

# Mercer County Clerk *Paula Sollami Covello, Esq.*

## County Clerk's Corner Newsletter...At Your Service



Vol. 1 | Issue 3 | Spring 2013

### Mercer County Clerk Launches New Computer Search System for Land Recording

The County Clerk's Office recently went live with a new cutting-edge Windows-based computer system called NewVision that improves the speed and efficiency of land recording and public record searching. The easy-to-use system has also been adopted by 3 other New Jersey counties.

The NewVision system automatically links together information on deeds, titles, mortgage and lien documents for land records dating all the way back to 1997. The office has also digitized and scanned land records dating as far back as 1957. Over the next two years, the office plans to incorporate the archives within the new system.

"We are so pleased to be able to offer a system that is compatible with current technologies used by title professionals and the title industry. It is a great advancement for our County and we are proud to be able to provide it to the public. The computer upgrade was funded entirely through the County Clerk's Special Trust Fund, so there was no expense to the taxpayers," said Sollami Covello.

To research Mercer County land records, public and professional record searchers can utilize public access workstations at the Mercer County Clerk's Office located at 209 South Broad Street in Trenton. You can also view the records remotely via the internet by becoming a free registered user on [https://records.mercercounty.org/recordsNG\\_search/](https://records.mercercounty.org/recordsNG_search/). It can also be accessed at [www.MercerCounty.org](http://www.MercerCounty.org) and then by following the link to the County Clerk page. For additional system registration information, contact Dena Sanna at 609-989-6473 or e-mail her at [dsanna@mercercounty.org](mailto:dsanna@mercercounty.org).



*In September 2012, Paula Sollami Covello hosted a public program at MCCC to help real estate and title professionals learn the new system at the County Clerk's Office.*

Welcome to the County Clerk's Corner—a publication designed to inform you of the essential services my office has to offer you as a resident of Mercer County.



We are responsible for services that residents and businesses in Mercer County use every day including filing and recording of all documents affecting real estate ownership / transfer; processing US Passport applications and renewals; assisting individuals who wish to become Notary Publics; issuing County ID Cards; filing Business Trade Names; and serving as the Supervisor of Elections. Historically known as the official "keeper of records", the County Clerk is one of the oldest offices in the State of New Jersey. Serving you in this position, so rich in history, is a privilege that I take very seriously.

Since I took office in 2006, I have worked very hard to transform the Clerk's Office into the technologically-advanced and responsive office it is today. We have streamlined processes, opened a satellite location for passports, extended business hours, upgraded our computer systems, and placed many of our records on-line. Every one of these improvements—big and small—is centered on saving you time and money and making your experience with our office as pleasant as possible.

I am very proud of our progress in the County Clerk's Office. My goal is to exceed your expectations; that is why I encourage you to contact my office with suggestions on how we can assist you even better. Your feedback is welcome and valued!

Thank you again for the honor to serve as your County Clerk.

All the best,

Paula Sollami Covello, Esq.

## What's Inside



**Veteran  
ID Cards**  
Page 2



**Notary  
Public**  
Pages 2-3



**Election  
Dates**  
Page 3



**Contact  
Information**  
Page 4

## Mercer County Clerk Provides County Photo ID Cards for Military Veterans

Honorably discharged military veterans residing in Mercer County may obtain a county photo identification card that designates their status as a veteran. In acknowledgement of their service to our nation, these cards are available to veterans for a reduced fee of \$10 (half the normal price for general ID cards). During the weeks of Memorial Day, 4th of July, and Veterans Day veterans can get their cards for free.



The Clerk's Office also maintains and preserves official military documents such as DD-214 discharge papers, which veterans are encouraged to file. This is important because military papers can get damaged or lost. If a copy of discharge papers is needed in the future, a veteran or a legally recognized representative of their estate may obtain one with proper identification.

## Clerk Warns Residents Not to Overpay for Certified Copies of Deeds

Homeowners need to beware of direct mail solicitations from any private company offering to provide residents with a certified copy of their deed at a cost of \$84 or more. This cost is excessive and unnecessary. The County Clerk's Office offers certified deeds at a fraction of this cost directly to residents. Do not be misled by a third-party seeking to make a sizable profit.

The name of the companies are often listed on the letterhead and envelopes. Solicitations have been from either National Deed Service or Secured Document Company Conveyance Transfer, with Washington, DC or Chicago, IL return addresses and a toll-free number.

The solicitation letter leads the reader to believe that the County Clerk's office only records deeds and that you must pay their company in order to get a certified copy. This is absolutely untrue. Mercer County land-owners may obtain a certified copy of their recorded deed directly from the Mercer County Clerk's Office for the cost of only \$10 for the first page and \$1.50 for each additional page.

The County Clerk has worked with local legislators to draft a bill to subject these companies to criminal penalties if they fail to meet certain disclosure and registration requirements. "I strongly believe we need to do more to protect consumers from these kinds of schemes through greater awareness and oversight," stated Sollami Covello.

Homeowners interested in obtaining a certified copy of their deed should call the Recording Section of the Mercer County Clerk's Office at (609) 989-6998.

## Free Wireless Internet at Clerk's Office Makes Researching Documents Easier Than Ever

Free wireless internet service is now available in the Clerk's public search room at the Courthouse Annex making it even more convenient for the general public and professional document researchers to look up official documents. Visitors can enjoy free and fast wireless connection from their laptops or mobile devices, after obtaining a password from the Clerk's Office.

This exciting technology upgrade was funded entirely through the County Clerk's Special Trust Fund, which is derived solely from recording and user fees - not county tax dollars. The Wi-Fi technology equipment was provided through a shared service arrangement with Mercer County's Office of Information Technology.

"Our Wi-Fi technology, in conjunction with our office's new cutting-edge Windows-based computer system for the recording and research of land and property records that we installed last year, provides a host of new features that will improve the speed and efficiency of record searching for our constituents," said Sollami Covello.

## Clerk Sollami Covello Elected to International Committee

Mercer County Clerk Paula Sollami Covello was elected by the executive board to serve as Director at Large, Records Division of the **International Association of Clerks, Recorders, Election Officials and Treasurers (IACREOT)**. She is the first Mercer County official ever selected for the position. The organization serves as a forum for sharing professional information and best practices among those who oversee the safekeeping of public records and elections.

Sollami Covello said, "I look forward to sharing with other public officials our County's innovative ideas, while gaining insights from other areas of the nation and world to bring back to Mercer County."

## Free Notary Public Manuals

Copies of New Jersey's Notary Public Manual are available, at no cost, through the County Clerk's office. The manual provides forms Notaries must file with the state and county as well as practical guidance on how to perform duties of the office. To obtain a copy, call 609-989-5277. Manuals are limited to one per individual and two per business office.



## Passport Days Held Throughout Mercer County

Planning a trip abroad in 2013? Committed to making the Clerk's Office as accessible as possible for Mercer residents, the Clerk and her staff are holding special passport processing days in various municipalities throughout Mercer County in 2013.

Residents can also apply and renew their passports during extended business hours at the County Clerk's Office in Trenton or at the County Connection satellite office in Hamilton.

For complete information on US Passport requirements, what personal documents are needed to obtain a passport, and a schedule of Passport Days throughout the County, residents should visit <http://nj.gov/counties/mercerc/officials/clerk/services/passports.html>, or call (609) 989-6473.



## Mercer County Clerk Joins Forces with MCCC to Hold Public Document Search Classes

The Office of the Mercer County Clerk and Mercer County Community College joined together to offer a non-credit, half-day course focused on how to search for public records in the Mercer County Courthouse. Open to local residents, the course shows participants how to research deeds, liens, and other property information dating all the way back to the 1800s. Upcoming search classes announced in the college's Center for Continuing Studies' bulletins.

"The purpose of this course is to encourage more residents to take advantage of Mercer's open resources and records," said Sollami Covello. "There are so many fascinating records in our office—from property deeds and housing development maps to historic landmark filings and business name registrations. Each document is piece of Mercer's rich history that I encourage residents to delve into."



*Document Researchers in the Mercer County Clerk's Search Room*

## School Elections Moved to November

For the first time ever, there was no School election in April, 2013 in Mercer County, as all of the school boards have chosen to move school elections to the General Election, on November 5, 2013. This all began in 2012, after Gov. Christie signed legislation to allow school board elections to be moved from April to the November General Election Ballot (except Trenton where members are appointed).

The 468 school districts across NJ that moved their school board elections to November saw drastic increases in voter turnout while sparing their school districts the cost of running independent elections in April.

County Clerk Sollami Covello, who prepares the General Election ballot, urges residents to read the General Election sample ballots carefully as there is a great deal more information to review before voting.

## 2013 General Election Dates

### June 4

Primary Election Day

### October 15

Voter Registration Deadline for General Election

### October 29

Deadline to apply for a Mail-In Ballot by Mail for General Election

### October 30

Mailing of Sample Ballots for General Election

### November 4 – by 3:00 p.m.

Deadline for In-Person Mail-In Ballot Applications for General Election

### November 5

General Election

## NOTARY NIGHTS: Notaries Sworn In Throughout the Year

Those wishing to become notary publics in Mercer County in 2013 take note! Mercer County Clerk Paula Sollami Covello will be swearing in notary publics at the County's satellite office located in the Hamilton Square Shopping Center (957 Route 33 and Paxson Avenue) on the first Thursday of each month between the hours of 3:00-7:00 p.m. The dates are May 2; June 6; July 11 (Thursday following the Independence Day holiday); August 1, September 5, October 3, November 7, and December 5.



## Community Connections

The Mercer County Clerk's office is committed to helping the community. In addition, all money collected from weddings performed by the County Clerk is donated to local charities.



County Clerk Paula Sollami Covello pictured with Trenton City Council members, Phyllis Holly-Ward (L), Marge Caldwell-Wilson (C), and Womanspace Executive Director, Pat Hart (R). Clerk Sollami Covello served as the 2012 Municipal Coordinator for Womanspace's 11th Annual Communities of Light™, a program where candles line the streets of central New Jersey one night in December. Communities of Light™ raises awareness of domestic violence and sexual assault and the services available to help victims in Mercer County.



County Clerk Paula Sollami Covello, Deputy Clerk Walker Worthy (L), and the courthouse staff sponsored a food drive, Paws for a Cause, collecting over 300 pounds of food and supplies for EASEL (Ewing Animal Shelter Extension League).



Mercer County Constitutional Officers [County Clerk Paula Sollami Covello, Surrogate Diane Gerofsky, and Sheriff Jack Kemler (not pictured)], Rev. Msgr. Joseph Roldan (L), Deputy Clerk Walker Worthy (C), and Rescue Mission of Trenton CEO, Mary Gay Abbott-Young along with staff (R) held a Holiday Clothing Drive. Employees throughout the Mercer County courthouse collected clothing to provide relief for those experiencing homelessness, hunger and addiction in the community.

## Contact Information

209 South Broad Street, Room 100  
Trenton, NJ  
[www.mercercounty.org](http://www.mercercounty.org) and click on "County Clerk" or scan



Paula Sollami Covello  
Mercer County Clerk: 609-989-6998

Walker M. Worthy, Jr.  
Deputy Clerk: 609-989-6998

Passports, Military and County  
ID Cards: 609-989-6473

Recording: 609-989-6466

e-Filing: 609-989-6466  
[www.njcountyrecording.com](http://www.njcountyrecording.com)

Indexing: 609-989-2729

Elections: 609-989-6495

Business Registrations: 609-989-2729  
<http://nj.gov/counties/mercercounty/officials/clerk/services/trade.html>

Electronic Records Search:  
[https://records.mercercounty.org/RecordsNG\\_Search](https://records.mercercounty.org/RecordsNG_Search)

## Hours of Operation:

Elections Office  
Monday through Friday  
8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.

Passport Services/Notary Public  
Monday through Friday  
8:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.  
Extended Hours Wednesdays  
until 6:45 p.m.

Public Records Room/  
Recording Department  
8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.  
Monday through Friday  
Extended Hours Wednesdays  
until 6:45 p.m.

## County Connection, Satellite Office

Highway 33 / Paxson Avenue  
Hamilton, NJ 609-890-9800  
For passports, please arrive  
30 minutes prior to closing.

**Monday, Wednesday, Friday**  
10:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m.

**Tuesday and Thursday**  
10:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m.

**Saturday** 10:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m.



The main County Clerk office is still open for business on the first floor of 209 South Broad Street (in the former old court house)! During the renovation, the entranceway has moved 30 steps to the right as shown in the photo.

## Foreclosure Resource Directory

In a joint effort, Mercer County Executive Brian Hughes, Mercer County Clerk Paula Sollami Covello, and the Mercer County Division of Consumer Affairs have recently published a Foreclosure Resource Directory for residents facing foreclosure. The guidebook provides detailed information regarding HUD-certified organizations as well as State and Federal agencies who offer professional advice to troubled homeowners. To read or download our directory, please visit <http://nj.gov/counties/mercercounty/officials/clerk/links/>.