

CHAPTER 7. CLERK

Roles and Responsibilities

The municipal clerk plays a central role in the operation of local government, with duties that bring him or her into regular contact with the public. The clerk's statutory duties range from recording, preserving and certifying public documents to administering oaths of office, complying with public information requests, posting notices on the town's bulletin board, running the local elections, maintaining the grand list, selling fish and game licenses, issuing marriage licenses and licensing animals. The town clerk has many unofficial duties as well which vary from town to town. These duties may include administering the random drug testing program for the town, acting as the custodian of ticket books for local civil ordinance enforcement, attending and taking minutes of selectboard meetings, acting as mail-clerk for the town, and sending out the town's correspondence.

- The clerk is elected from the legally qualified voters at annual town meeting for a one-year term unless the town votes to make the office a three-year term. 17 V.S.A. §§ 2640, 2646(2). The town clerk will also act as the school clerk unless otherwise voted. 16 V.S.A. § 425.
- Municipal clerks are compensated either by fees collected for performing their duties or by a salary in addition to or in lieu of fees. This salary is established by vote at town meeting or is set by the selectboard. 32 V.S.A. §§ 1224, 1401, 1671.
- The municipal clerk is an independent official, answerable only to the electorate. He or she may set the clerk's office hours and may appoint an assistant clerk. 24 V.S.A. § 1170. Files and records maintained by the clerk must be available for public inspection upon proper request at all reasonable hours. 24 V.S.A. § 1165.
- The town clerk is a voting member of the board of civil authority and certifies the grand list. 17 V.S.A. § 2103(5); 24 V.S.A. § 801; 32 V.S.A. § 4151. The clerk has the power to administer oaths in all cases in which an oath is required. 24 V.S.A. § 1160. The clerk is an *ex officio* notary public. 24 V.S.A. § 441.
- The clerk runs the local elections and certifies the results to the secretary of state. 17 V.S.A. § 2645. The clerk manages all of the town's public records, records all public documents, including maps, plats, mortgages, liens and records of land transactions, and forwards property transfer tax returns and tax money to the State.
- The clerk issues dog licenses, marriage licenses, fish and game licenses (if he or she wishes) and any other municipal license that might be required. 10 V.S.A. § 4254; 18 V.S.A. § 5131; 20 V.S.A. § 3581.
- The clerk may be authorized to renew motor vehicle, snowmobile or motorboat registrations. 23 V.S.A. § 6.

☞ For more information about the duties and functions of the municipal clerk, please consult VLCT's *Handbook for Vermont Municipal Clerks*. To order a copy of this handbook, please call 800-649-7915.