



Paula Sollami-Covello, Esq.

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

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Welcome from the County Clerk

For many of us, 2020 has not been the year we expected it to be. The COVID-19 pandemic has cost lives and jobs, and has made for many unique situations. It's closed businesses, made us adapt to mask-wearing and social distancing guidelines, and made for a very interesting school year. However, we at the County Clerk's Office have continued to serve our community. Throughout the pandemic, we have been recording all deeds and we have conducted the Primary election. Now, we are preparing for the General Election in November. We also have continued to perform other county services by appointment, including passports, notary commissions, ID cards, and small business regulations.

In the interest of the safety of customers and employees alike, we have implemented some guidelines to ensure a smooth reopening. All visitors to the Mercer County Clerk's Office in Trenton and the County Connection office in Hamilton must wear a MASK OR OTHER FACE COVERING to enter. Also, we ask that anyone who has experienced cold or flu symptoms in the last 72 hours not visit.

Notaries: We are scheduling notary renewal appointments in our Trenton Office and you may call 609-989-6466 or email Sortiz@mercercounty.org to schedule an appointment. Our monthly "Notary Nights" at the County Connection Satellite Office in Hamilton will resume November 5.

Passports: We are offering passport services by appointment. To schedule an appointment, please call 609-989-6473 or email ctoour@mercercounty.org. Passport services at Hamilton's County Connection office will resume on October 5 by appointment only and can be scheduled by calling 609-890-9800 or emailing passportservice@mercercounty.org.

Search room: Property searchers must schedule an appointment to come into the search room between 8:30-11:30 a.m. or 12:30-3:30 p.m. No more than five slots per session will be allowed. Please call 609-989-6233 or email mplumeri@mercercounty.org.

IDs: Appointments are required to obtain a County ID card at this time. Please call 609-278-7108 or email mhubscher@mercercounty.org to schedule an appointment. Additionally, veteran ID cards are available by appointment only, and will be issued for FREE during the week of Veteran's Day and Pearl Harbor Day.

Elections: In light of the Covid-19 Pandemic, the Mercer County Clerk's Office has been ordered to change the way we normally conduct NJ elections for the upcoming General Election on November 3rd.

Sollami Covello Sworn in as President of COANJ

Mercer County Clerk Paula Sollami Covello was recently sworn in to be the new President of the Constitutional Officers Association of New Jersey. The swearing-in took place at The Statehouse Annex in Trenton. She was elected to the position by her peers in the organization, based in all 21 counties of New Jersey. She was sworn in by Senator Shirley K Turner. Also joining was Mercer County's other two senators, Senator Linda Greenstein and Senator Christopher "Kip" Bateman via Zoom. Members of the Constitutional Officers Association also were online to observe the ceremony as newly installed officers attended the ceremony in the Statehouse in person.

Previously, Sollami Covello served as Vice President, Secretary, and Chief Clerk of COANJ, which is made up of County Clerks, Surrogates, Registers, and Sheriffs of New Jersey. She also has served on various committees through the years.

"I'm so thrilled and honored to be able to lead this bipartisan organization of NJ County Clerks, Sheriffs and Surrogates in a collaborative and positive way to move the organization forward through this pandemic," said County Clerk Paula Sollami Covello. "We will continue to exchange best practices so that we can continue to bring direct County services to the public."

Mercer County Clerk Paula Sollami Covello is sworn in to be the new President of COANJ. State Senator Shirley Turner (D-Mercer, Hunterdon) administers the oath as Deputy Clerk Walker Worthy and her husband John look on.



From left: Middlesex County Clerk Elaine Flynn, Mercer County Clerk Paula Sollami Covello, and State Senator Linda Greenstein (D- Mercer, Middlesex)

Welcome from the County Clerk

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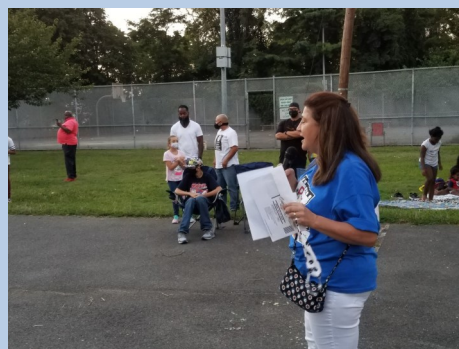
Elections continued: Under Governor Phil Murphy's Executive Order #177, the November Election will be conducted primarily through mail-in ballot voting and ALL registered voters will receive a ballot. However, there will be some polling locations available for voters to cast a ballot in the polls via a Provisional (or paper) ballot if they prefer. Also, voting machine devices will be available ONLY for those who have a documented audio or visual impairment. If you don't receive a ballot by October 10th, you may contact our office at 609-989-6465 or email at vote@mercercounty.org. You can also find information at e-mail Mercervotes@mercercounty.org. We have made two instructional videos- one in English and one in Spanish – which are posted below to assist you in completing your mail in ballot. More voting information can be found on our sub-page to the left titled, "ELECTIONS".

*** Please continue to check our website for updates and future alerts as we continue to make accommodations to keep you and our workforce safe.

Sollami Covello Sworn in as President of COANJ

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The Constitutional Officers Association of New Jersey was founded in 1920. Its primary goal, as stated on their website, is "To establish a cooperative effort among the Sheriffs, County Clerks, Surrogates and Registers of Deeds among the 21 counties of the State of New Jersey to improve services rendered to their respective constituencies." In addition to several smaller meetings throughout the year, the constitutional officers hold an annual conference and installment dinner to educate members on emerging topics, swear in new officers, and discuss best practices to improve services throughout the members' respective counties of New Jersey. "



It was great to speak to residents of Bromley, Hamilton about the upcoming General Election and voting by mail. I was joined by candidates for Hamilton Twp Council. Thank you Brian Blakely for hosting the great event!

Deadlines for General Election

- October 5:** All mail-in ballots will be sent out
- October 13:** Final day to register to vote
- October 31:** Extended hours for vote-by-mail ballot pickup (walk-in); 9am to 1pm; Trenton office only

November 3: General Election Day; polls open at 6am and close at 8pm; ballots can be dropped off at drop boxes or at your polling location until 8pm



Left: With Mercer County Deputy Clerk Walker Worthy and residents of the Bromley section of Hamilton

Did You Know?

You can now register to vote at age 17 so that you will be able to vote at age 18. Here is the state link: <https://www.state.nj.us/state/elections/voter-registration.shtml>

2020 General Election to Be Primarily Conducted by Mail-In Ballots

As a precaution against COVID-19, the 2020 General Election will be primarily a vote-by-mail election. All registered voters will receive a mail-in ballot for this election. Voters have the options of returning their completed ballots either by mail, to their designated polling place, or in one of the 15 secure drop boxes throughout the county. Their locations are as follows:

EAST WINDSOR:

East Windsor Municipal Court – 80 One Mile Road, East Windsor, NJ, 08520 (Courthouse)

EWING:

Ewing Municipal Building – 2 Jake Garzio Drive, Ewing, NJ, 08628 (In Front)

HAMILTON (3 locations):

Hamilton Golf/Call Center – 5 Justice Samuel A. Alito Way, Hamilton, NJ, 08619

Hamilton Municipal Building – 2090 Greenwood Avenue, Hamilton, NJ, 08609 (Right side of Bldg.)

Nottingham Firehouse – 200 Mercer Street, Hamilton Square, NJ, 08690 (Right side of Bldg.)

HIGHTSTOWN:

Hightstown Firehouse #1 – 140 N. Main Street, Hightstown, NJ, 08520 (Front of Bldg.)

HOPEWELL TWP:

Hopewell Township Administration Building – 201 Washington Crossing-Pennington Rd, Titusville, NJ 08560 (at the intersection of Scotch Road)

LAWRENCE:

Lawrence Municipal Building – 2207 Lawrenceville Rd, (Rt 206) Lawrence, NJ 08648 (North Side-Right Side of the Municipal Bldg.)

PRINCETON:

Princeton Municipal Building – 400 Witherspoon St, Princeton, NJ, 08540 (Front of Bldg. facing Witherspoon)

ROBBINSVILLE:

Robbinsville Municipal Building, 2298 NJ-33, Robbinsville, NJ 08691 (In back parking lot of Municipal Bldg.)

TRENTON (4 locations):

County Clerk's Office- Courthouse Annex- 209 S. Broad Street, Trenton, NJ, 08608 (in front of County Clerk's Office)

Trenton City Hall – 319 E. State Street, Trenton, NJ, 08608 (In back/ near Municipal Clerks Office)

Henry J. Austin Center – 321 N. Warren St, Trenton, NJ, 08618 (Corner of Tucker)

Trenton Central High School – 400 Chambers Street, Trenton, NJ, 08609 (across from McDonald's)

WEST WINDSOR:

West Windsor Municipal Complex, 271 Clarksville Rd, West Windsor, NJ, 08550 (Between the Municipal building and the Senior Center)



Above: The County Clerk with 2020 Summer Interns

In addition to taking precautions because of the COVID-19 pandemic, we are encouraging all area college students to apply to vote by mail for the 2020 Election. Do it ASAP to avoid missing any deadlines!

Also, make sure you are registered by using Statewide Online Voter Registration System by October 13. <https://www.nj.gov/state/elections/voter-registration.shtml>

Track My Ballot App

Worried about if your ballot will be counted or not? Sign up for the Track My Ballot App! You can view the progress of your ballot in real time.

<https://www.nj.gov/state/elections/vote-track-my-ballot.shtml>

About the Mercer County Clerk's Office

The County Clerk's Office offers many services that Mercer County residents and businesses use every day. The Clerk's Office files and records all documents concerning real estate ownership and transfer, registers small business trade names, processes U.S. passport applications, and swears in notary public applicants.

The office offers photos for people seeking passports and County and Veteran ID cards, and Gold-Star Parent ID cards as well. The County Clerk also has certain election responsibilities – including the printing of ballots, counting of votes cast by electronic machines and the issuance of vote-by-mail ballots. Elections information can be found on our website at <http://www.mercercounty.org/government/county-clerk/elections>.

County Clerk: Voting By Mail is Safe and Secure

As Clerk of Mercer County, one of my key responsibilities is to process vote-by-mail applications and to issue vote-by-mail ballots. This has been the case since 2009 when the NJ legislature passed a law creating vote by mail a permanent option for any registered voter who wished to use it to cast a vote. It abolished the need for absentee ballot voting because now anyone can vote by mail for any reason.

Recently, voting by mail has come under focus as the Governor of New Jersey and many other Governors throughout the country have been ordering or recommending it as a preferred method of voting to combat the spread of COVID-19 as this pandemic sweeps the country. In response, the President and others have been critical of vote-by-mail stating it is unsafe in various tweets and announcements.

As someone who has been administering this option for many years, I want to assure voters that voting by mail has been, and continues to be a safe method of voting here in Mercer County, New Jersey.

Throughout the years, we have seen **zero** incidences of fraud in Mercer County with the implementation of vote by mail. Rather, we have seen a marked growth in our number of voters who wish to permanently vote by mail.

We went from zero to 27,000 permanent voters on the Mercer County vote-by-mail list in 2020. That means that for every election, 27,000 voters get a ballot mailed to them. This year, all registered voters will receive a mail-in ballot.

The States of Oregon, Washington, Colorado and Utah issue mail-in ballots to every voter. Voting by mail greatly reduced or eliminated costs of staffing the polls, programming and moving voting machines out to each district, and the rental cost to secure each polling location.

In fact, the Washington Post article, "No, voting by mail does not give either party an advantage. Here's how we know" (published April 17, 2020) found that in California, Utah, and Washington, voting by mail would not lead to a permanent electoral shift toward either major party, nor does it lead to either party making up a larger fraction of the electorate.

Furthermore, a fivethirtyeight.com article, "There is no evidence that voting by mail gives one party an advantage" (published May 12, 2020) found that any partisan difference created by voting by mail was negligible and statistically insignificant.

Our County does pay for postage for ballots to be returned to the Board of Elections which means no one has to pay to vote. I requested in a budget hearing that and the County Freeholders approved this request so that no vote would be disenfranchised. However, we cannot guarantee mail delivery of ballots as they travel through the U.S. Postal Service. Be assured that we meet with the postmaster before each and every election to assure that they are special tags for vote by mail ballots and applications. However, if you want to guarantee delivery, you should hand-deliver your ballot to the Mercer County Board of Elections, or pay for tracking on your ballot. The County is also offering drop boxes for the General Election throughout the county.

In sum, I would like to assure voters that vote-by-mail is a real option for them to exercise this vital and important right of voting.

Sample Ballots Now Available on the County Clerk's Website

Mercer County Clerk Paula Sollami Covello is reminding Mercer County voters that sample ballots for the upcoming General Election on November 3rd are now available for online viewing.

The sample ballots of Mercer County's 12 municipalities can be accessed by visiting the Mercer County Clerk's website at <http://www.mercercounty.org/government/county-clerk/election-sample-ballots> and are listed by municipality.

Because this is a primarily vote-by-mail election, as per Governor Phil Murphy's executive order, all registered voters will receive a mail-in ballot. Voters have the option of mailing them in, returning their completed ballots to their polling place on Election Day, or placing it in one of the fifteen secure drop boxes throughout the County. That list can be found on the County Clerk's website.

"As your County Clerk, I am charged with preparing the General Election ballot. I urge voters to go to our website and read their sample ballots carefully," said Sollami Covello. "There's understating the importance of this election. The Presidency and several Congressional seats are up for grabs, but so too are important state and local races."

You can vote for school board candidates without regard to column, or you may wish to stick to a slate. It is at the voter's discretion.

More information about sample ballots for the upcoming election can be obtained by calling 609-989-6495, or by visiting our office at 209 South Broad Street, 2nd floor, Trenton, during business hours. There you can also find vote-by-mail ballots and other voting information pertaining to the upcoming election. For further election information, see our website by visiting this link: <http://www.mercercounty.org/government/county-clerk/elections>.



The County Clerk has also speaking at various voting panels and sharing information to the community about the upcoming election, including a panel with Assemblywoman Verlina Reynolds-Jackson.

Get in Touch

**Mercer County Clerk's Office
209 South Broad Street
Trenton, NJ 08608**

**Mercer County Connection Satellite Office
957 State Highway 33
Hamilton, NJ 08690**

Visit our website: mercercounty.org/government/county-clerk

By Phone

Main number: 609-989-6464

Deputy Clerk Walker Worthy, Jr., and Administrative Offices: 609-989-6353

Press Inquiries: 609-278-7161

Elections: 609-989-6494

Indexing/Imaging: 609-989-6476

Business Registrations: 609-989-6469

Passports: 609-989-6473

County ID/Veteran ID/Gold Star Parent ID: 609-278-7108

Recording: 609-989-6466

Fax: 609-989-1111

County Connection: 609-890-9800

Follow us on social media

Facebook: facebook.com/MercerCountyClerk

Twitter: [@MercerClerk](https://twitter.com/MercerClerk)

Property Information Portal: pip@mercercounty.org