



Mercer County Clerk Paula Sollami Covello Provides Passport and Notary Information

By Mercer County Clerk Paula Sollami Covello Esq.

Happy New Year! Another year has gone by and we welcome the new year with optimism. As we step into 2024, I extend my warmest wishes for a year filled with joy, prosperity and new beginnings. And hopefully, some travel. This column is going to be dedicated to obtaining or renewing your passport and also obtaining or renewing yourself as a notary public, two services my office provides.

It's true that nothing can ruin a trip more than finding out you need a valid passport to travel to your island destination and that your passport is expired.

With all of the planning that goes into a trip abroad, some travelers will sometimes delay applying for a new passport until it is too late. My office recommends that you take a look at your passport and its expiration date well in advance of your trip departure so you are not forced to rush under the wire.

The good news is that routine service time for passport processing by the U.S. Department of State now takes four to six weeks, which is less time than last year. An expedited application will take at least two to four weeks. We are here to serve you and have two offices with extended hours and Saturday hours that are here to assist with your passport needs. Our Trenton Office is located at 209 S. Broad Street and an appointment is not required. Our County Connection Office in Hamilton is located at 957 Rt. 33 (near Paxon Ave.) and while appointments are not required, they are recommended for guaranteed service. For a full list of the office hours, please visit the [Mercer County Clerk's Passport Services page](#).

In addition to encouraging Mercer residents to renew and apply for passports well before their departure, my office would also like to provide some tips for international travel.

Travel Tips

- Make a copy of the first two pages of your passport before leaving for your trip. Travel with your passport on your person and put the two pages in your checked bag. This prevents you from losing both at the same time.

- If you lose your passport abroad, you then have to go to the US consulate and it can be difficult to get back to the United States.
- If you leave your passport at any location, make sure it is in a secure location – ideally a locked safe.

To apply for a US Passport, residents need: 1) Proof of US citizenship in the form of a state certified birth certificate, a US naturalization certificate or a previous US Passport; 2) Proof of identity in the form of a current driver's license or state issued identification card. Passport photos may be taken onsite. There will also be fee, which must be made by check or money order.

The process may be extensive, but it is to help protect you from identity fraud and other security threats. We are here to answer any questions you have and assist you in whatever way we can. Feel free to call our office at **(609) 989-6465**.

The County Clerk's Office also swears in those who wish to become a Notary Public. Notary Services are vital for various transactions, and we are here to make the process convenient for you.

The first step of the process is to apply to become a notary through the NJ Department of the Treasury, that paperwork can be found online [here](#). The Department of the Treasury can be reached directly at **609-292-6748**.

Once you receive your commission from the State of NJ in the mail, then you can come into our Trenton Office any day of the week to be sworn in.

We also swear in notaries at our County Connection Office in Hamilton, NJ once a month. Every 1st Thursday of the Month, the dates can be found on the Mercer County Clerk's Website here [Mercer County Clerk Notary Public Services](#). Appointments for Notary Nights can be scheduled by phone at **(609) 989-6466**.

Here is the Notary Schedule for 2024 at the County Connection:

February 1, 2024

April 4, 2024

June 6, 2024

August 1, 2024

October 3, 2024

December 5, 2024

March 7, 2024

May 2, 2024

July 11, 2024

September 5, 2024

November 7, 2024

As your Mercer County Clerk, my staff and I are dedicated to providing efficient and accessible services to meet your needs. Wishing you a fantastic year ahead!