

Mercer County Clerk *Paula Sollami Covello, Esq.*

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



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Mercer County Clerk Unveils New Property Information Portal

Online services are part of the effort to provide residents with the most efficient recording, filing and access to property documents with the Mercer County Clerk's Office.

Mercer County Clerk Paula Sollami-Covello unveiled a new website offering more property information with GIS satellite views. The County-wide property information portal enables searchers to obtain satellite photos and all public property information from the County Clerk, the Mercer Tax Assessor, County Planning Office and other departments. Previously, searchers had to go to each office or website to obtain the information.

"The Property Information Portal is the latest technological advancement in my ongoing commitment to streamlining processes and procedures in the Mercer County Clerk's Office," said Paula Sollami-Covello. "This new computerized retrieval tool will help the professional title searchers who use our office every day, as well as the countless residents interested in finding information about a specific Mercer County property. It's a time-saver for residents all around. This is a highly innovative site and I urge you to check it out and give us feedback on how you like it and how you would like to see it improved."

The County-wide property information website is free and available to the public at pip.mercercounty.org.



County Clerk Paula Sollami Covello demonstrates the new Property Information Portal to County Executive Brian M. Hughes and other officials at the opening of the new office on West State Street in Trenton.

It has been an exciting time for the Mercer County Clerk's Office! We moved our headquarters to 240 West State Street in Trenton while our home in the Courthouse Annex is being renovated, but we have not skipped a beat! The Clerk's office continues to enhance services to provide Mercer County residents like you the very best experience with our office. Here's just a snapshot of some of the exciting happenings in my office, all of which you can read more about in this newsletter:



- **New Property Information Portal:** In April 2016, we unveiled a county-wide Property Information Portal that enables users to access comprehensive information on Mercer County properties in one online search, with GIS satellite pictures.
- **Enhanced Services for Veterans:** We have enhanced a number of services to our Military, including launching a Veterans' Discount Book, extending the term of Veterans' ID cards, and offering Peddler's licenses at no cost.
- **Property Alert Service:** We introduced this free fraud alert service as a tool to help prevent fraudulent activity on your property. Please sign up now.
- **Continue to Digitize All County Clerk Records:** We are continuing to replace older books with microfilm images and move everything to digital records, so you can access information easier and in less time.

I hope you'll take the time to peruse this newsletter and learn more about how my office is here to serve you. Please contact me with any questions or suggestions you may have. More than anything, I am committed to providing you with the highest level of service that you deserve and expect.

Thank you again for the privilege to serve as your County Clerk. I look forward to a productive and fulfilling year ahead.

Paula Sollami Covello, Esq. | Mercer County Clerk
(609) 989-6464 | www.mercercounty.org

What's
Inside



Voter
Information
Page 2



Property
Alert
Page 3



Passport
Processing
Page 3



Notary
Resources
Page 4



Register, Vote, Results!

Making voting as accessible as possible to registered voters is one of the highest priorities of County Clerk Sollami Covello. With this in mind, she is reminding constituents that they can vote with a "Mail-In" ballot for any reason.

A voter may vote by mail by completing the Application for Vote by Mail Ballot and mailing the application to the County Clerk's Office up to 7 days prior to the election. A voter may

also apply in person and pick up a ballot at the County Clerk's Office until 3:00 pm, the day before the election.

To request a Vote-by-Mail application, voters can call 609-989-6494. Vote-by-Mail applications also are available on the web at www.mercercounty.org/countyclerk in both English and Spanish. The State Division of Elections website also offers vote-by-mail ballots in Indian, Korean and Chinese languages. That website is <http://www.njelections.org/voting-information-vote-by-mail.html>.

To register to vote in New Jersey, you must be a United States citizen, 18 years old by the next election and a resident of the county for 30 days before the election. Applications for registration can be obtained from the County Clerk, the Superintendent of Elections/Commissioner of Registrations, the State Division of Elections or the NJ MVC. Various other agencies can also assist in the process. Mail-In registration forms and full information on Voter Registration can be found at <http://nj.gov/counties/mercercounty/departments/intendent/registration.html> or at the NJ Division of Elections website in multiple languages. There is no cost to register to vote.

Home for Now

The County Clerk's office has settled into temporary space at 240 West State Street in Trenton nicely, and operating at full speed ahead! They expect to remain on West State Street through 2018 while the Mercer County Improvement Authority renovates and brings to current safety standards their permanent home in the Courthouse Annex.

Passports, small business registrations, notary oath, property recording, access to deeds, mortgages, and other essential records are located on the sixth floor; and the election department is on the seventh floor. When visiting, please be sure to stop by the historic document exhibit noting some of Mercer County's rich and diverse history and famous residents dating back to 1838, such as Albert Einstein, Paul Robeson, Woodrow Wilson, Gen. Schwarzkopf and others.

Enhanced Services for Veterans

Attention Veterans! The County Clerk's Office records Veterans' honorable discharge cards (DD-214) year round at no cost. Also during the weeks of Memorial Day, July 4th, Veteran's Day, and Pearl Harbor Day, the Clerk's office issues Veteran ID cards for free (all other times, the service is offered at a reduced rate of just \$10). To obtain an ID card, Veterans must bring their original DD-214 and proof of Mercer County residency to the Clerk's Office. The new cards are valid for 10-years.

A free booklet is available in the Clerk's Office that details businesses offering special discounts to Vets throughout Mercer County. Additionally, honorably discharged Vets may obtain a free Peddler's License through the Clerk's Office that enables them to sell food from food trucks, at fairs and other events.



County Clerk Paula Sollami Covello announces the launch of a Veteran's Discount Booklet distributed to all that pick up veteran ID cards. Pictured are Veteran leaders from around the State and a local business owner who is also a Vet.

Foreclosure Resources

Mercer County Clerk Paula Sollami Covello proactively works to help those struggling to pay their mortgages and avoid foreclosure. The County Clerk's office worked with other County officials to produce a Foreclosure Resource Directory, available for free to residents.

Mercer County Clerk Sollami Covello, the Office of Mercer County Consumer Affairs, the NJ Affordable Housing Alliance, and the Mercer County Sheriff jointly host free workshops to assist those

in danger of foreclosure. These presentations offer a foreclosure timeline, warnings about the different types of foreclosure scams, and loan modification options.

Our website lists upcoming foreclosure workshops.



A recent foreclosure assistance workshop held in Trenton.

What voters may not know is that if they are on the “permanent” vote by mail list, they will not automatically receive a vote by mail ballot for the Primary election. The permanent list only means they will automatically receive ballots for the “General Elections” held every November. To receive a ballot for a calendar year, one must renew each year.

Students away at college and citizens traveling out of the county during election times are encouraged to exercise their right to vote by Voting by Mail. They can apply at any time for the upcoming election.

Overseas citizens and U.S. Military may vote via a special absentee ballot. All details are available at www.fvap.gov/citizen-voter.



Mercer County Clerk Paula Sollami Covello with college students / summer interns urging other students to fill out the Vote By Mail applications.



The Mercer County Fraudulent Housing Occupancy Task Force held a press conference to discuss some of the schemes it has uncovered, as well as unveil the multi-pronged approach being proposed to address this growing problem of property fraud in Trenton and neighboring municipalities. The County Clerk speaking along with County, City and State officials.

Mercer County Property Alert Service

The Mercer County Clerk's Office is offering a new added layer of security when it comes to property protection. Mercer County Clerk Paula Sollami Covello created a property alert service to provide property owners with e-mail alerts anytime that a document affecting a specific property is recorded by the Mercer County Clerk's Office.

Unfortunately, property and mortgage fraud is a fast growing crime in the United States. Unscrupulous individuals record fraudulent documents like fake deeds or liens against property owners. In some instances, fraud on real property may not be discovered until the owners seek to sell the house.

Property owners can sign up now for the free service by visiting <http://propertyalert.mercercounty.org/PropertyAlert>. You may also wish to register properties for a friend or elderly relative to help protect them from fraud. This service does not prevent fraudulent activity, but helps you monitor activity and transactions on your property.

Another type of fraud involves rental scams where individuals pose as agents or owners to rent vacant properties that they don't own to renters who become unsuspecting squatters. The fake property owners then disappear, stealing cash deposit and rent collected and leaving the renters without a home.

Mercer County Clerk Paula Sollami Covello has been a member of a task force with Trenton City officials and law enforcement to combat this problem. If you find you are a victim of fraud, you can call the Mercer County Clerk's Office Assistance Hotline at **609-989-6470**. Someone will provide you with public resources available to assist you. You can also call the Mercer County Office of Consumer Affairs to lodge a complaint at 609-989-6671, or you can call a private attorney.

Passports: Don't Get Stuck at the Gate!

County Clerk Paula Sollami Covello suggests that residents renew or apply for their passports at least six months before trips abroad. Planning ahead and keeping passports current (they are good for 10 years for adults) will help avoid last minute aggravation, as process times vary greatly.



Passport processing is done at the County Clerk's Office in Trenton and at the Mercer County Connection in Hamilton. They also offer special 'Passport Days' that are held throughout Mercer County at senior centers and municipal buildings. For more information about processing hours, required documents needed for passports and other related information, visit <http://nj.gov/counties/mercercounty/officials/clerk/services/passports.html>.

On the Air

Mercer County Clerk Paula Sollami Covello has taken to the airwaves to connect more residents with her office's services. She has appeared on the "Empowerment Hour" radio show hosted by John Harmon, President & CEO of the African American Chamber of Commerce of NJ (AACCNJ). Debbie Lang of Berkshire Hathaway HomeServices Fox & Roach featured the Clerk's services on "The Voice of Real Estate" also on 920am. She also chatted with Jacque Howard on his Trenton365 program about voter registration and the election process.



Community Connections



The Mercer County Clerk's office is committed to helping the community through clothing drives and collections for organizations that address children, homelessness, hunger and animal rescue. Pictured are staff making annual deliveries.

The County Clerk also donates all money collected from weddings performed to local charities.



Contact Information

The Mercer County Clerk's Office is located on the sixth and seventh floors of: 240 W State Street, Trenton, NJ 08608

6th Floor: Property Recording ~ Passports
Small Business Registrations~ Notary Oath
Public Records Room~ Historic Records Exhibit

7th Floor: Elections Department
(For vote-by-mail ballots)
County and Veteran IDs, and
Peddler's licenses

Paula Sollami Covello
Mercer County Clerk: 609-989-6465
nj.gov/counties/mercercounty/officials/clerk
Elections: 609-989-6494
Recording: 609-989-6466
Indexing: 609-278-7106
Passports: 609-989-6473

Veteran/County IDs: 609-278-7108
Peddler's Licenses: 609-278-7108
Scanning: 609-278-7108

E-Recording: 609-989-6232
www.njcountysrecording.com

Election Website – Track results as reported by Districts on Election Night and view detailed post-election stats via the County Clerk website.

Business Registration:
<http://nj.gov/counties/mercercounty/officials/clerk/services/trade.html>

Electronic Records Search: https://records.mercercounty.org/RecordsNG_Search

County-wide Property Information Portal:
<http://pip.mercercounty.org>

Mercer County Property Alert Service:
<http://propertyalert.mercercounty.org/PropertyAlert>

Hours of Operation:

**Elections Office, Recording,
Notary Public, Public Records Room**
Weekdays 8:30 AM-4:30 PM

Passport Services *
Weekdays 8:00 AM - 4:00 PM

Veteran / County IDs
Weekdays 8:30 AM – 4:00 PM

**Passports*, Notary, Recording,
Public Records Room**
Extended Hours on Wednesdays
until 6:30 PM

County Connection, Satellite Office

Highway 33 / Paxson Avenue
Hamilton, NJ 609-890-9800

Passport Hours*
Monday, Wednesday & Friday
10 AM - 5:30 PM
Tuesday & Thursday - 10 AM - 7:30 PM
Saturday - 10 AM - 2:30 PM

*For passport service, please arrive 30 minutes prior to closing.

Notary Nights - the 1st Thursday of each month from 3 PM – 7:30 PM



Paula Sollami Covello joins to celebrate the Lawrence Senior Center's 25th Anniversary. L-R: Lawrence Mayor David Maffei; Veronica Pickering, Lawrence Senior Executive Committee; Lillian LaSalle, Executive Director Office on Aging; Mercer County Surrogate Diane Gerofsky, Mercer County Clerk Paula Sollami Covello

Notary Resources

Becoming a Notary in Mercer County—or learning the latest technology and skills if you already are one—is now easier than ever thanks to a joint program offered by Mercer County Community College and the Mercer County Clerk's Office. The half-day, noncredit course delves into the essential skills needed to perform notarial duties properly, the new technologies to assist with the daily duties, and how to avoid liability issues. Members of the general public and prospective Notary Publics will learn how to obtain or renew a notary commission and get a clear understanding of the steps needed to become a notary public. Call the County Clerk's office at 609-989-6232 or check the MCCC course catalog for class schedule.