council Agenda packets were distributed which include communications, applications, minutes, resolutions, and ordinances along with back-up materials. Following all meetings, summary minutes were prepared and published after approval of the Governing Body.

Resolutions and Ordinances

The Township Council considered eighty-one (81) ordinances and five hundred three (503) resolutions were submitted to the governing body for formal action.

Elections

The Municipal Clerk is the Administrative Officer for all elections under the direction of the New Jersey Division of Elections and the Mercer County Board of Elections. As such, the Clerk's Office is responsible for distributing and receiving new voter registration forms, name and address change forms, party affiliation declaration forms and vote by mail applications. Additionally, the Municipal Clerk distributes and receives candidate petitions for municipal elections. Our residents are to be commended for taking their right and privilege to vote seriously. For each election the Clerk's Office:

- Works with the board of education, volunteer fire companies, and private and non-profit organizations to coordinate the use of facilities for polling locations
- Ensures polling locations are compliant with elections laws;
- Distributes election materials to poll workers;
- Collects election materials/tallies at close of polls;
- Transports provisional ballots to county offices;
- Tallies election results
- Provides election results information to media as requested.

Liquor Licenses

The Clerk's Office and the New Jersey Alcoholic Beverage Control Commission work together and oversees the licensing process and enforcement of the state's liquor laws. Hamilton Township is responsible for investigating all applicants and verifying that the place of business meets all state and local building, plumbing, zoning, fire, sanitation and health laws and ordinances. The Clerk's Office coordinates the procedures with the Police Department and the Community Planning and Compliance Departments. The most common types of liquor licenses that are issued in Hamilton include *Retail Consumption "33"* (permits the sale on the licensed premises by the glass or other open container. Licensees may also allow the sale of packaged goods for consumption off-premise but sale may only take place from the principal barroom); *Retail Consumption with Broad Package Privilege "32"* (same as Retail Consumption, except the sale of package goods is not restricted to the principal public barroom); *Club License "31"* (issued to non-profit organizations that have a minimum of sixty (60) voting members and whose clubhouse has been in active for three (3) continuous years; *Plenary Retail Distribution "44"* (permits the sale of packaged goods for consumption off the licensed premise).

In 2014, our office processed 71 liquor licenses renewals and transfers which resulted in revenue of \$95,650.00. Additionally, in 2014 the Council allowed for the issuance of two (2) additional hotel liquor licenses; Homewood Suites is scheduled for operation in January 2015.

Bingo and Raffle

All qualified non-profit organizations desiring to conduct a bingo or raffle must file an application which is then processed by this office. Qualified organizations must have at least twenty-five (25) members and include: religious, charitable, educational, and veterans organizations, fraternal groups, civic and service clubs, volunteer fire companies, volunteer first aid/rescue squads and senior citizen organizations. Bingo and raffle applications are submitted in triplicate with this office. One copy of retained by the Clerk, the second copy is returned to the applicant after a license has been granted or denied and the third is forwarded to the New Jersey Legalized Games of Chance Control Commission. In 2014, this office processed over 230 applications which generated \$14,750.00 in revenue.

Peddler/Vendor/Solicitors

Many businesses target Hamilton Township as a desirable place to distribute information regarding their company or to sell a service or product offered by their company. In order to regulate the persons and organizations soliciting in our township and to protect the safety and privacy of our residents, our office requires that applications be submitted for each individual wishing to solicit in the Township. Each applicant is investigated by the Hamilton Township Police Division to help ensure the safety of our residents. Once the applicant has been cleared, our office issues a photo ID card that identifies them as a solicitor which must be worn at all times. In 2014, over eighty (80) applications for solicitor/vendor/peddler licenses resulted in revenue totaling over \$2,000.00.

Towers

Towers summoned by the Hamilton Township Police Department to pick-up disabled vehicles are required to be licensed. Applications are provided to all towing companies wishing to participate in a towing rotation which is administered by the HTPD. The licenses fees are \$1,750 for light/medium duty and \$1,850 for combination light/medium/heavy. An additional application fee of \$250 is required, which covers the cost of vehicle/facility inspections and company personnel background investigations. In 2014, our office issued nine (9) licenses which generated \$18,000 in revenue.

Other Permits and Licenses

The Municipal Clerk's Office serves as the administrative office for the acceptance of application and issuance of various licenses and permits except where state statute or municipal ordinance designates some other municipal office. In 2014, Council approved ordinances which eliminated Amusement Game Device and Auctioneer Licenses which were thought to be antiquated and unnecessary in today's times.

The following licenses, permits and requests were processed by the Clerk's Office:

Assessment Searches	5	\$ 50
Auto Dealer New/Renewals	31	\$3,100
Junk Yard	3	\$ 600
Taxi Cab Driver/Owner (SS w/ Ewing)	39	\$3,785
Theater		\$1,950
Jewelers	15	\$ 550

The final dollars amount for revenue generated for the year 2014 is \$145,852.00 for all licenses and permits issued by this office.

Open Public Records Act (OPRA)

The Municipal Clerk's Office plays an important role as a liaison between numerous Township departments to ensure records are retrieved in an accurate and timely manner. In 2010, Governor Christie signed into law legislation that dramatically changed the copy fees previously established. These changes became effective for all New Jersey public agencies on November 9, 2010. Fees for records that do not have a specific fee established by state statute, custodians are now required to charge a flat rate of \$0.05 per letter size or smaller, and \$0.07 per legal size page. Additionally, records provided via e-mail and facsimile must be provided free of charge. While the premise behind these changes was to give the public even greater access to records by balancing the public's interest in government records, respect for personal privacy and the efficient process of government, it continues to prove that this law is committed to making OPRA work for all citizens of New Jersey.

In 2014, OPRA Requests increased to over five hundred (500) filed requests, up fifteen percent (15%) from 2013 as well as countless informal requests for information and documents. Multiple departments' records coordinators share in the responsibility to ensure response to these many requests by copying the necessary documents or having records available for on-site inspection. This office takes pride in the fact that not a single complaint was filed with the New Jersey Government Records Council for failure to provide requested records. Revenue generated for the cost of provided records totaled over \$3,500.

Records Management Program

The Municipal Clerk serves as the Custodian of Records and oversees the Township's Records Retention Program as mandated by state law. The Township Clerk's responsibilities as the Records Manager include the following:

- Plans, develops, and administers records management policies and procedures.
- Confer with departments regarding recordkeeping problems and recommends solutions.

- Trains staff in records management requirements and Laserfiche software use.
- Evaluates department records to determine requirements, methods of storage, and space needs.
- Plans and implements multiple databases.
- Responsible for the disposal of records approved for destruction.
- Coordinates records retrieval from archival storage facilities.
- Coordinates OPRA requests.

Continuing efforts to reorganize Township records in each department have met with positive results. In 2014, over 500 cubic feet of records were destroyed with State approval. Additionally, over 150 cubic feet of permanent records were digitally scanned and imported into our Laserfiche System which stores permanent files. Having been able to accomplish this task, the hard copies will be destroyed which then for much needed additional storage space of permanent records.

The Township continues to implement an enterprise-wide imaging program using Laserfiche Software which is now utilized by all departments and divisions. This allows departments to view documentation which facilitates timely access and reduces the need for hard copies and requests to this office for such documents.

This office continues to apply for and receive certification from the Division of Archives and Records Management which allows hard copies of scanned records to be removed from our current inventory and allow space for additional records.

With the previously completed retrofitting of the Dwier Records Center, Hamilton's many departments have established off-site storage with the benefit of added workspace in their current offices. Currently, the Dwier Records Center now houses over 1200 cubic feet of stored records with another 100 cubic feet of cabinet storage.

Access to records for the many OPRA requests the Clerk's office receives has immensely improved. Record boxes are labeled and inventoried which adds to timely accessibility. In 2015, the records manager will continue all responsibilities mentioned above and commence with new project plans. The 2014 projects are updated below.

- The retrofitting of the 'war room' to the Records Storage Room was completed which serves as the microfilm reader/printer and microfilm storage area along with housing of computer/scanner stations. Individuals from other offices who are placed on 'light duty' perform tasks such as shredding or scanning of documents
- Records Coordinator training which an on-going exercise, which ensures all policies and procedures are state compliant and to assist departments with any records management issues.

- Tax Assessor – the vault reorganization was completed in 2014 which now allows for more than 200 additional spaces for storage.
- Tax Collector – the microfilming project was completed which resulted in over 25 years' worth of permanent records being digitally scanned and imported into Laserfiche for easy retrieval
- Tax Assessor - property record cards for the years 1977 and 1999 for all properties were scanned and the images are currently housed in Laserfiche for easy access and retrieval by all interested parties which eliminate the need for manual searches.
- Construction Office – two years of permanent construction files were also scanned and images imported, however this office continues to be a priority as there are currently over 1,000 boxes of permanent records that still need to be digitally scanned.
- Personnel Office – permanent employee files were successfully digitally scanned and imported for easy retrieval by the necessary divisions.