

# Town Recorder

*the official publication of the  
New York State Town Clerks Association*

Summer 2022

## INCOMING PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

**I**'m humbled and honored for the opportunity to serve as president of this association – an association founded 40 years ago this year. An association dedicated to providing professional and educational opportunities for the Town Clerks in New York State.

The population of New York State currently exceeds 20 million people. There are 933 Towns in New York State – one Town Clerk in each of those. That makes us pretty unique! And the 933 towns are each unique in size, population, geography and services provided for their residents. Populations range from under 100 to a couple 100,000. Our pathways to becoming town clerk are just as varied.

Most of us found our way into this position rather unintentionally. With a few exceptions, we didn't grow up saying we wanted to be the town clerk.

Here's my story: My senior year of high school I only needed a few credits to graduate and my guidance counsellor referred me to a local law firm to keep me occupied for the remainder of the school day. I ended up working there full time after graduation. That law firm served

as legal counsel for our town and so began my education about town government.

Some years later, after marriage and children, it made more sense to stay home, so I did that and had a small in-home daycare. Later, when my kids were in school, I took a job with a nursery school. While on a field trip, the grandmother of one of our children, who was a court clerk in our local town court, told me that the current town clerk was retiring, and the town needed a new town clerk. I made a few inquiries, including contacting our town attorney and former employer. My first term began January 1, 1998.

The Town of Dryden is in Tompkins County. We have over 90 square miles with two villages, a community college and a unique blend of housing, business, agriculture, history and recreation.

I understand the value of this association. I had some knowledge of the job. Despite the variations in our towns, the basic responsibilities of the position are the same, and are found in various sections of the laws of the State of New York. There's a handbook.

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*By Bambi Avery, RMC/MMC  
NYSTCA President  
Dryden Town Clerk*

## OUT GOING PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

**I** had to stop and think back how long I have been involved with the NYSTCA Executive Board....15 years. It is incredible how fast the time has flown and how much I have learned. I can remember my very first Board meeting and walking out of it with my head spinning not realizing how far reaching our association is and how much I had to learn.

Over the years I have worked with truly amazing people. I've met and become friends with people I would have never crossed paths with if I wasn't a Town Clerk. This profession

we find ourselves in is more involved than anyone understands and the lives we touch are too numerous to count. I can say that I haven't

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*Susan Haag, RMC MMC  
Town of Austerlitz  
NYSTCA Ex-Officio*

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#### IIMC Update

**New York State Department of Environmental Conservation**

## DECALS Update

**By: Kevin Maloney**  
**Environmental Program Specialist 1**  
**Division of Fish & Wildlife/License Sales**

**A**t the time of writing this we are busy preparing for the upcoming peak sales season. While we don't anticipate any major changes to DECALS, we are hoping for some updates to existing functionality. Since this work is still ongoing, please make sure to check your DECALS messages daily as any updates will be sent through DECALS and GovDelivery. In addition to these updates, we are anticipating to launch a new Agent Help Center within the system. The Agent Help Center will eventually replace Support Materials and make getting answers to questions, access to forms and finding DEC contact information much easier. We have made a similar help center available to customers in our online store and early reports seem to indicate it has been helpful. So once again, be sure to check for messages directed at the help center launch and functionality. While the help center should address lots of questions, you may have a need to contact us directly. In that case, here are some of the most common points of contact that relate to DECALS:

**Agent Help Line 1-866-933-2457** - Questions regarding printer issues and other general sales questions

**License Sales** (Agents only, do not give to customers): **1-800-622-0280** - This is a line specifically for agents to call in and if need be, to leave a message. If you need to give a License Sales phone number to a customer, please provide them with **(518) 402-8843**.

**DMP Hotline 1-866-472-4332** - This phone number can be used by customers to report their harvest but is also used for agents to report mistakes made when issuing DMP's (wrong WMU selection, landowner mistakes, etc) and general DMP questions.

**Revenue 1-800-962-5622** - Any questions related to the financial parts of DECALS (adjustments, bank account sweeps, etc) and updating information in your DECALS profile. In addition to calling Revenue, you now also have access to emailing them on **adjustments only**. We will be sending a reminder message with the details via DECALS and GovDelivery.

**Hunter Education 1-888-486-8332** - Questions about how and where to take a hunter education course or to check on the existence of hunter education proof (only available for courses taken from 1980 forward).

Lastly, if you are trying to reach us this busy season, please understand that you may get our voicemail instead of a person. Historically, we are incredibly busy and just can't answer every call as it comes in. When you leave a message, please be sure to leave all your contact information (agent #, phone number, hours you may be reached), as well as your question/issue and any other information which will help us investigate the problem before calling back. Hopefully, this will help us move through voicemails and resolve issues quicker. If you have an email address, it may be helpful to provide that in your message as well.

*Thank you all in advance for the work you do not only during the busy season, but throughout the entire year.*

**New York State Agriculture & Markets**

## Clerks! Don't forget to send your monthly \$1/\$3 fees to NYS Agriculture & Markets!

**By Karen Sweeting, RMC**  
**Ag & Markets Liaison**

**O**ver \$3,700,000 since 2016 has been distributed to animal shelters across New York State providing low-cost spaying and neutering to 107,589 cats and 24,378 dogs!! So, you see, the fees you send in each month help many organizations offer this service to low-income pet owners.

New York State Agriculture and Markets Law Section 110 (3) requires all municipalities issuing dog licenses to collect surcharges of at least one dollar (\$1) for altered dogs

and at least three dollars (\$3) for unaltered dogs for the purposes of carrying out animal population control efforts. Fees collected by municipalities pursuant to Section 110 (3) must be submitted to the Department of Agriculture and Markets for deposit in the animal population control fund. These funds are used in the statewide animal population control program administered by the ASPCA pursuant to New York State Agriculture and Markets Law Section 117-a.

Fees collected by municipalities must be remitted to the Department of Agriculture and Markets by the 5th of each month covering activities of the preceding month using the Animal Population Control Fund Form on the Department's website at <https://agriculture.ny.gov/animals/guidance-municipalities>. Remittance should be mailed to the address on the form. Fees submitted without the required remittance form will be returned to sender. Questions can be directed to DAI@agriculture.ny.gov.

NY ASSOCIATION OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT RECORDS OFFICERS

# Records Management - The Lifecycle of Records

## Creating a System That Can Be Used by All



**By Desiree Potvin**  
**Woodbury Town/Village Clerk**  
**Orange County, New York**  
**President, New York Association of Local**  
**Government Records Officers**

Records Management is one of the most important responsibilities of a municipal clerk. Unfortunately, if you are like me, it always seems to end up at the bottom of the priority list. As municipal clerks, we are tasked with the responsibility of maintaining the official records of our government. We often become the “go to” person to research the history of a project or to locate that one record that is constantly being mentioned once a year by a resident that will not let us forget about it. How we maintain our records – whether in paper or electronic format – helps make our jobs easier. Often, I get calls from new clerks that have no idea how to find a record because they are unable to determine the “ins and outs” of their predecessor’s filing system. It is important to establish a filing system that anyone can navigate if the clerk is unavailable. It is also important to know that records, like humans, have a lifecycle. It is born, lives and eventually expires.

### Your Record is Born

A record has been created and now you need to file it; this should be the easy part. If you have a paper system, I suggest naming the file based on the topic and by year (for example – Marriage Licenses 2021). In my office, we use a different color file label or folder for each year to make it easily identifiable, which is helpful when a topic/project spans over multiple

years. This also makes it easier to determine what can be purged when, but more on that later. For a digital record, you may want to use the year first and then the topic for easy sorting (for example – 2021 Marriage Licenses). Remember, the goal is to make the record easy to find by anyone.

### Your Record Lives

Your record is a living document with a retention period – permanent, temporary or, sometimes, none. Determining a records retention is important for your filing system. In New York, there is a schedule prepared by the New York State Archives (LGS-1) that all municipal entities must adopt and follow which dictates minimum retention periods for all records. Hopefully wherever you call home there is a similar point of reference that you can use. It is recommended that temporary records be kept separate from permanent records. This will help to ensure that a record is not purged in error or prematurely. If you use a color system (as I stated I do before), then all records of the one color in the temporary files section of your system can be purged at the same time.

Occasionally, files can contain records with different retentions. When this happens, I use a larger folder for the file, named by topic, and smaller folders kept within the large one with more specific record names. A perfect example of files that may contain different record lifecycles are those involving elections. Most municipalities, at some point, have had to hold/run an election. Elections are very important to a municipality – it could be held for a candidate for elected office, a bond resolution or a matter that was subject to a permissive referendum that the residency felt should be voted upon. When creating your file, be sure to separate what is permanent from temporary for easier purging when the time comes.

**NOTE** – Temporary records may be kept permanently if deemed appropriate to preserve the historical significance of the issue. Whenever you keep a temporary record longer than what the retention period is, you should

justify why you choose to do so. For example, I keep all my grant applications regardless of their retention period. My justification is that a grant application may help future applicants be more successful by knowing why the grant was denied or approved the first time.

### Your Record Expires

The retention period of your record has ended and now it is time to purge it so you have room for more records. Ideally, your records inventory should be reviewed annually and purging done timely. I recommend purging whenever your fiscal year begins. If your area has a “Records Management Week or Month” (which is April in New York) then that might be a good time as well. I do my purging annually each January and hire a shredding company. You should maintain an inventory/list of what was purged and when it was done.

### But Wait – Your Record Can Be Immortal

Yes, there are records that have a permanent retention. Does this mean they can never be purged? Not exactly. It depends on the rules of your State/Country. If you convert the paper record into an electronic format and conduct a 100% verification (meaning you have checked – page by page – that the electronic record matched the paper record 100%), then you may be able to purge the paper copy. You should check with the rules of your State/Country before you purge a permanent document. This is something that is a viable option for the municipalities that can afford an Electronic Document Records System. It is also a great way to free up valuable office/storage space.

The management of a records system/program can be an overwhelming task. Having a strong foundation, understanding the lifecycle of a record, and following a routine, can make it less daunting. As someone that has been managing municipal records for the past 22 years, I honestly enjoy the organization of the process and coming up with “short-cut” tips that I can share with colleagues. I hope you experience the same sense of accomplishment when you tackle your records.

**New York State Town Clerk Association****Retreat 2022**

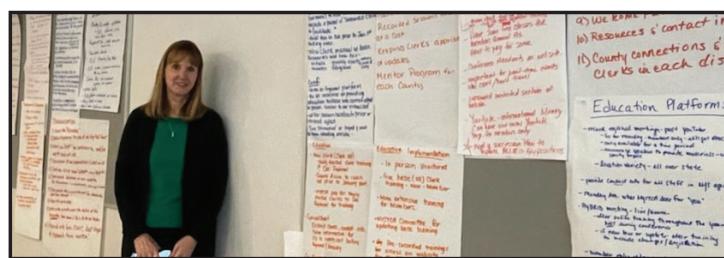
**O**ver the three years of my Presidency, it became increasingly apparent that NYSTCA had to shake some things up. Had to move forward in terms of technology. Had to find better ways of communicating with its membership. By November of last year, it became important to me to make sure as I left the Presidency, I left NYSTCA with a plan of action, goals that were put in place in order to better serve our membership.

In researching ways to bring NYSTCA along, I had the distinct pleasure of being put in the path of Ellen Freeman-Wakefield, the IIMC Institute and Academy Director out of Nebraska. With Ellen on our side ready to assist us, the Association's Executive Board, past NYSTCA Presidents and new clerks only on the job for a short time, geared up for a 3-day Retreat designed to discuss survey results, look at branding options and decide a feel and look for NYSTCA, and to put plans in place to reach the strategic goals we adopted.

To say the energy in the room was electric, as the creative juices were flowing, is an understatement. There were no right or wrong thoughts or ideas, only suggestions to think about and weigh over, deciding which were most important to tackle first and which we could agree to monetarily. Ellen led us using a systematic approach, building on each decision until we naturally came to conclusions to base our strategic plan on. It seemed so easy and seamless as the participants embraced each other and really listened to concerns, ideas, needs and desires.

By the end of our time together, I think we really put together a solid plan in place with reachable goals to move NYSTCA into the future for our membership. We concentrated on four distinct areas: training of our District Directors, creation of a new website, communication with our members and how we can more comprehensively educated our clerks.

This is what you can look forward to from NYSTCA as we move forward:  
District Director Training: We intend to implement a yearly training for



**Ellen Freeman-Wakefield, from the IIMC Institute and Academy Director, Nebraska led discussion and assisted the group in discussing survey results, looked at branding options to decide a "feel and look" for NYSTCA, and to put plans in place to reach the strategic goals we adopted.**



**L-R Past President and retired Somerset Town Clerk Becky Connolly, Canton Town Clerk Heidi Smith, Lawrence Town Clerk Tracy Villnave and Newfield Town Clerk Karen Miller Kenerson brainstorm goals during the work session.**

**Susan Haag, RMC MMC  
NYSTCA Ex-Oficio  
Retreat Recap**

the Executive Board over a couple day period. Since timing for this year is not optimal, we have scheduled this training to take place a day before the September Regional meeting. This training will help District Directors feel confident in their role and give them the knowledge, skills and abilities to assist them in fulfilling the duties of a District Director to the fullest. The training will come complete with an updated and expanded tool box of examples.

**Creation of a New Website:** This is currently underway. I signed a contract in June with CivicPlus for a more robust and state-of-the-art website complete with brand new features that will be user-friendly. The new website will house so much of interest to our membership including online registration options for Regionals and Conference, education webinars and how-to videos, more in-depth information on who NYSTCA is and how you can become involved, and more!

**Communication With Our Members:** The Executive Board is committed to make sure that it reaches its membership in an understandable, rational and effective way making sure that all its members feel connected and valued by understanding the Association's mission, vision and values. Our Communication Committee has been revamped and has been tasked with formulating a better communication plan using all of the modes available to NYSTCA which will continue to include eBlasts, Facebook, Instagram, the Recorder and the new website once completed.

**Education:** A new Committee will be formed to investigate all platforms for learning, taking into consideration NYSTCA's diverse membership to include both face-to-face learning, online programs and possible hybrid options. Outcomes highly recommended during the retreat included creating webinars housed on our website for easy access, posting of links to State Agency education sessions, hosting virtual education sessions, creation of a new clerk 'tool box' housed on our website and much more. This goal will be rolled out over the next couple of years.



**Tom Peer, Orange Town Clerk, Andrea Babcock, Westfield Town Clerk, Karen Sweeting, Sweden Town Clerk and President Bambi Avery, Dryden Town Clerk work on improvements to education strategies during the meeting.**



**Randolph Town Clerk Gretchen Hind, Erwin Town Clerk Eve Fischer, Austerlitz Town Clerk and Ex Officio Susan Haag and Potsdam Town Clerk Cindy Goliber take a break from brainstorming for a photo-op.**

I hope each of you are excited as I am to move NYSTCA into the future making the Association the best it can be. The Executive Board continues to be open to any ideas in helping NYSTCA move forward with its goals.

Thank you so much again to all who completed our survey which allowed us to hear you and listen to what our membership wants and needs. Onward and upward!



Tina Ward, Cobleskill Town Clerk, Virginia Ignatowski, Chili Town Clerk, Tammy Vezzose, Huron Town Clerk and new Southold Town Clerk Denis Noncarrow discuss ways to improve communications.



Salina Town Clerk Rodney Lowe, Chatham Town Clerk Beth Ann Rippel, Deerfield Town Clerk Flo Santini and Pomfret Town Clerk Allison Vento brainstorm on improving the NYSTCA website.

## JOIN US ON FACEBOOK!

Have you discovered the New York State Town Clerks Association Facebook group?

Exclusively for NYSTCA members, our Facebook group is a safe place to ask your fellow Town Clerks your most burning questions, share your “life hacks” that will make the lives of your fellow Town Clerks a lot easier and have a LOT of fun!

## Membership at our 40th Annual Conference

**Allison Vento, MMC/RMC**  
**Town Clerk, Town of**  
**Pomfret**  
**Outgoing Membership Chair**



Membership at our 40th Annual Conference was strong! The association is at a total of 828 Current members, leaving 105 no-members. There are 18 Associate members and 12 Honorary.

Congratulations to Lori Mithen-Demasi as our newest Honorary member from the Association of Towns!

At the Annual Business Meeting held Monday, April 25th the following counties were announced for their outstanding membership:

The following have 100% membership: Albany, Clinton, Columbia, Genesee, Onondaga, Ontario, Orange, Orleans, Putnam, Rensselaer, Schuyler, Suffolk, Sullivan, Tompkins, Warren, Washington, Wayne, Westchester, and Yates Counties.

The following have 99% participation, leaving only one town as a non-member:

Broome, Cayuga, Delaware, Erie, Fulton, Greene, Montgomery, Nassau, Niagara, Oneida, Rockland, Saratoga, Schoharie, Schenectady, Seneca, Tioga, Wyoming,

Be sure to keep an eye out for your Annual Membership Renewals, which will be hitting mailboxes and ‘inboxes’ mid-June. Remember our membership year runs July 1 – June 30 each year. This year your membership renewal payments and applications will need to be sent to a new Membership Chair at a new address. *It's so important this is updated with your bookkeeping so payments are received in a timely fashion to the correct person to process. The new renewals and applications can be sent to:*

**Karen Sweeting, RMC/CMC**

**Town of Sweden**

**18 State Street**

**Brockport, N.Y. 14420**

It's been my pleasure to serve as your Membership chair since 2017. Membership is such a pivotal piece to our association-- being able to provide networking, education, and personal and professional development to all of our 933 clerks. We can't continue to do what we do, as an association, without your continued support. Let's make our membership the greatest year yet for 2022-2023!

## Notary News

by Alfred E. Piombino

**N**OTE: It is once again my sincere pleasure to be a part of the educational program at the NYSTCA 40th Annual Conference in Albany, New York. I shared two updated presentations: On Sunday, April 24, 2022 (NYS Notary Exam Preparation and Review) and Monday, April 25, 2022 (NYS Notary Law & Practice Review). I met new friends and greeted old friends there, too. This is especially meaningful to me because my first presentation before the NYSTCA membership was 34 years ago at this very site. It was a pleasure seeing you at the Desmond Hotel and Conference Center!

Throughout the year, I am contacted by Town Clerks throughout New York State (NYS) (who also hold a NYS Notary Public commission) with various notarial-related questions and situations. Here is one of those requests and my views on it.

**Q:** As a New York State Notary Public, am I legally required by any state statute or administrative rule to create and maintain any form of records of my official notarial activities?

**A:** No.

However, it's sensible legal protection for every Notary Public and the general public served by them. Every time a Notary Public officiates, his or her legal liability and personal credibility are "on the line" – figuratively and literally. Due to the unique legal status of the Office of Notary Public, statutory and case law holds a Notary-employee individually liable for notarial acts, even if the act was employment-related. Remember - a Town Clerk is not legally protected by the municipality for legal liability stemming from his or her state Notary Public commission activity. Additionally, municipal records are for legal activity specifically flowing from the statutory powers enumerated in state statute for town officers. Accordingly, a Town Clerk (and, by extension, any Deputy Town Clerk(s) or other municipal officers or employees) who also holds a NYS Notary Public commission should create, maintain and retain notarial records separately from town records. These notarial records are the personal property of the Notary Public, not the municipality. As such, at the conclusion of town service, (due to town office term expiration, resignation, retirement, removal or other vacancy of office), the notarial records should be secured by the Notary Public and safely maintained in perpetuity. Record retention laws and regulations pertaining to the municipality are not germane to notarial records because the Office of Notary Public is not a town office.

New York State is in the minority of American states not compelling Notaries Public to obtain, maintain and safeguard a Notarial Register; over 35 states either legally mandate or strongly recommend that a Notary Public maintain a Notarial Register of all official activity. There is no standard name for the recordkeeping media and the terms Notarial Register, Notary Public Register, Notary Log, Notary Journal, Notary Diary, Notary Record and Notary Record Book are synonymous.

Every year, Notaries Public who maintain a personal Notary Public Register successfully defend themselves from attacks and promote justice for innocent people. Unlike a traditional public officer or employee, even though a Notary Public is indeed a state public officer in the eyes of the law in New York, he or she is solely responsible to defend any legal challenges. If he or she is the target of a criminal indictment, civil lawsuit, or even a government disciplinary action, the Notary Public is left alone to defend the charge – even if becoming a Notary Public is a job requirement of a private or public employment.

While the New York Department of State has overall statutory authority to issue, suspend and/or revoke a Notary Public commission, in addition to levying an administrative fine, it never suffers from a guilty verdict levied upon a Notary Public – the Notary Public alone bears all financial loss, employment jeopardy and possible life-long, public humiliation. Since most Town Clerks in New York State are elected officials, any negative impacts stemming from a notarial act can have potentially catastrophic, collateral consequences, particularly at the voting polls during the next election cycle.

Here are four more good reasons to maintain a Notarial Register:

**1 Even a trained, conscientious notary makes mistakes.**

Upon realizing a mistake was made, a Register recording makes contact possible to permit the notary to remedy the mistake. Recording basic notarial act data could help to avoid unnecessary legal costs, disciplinary action (including suspension or removal from office) by the government and even a costly damages judgment or settlement for negligence – not to mention lost professional credibility in the eyes of the client, employer and community.

**2. People deny they ever appeared before a notary (even when they actually did appear).**

This puts the notary on the defensive. Capturing an original signature, an identification serial number – even a thumbprint impression – plus other notarial act-related information, will help bolster the credibility of the notary in the eyes of the law. It might even help ward off a possible legal action before it ever gets off the ground. How else can a notary positively prove that

someone personally appeared before him or her and that proper identification was requested and examined at that time?

**3. Forgery of notarial signatures is increasing.**

A notary can't prevent an unscrupulous person from forging his or her official signature. It can easily occur by a dishonest person tracing a notary's signature from a legitimate, notarized signature document onto a bogus, forged document. A notary can defend the charge and challenge this serious felony by showing a Register (with no entry record of this bogus notarial act) to the governmental authorities or the court. A Notary who simply declares, at a deposition or on a court witness stand, that "it wasn't his or her signature", may not be sufficiently convincing that the signature was truly a fake.

**4. Notaries are summoned to testify before court judges, government hearing officers and attorneys at depositions.**

The rules of evidence for testimony take many factors into account, including written records. A professional and properly maintained Register, along with a thorough understanding of notarial principles and practices, will go a long way to building notary-witness credibility in the eyes of a judge, jury or hearing officer. By having a register ready for memory refreshing before and even during sworn testimony, the notary-witness now becomes a more reliable witness. Thus, his or her testimony becomes more valuable as evidence. If you were served with a judicial subpoena, could you conscientiously testify and provide a true, detailed-filled account of a notarial act that took place several years ago?

In conclusion, a professional Notary Public in the State of New York should keep records of every notarial act.

Alfred E. Piombino is the leading New York and national notary law and practice expert. As a professional speaker, Piombino's expertise, dynamic style and rare humor help participants navigate through confusing state laws, procedures and concepts. Over the past 35 years, he has personally prepared tens of thousands of people from across New York to pass the official appointment examination and update their legal knowledge throughout their career. Piombino is the author of nine books, including Notary Public Handbook: A Guide for New York, Fourth Edition, court expert witness and is listed in Who's Who in American Law. He is former Business Law faculty at the State University of New York (SUNY) and continues to teach seminars at SUNY college campuses. He has held both elective and appointive public offices, including Register of Probate, Fair Hearing Officer and Civil Service Commissioner. He may be reached by email at [Piombino@AlfredPiombino.com](mailto:Piombino@AlfredPiombino.com) or <https://NotaryExpertWitness.com>.

NY ASSOCIATION OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT RECORDS OFFICERS

# NYSTCA 40th Annual Conference

## April 24-27, 2022

***The following remarks were made by  
President Susan Haag at the NYSTCA 40th  
Anniversary Banquet on April 26, 2022.***

**I**t has been a long time since we have had the opportunity to present special awards to anyone, not only because our conferences have been held virtually, but because NYSTCA does not give these awards often. But tonight, it is my distinct honor to award a very special person a New York State Town Clerks Association Honorary Membership designation.

Lori Mithen-DeMasi, General Counsel for the Association of Towns, has been a staple I believe at every conference I have attended in the last 20 years. Not only has she taught almost every one of us during those conferences, but she has given of her time for many, many regional meetings as well. I asked Lori's co-workers to describe her and this is what they said....

Lori has dedicated her entire career to serving towns in New York. She is a New Yorker through and through, having grown up outside of the capital district, receiving her undergraduate degree in journalism (all towns in New York should consider themselves lucky that she made the change to law!) from Ithaca College and graduating from Albany Law School. After graduating from law school in the early 90s, Lori joined the Association of Towns and began building her now decades-long expertise in anything and everything related to towns. She has guided towns during the grunge rock phase of the 90s, the Y2K panic, the financial disasters of the aughts and most recently the COVID-19 pandemic, all with patience and a determination to help others.

While the AOT attorneys are generally jacks of all trades (towns), Lori has especially honed her expertise and knowledge in all things highway and town clerk. She has spent years developing, writing and editing the Town Clerk's manual, an essential town clerk guide that has a permanent spot on the desks of all clerks to help guide them through all of the issues they encounter in their days. If there is a problem Lori will solve it!

I personally had the pleasure of working with a group of clerks on one of these revisions with Lori when Becky Connolly was president.

Lori's institutional knowledge is unmatched and she is always willing to put aside what

### Lori Mithen-Debasi Receives NYSTCA Honor



she is doing to offer assistance and guidance to anyone that needs it. She is kind, witty and quirky and never fails to make her colleagues laugh with her observations. The Association of Towns would not be what it is today without Lori, and we are grateful for her continuing contributions both personally and professionally.

I certainly cannot express my feelings any better than this. So many of us in this room would not be where we are today without Lori's guidance, advice, expertise, FRIENDSHIP and love and we too, myself personally, are beyond grateful she joined AOT and has continued to serve and given of herself so generously in so many ways, over so many years. She has always been just a phone call or email away....

It is my pleasure to ask my friend, Lori Mithen-DeMasi to come up and accept the NYSTCA Honorary Membership with a token of our gratitude in this plaque.



## nnual Banquet **THE 40TH ANNUAL BANQUET** The 40th Annu



## annual Banquet **THE 40TH ANNUAL BANQUET** The 40th Annu



For decades town clerks from around the state came together to form the NYSTCA Choir. Each year they performed at the annual banquets and they always ended their performance with "Let There be Peace on Earth".



This year Maggie Smith, Town Clerk from the Town of Richmondville and Margaret Orrange, Retired Town Clerk from the Town of North Collins and Past NYSTCA President led banquet attendees in singing "Let There be Peace on Earth"! It was a fitting ending to our 40th Anniversary Celebration!



## New Officers are sworn in



President Bambi Avery, Town of Dryden takes her Oath of Office.



District 3 Director Julie Gansle, Town of Colonie; District 1 Director Andrew Raia, Town of Huntington; District 7 Director Ever Fisher, Town of Erwin and District 10 Director Andrea Babcock, Town of Westfield take their Oath of Office.



1st VP Boo Fumagali, Town of Bedford; 2nd VP Marie Little, Town of Royalton; 3rd VP Tammy Vessose, Town of Huron; take their Oath of Office.



Treasurer Linda Laird, Town of Westchester and Secretary Allison Vento, Town of Pomfret take their Oath of Office.

The advertisement features a blue header with the company's logo, which consists of six white icons arranged in a 2x3 grid: a person in a tent, a telescope, a house, a triangle on a base, a flask, and a globe. Below the logo, the company name "C.T. Male Associates" is written in a large, white, sans-serif font. Underneath the company name, the services offered are listed: "Engineering, Surveying, Architecture, Landscape Architecture &amp; Geology, D.P.C." The background of the ad shows a surveying tripod with a device mounted on it, positioned in front of a large, modern city skyline with prominent buildings and a bridge.

EXPERIENCE • EXPERTISE • EXCELLENCE  
[CTMALE.COM](http://CTMALE.COM)

# Fun Time Auction

**Flo Santini, Chair**  
**Town Clerk Town of Deerpark**  
**Deb Curtis, Co-Chair**  
**Town of Schodack**

I want to say thank you so very much to all our Town Clerks and County Committees that donated to our Fun Time Auction this past April. We had a such a great time chairing this fundraiser and are so pleased with all the money that was raised for our scholarship. There were so many amazing baskets at the auction. You all have done a wonderful job in putting them together in style to celebrate our 40th Anniversary.



*Photo Above: Gretchen Hinds, Patty Kalba and Becca Haines trade bids for this basket of goodies!*

*Photo Left: Outgoing President Susan Haag and Incoming President Bambi Avery took time out of their busy schedule to visit the Fun Time Auction.*



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Visit Our Website

# NYSTCA Celebrating 40 Years! What a celebration!

**O**ur 40th anniversary celebration at the NYSTCA conference was so much fun! Extra prizes were given after each class, more scholarships were awarded, and a slide show of pictures from over the years was shown.

Clerks celebrated at the mixer and overall enjoyed seeing each other again. So much work went into preparing for this and I thank the 40th anniversary committee members for their efforts that ensured a successful outcome. The pictures from the conference illustrate all of the activity that took place!

Over 300 people attended this year's conference. Did you know that NYSTCA's first Annual Conference was held April 24th & 25th, 1983 in the Syracuse Hilton Inn, with approximately 150 Town Clerks in attendance? Each year since then, (up until COVID), clerks have gathered for education, networking and a little fun. It was interesting pouring over photos from years past to put together the slide show.

***These photos are taken  
from 1982 at the first  
meeting and the 1983 first conference.***

**Virginia Ignatowski, CMC/RMC**  
**Town of Chili Clerk/Receiver**  
**40th Anniversary Chair**



## WE NEED YOU!

Have you discovered a "life hack" that would make the lives of your fellow Town Clerks a lot easier?

Are you a budding photographer with a photogenic town?

Then we need you to write an article or take some pictures.

Your work could appear in the next issue of the *Town Recorder*.

Submit your work to  
Editor Cindy Goliber at  
[recorder@nystca.com](mailto:recorder@nystca.com)



**Social Media**

## Did you stop by the Connect With Us table at conference?

**Allison Weber, RMC**  
Town Clerk, Town of Manlius  
**Tom Peer**  
Town Clerk, Town of Orange

If you did stop by and see us we were so glad to meet you! If you missed us...make sure you connect with us. Tom and I spent a great afternoon meeting new clerks and catching up with old friends.

We want to make sure that you are getting everything you can out of your membership with NYSTCA. We are always trying to find new ways to reach out to all clerks across New York State. We dubbed ourselves the "Party Table"—and look forward to seeing everyone next year.



**The 53rd Annual Professional Municipal Clerks Week was celebrated from May 1st to May 7th. Clerks at the NYSTCA Conference celebrated using the IIMC Selfie Frame.**



## Connect With Us

***What does it mean to be connected with NYSTCA you may ask?***

- Are you receiving emails from NYSTCA?
- Are you a member of our private Facebook group?
- Do you follow our Facebook page and Instagram?
- Do you know who your District Director is and are you able to connect with them?

If you need help connecting with NYSTCA, Tom and I are here for you. We are your communications team, so please stop right now and email us at : Allison Weber [a.weber@townofmanlius.org](mailto:a.weber@townofmanlius.org) or Tom Peer [t.peer@htva.net](mailto:t.peer@htva.net).

## NYSTCA Store Report

The NYSTCA Store was extremely well attended at the NYSTCA Conference in April! Thank you all!!! We hope everyone liked the options available, but we are always looking for new ideas. If there is something you would like to see in the store, please let us know and we can research those options.

**Cortney A. Rhinehardt, RMC**  
Town Clerk, Town of West Monroe  
**NYSTCA Store Chair**

We are working on restocking popular items like clothing & bags! The store will be set up at each NYSTCA Regional meeting so if you attend bring your cash, check or credit/debit card and get all your fun Town Clerk swag!!



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- Safe Workplace Award incentives for employee safety
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### District 2

**Patricia Kalba**  
*Town of Somers Town Clerk*  
**Flo Santini**  
*Town of Deerpark Town Clerk*

On Tuesday March 29, 2022, Town of Fishkill Town Clerk Becki Tompkins attended the first meeting of the Dutchess County Town Clerks' Association since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic. 19 of 20 Towns in Dutchess County are represented in the Association, which has 99% percent memberships from the New York State Town Clerks' Association.

At Tuesday's meeting, the Association held elections for executive positions, and Becki was unanimously elected President!!

### District 5

**Allison Weber, RMC**  
*Town of Manlius Town Clerk*  
**District 5 Director**



The Onondaga County Town Clerks took a boat cruise around Skaneateles Lake with Sen. John Mannion. Clerks were able to spend the afternoon networking with each other and Senator Mannion. They asked questions and discussed important issues facing their communities.

### District 8

**Nicole Begin**  
*Town of Pembroke Town Clerk*  
**AND**  
**Karen Sweeting, RMC, CMC**  
*Town of Sweden Town Clerk*  
**District 8 Directors**

#### Allegany County

Julie Jones, the Town Clerk for the Town of Clarksville, shared that her Town held a school supply drive for local kids to start the 2021-2022 school year off right. They donated supplies to the Bolivar Richburg Central Elementary and High School. The collection started in August and ran until the end of October. Town Clerk, Julie Jones, plans to collect and donate again this year. Clarksville has done the collection for two years now. The student population is 686 with most families within the poverty range also qualifying for the free or reduced school lunch program. It helps take the burden off families that would otherwise struggle getting supplies for their children. Nice job everyone!! (see photo)

The Allegany County Association met in April with many great speakers in attendance. County Real Property spoke about changes pertaining to the county tax collection effective for the upcoming tax season. Allegany County Clerk, Rob Christman, asked that Town Clerks remind their Justices to file Oaths of Office



*Mendon Town Clerk Jim Merzke retires. From left: Amy Steklof, Penfield; Daniel Aman, Brighton; Jim Merzke, Mendon; and Karen Sweeting, Sweden*

with the County as well as the Office of Court Administration and Town Clerks Office. The County Health Department brought COVID supplies and shared upcoming vaccination clinics. Sarah Phearsdorf from Southern Tier West Regional Planning and Development was

present to share information on the upcoming one-day Small Government Conference June 9th in Houghton.

Thank you, Allegany County Association! These are great speaker suggestions for all of us!

District 8

## **Monroe County**

The Monroe County Association met in May. Lori Mithen-Demasi drove all the way from Albany to present “hot topics” to those in attendance. She filled us in on the newest amendment to Open Meetings Law 103, which they refer to as the meeting/agenda packets provision. Lori also presented information on referendums and propositions.

Kristin O'Neill attended the Monroe County Association meeting in March sharing updates on remote meetings. We are lucky to have such great speakers available to us – please take advantage and contact both AOT and COOG to speak at your meetings.

Congratulations, Linda Dillon!! Linda retired in August 2021 as the Town Clerk/Tax Receiver of the Town of Pittsford after 26 years of service.

Congratulations, Jim Merzke!! Jim retired in December 2021 as the Town Clerk/Tax Receiver of the Town of Mendon after 29 years of service. He has a part-time role with the Town of Mendon as the Deputy Supervisor.

Congratulations, Jennifer West!! Jennifer retired in April 2022 as the Town Clerk/Tax Receiver of the Town of Perinton after 16 years of service.



**Pittsford Town Clerk Linda Dillon retires. From left: Amy Steklof, Penfield and Linda Dillon, Pittsford.**



**Perinton Town Clerk Jennifer West retires. From left: Pam Bucci, Rush; Jennifer West, Perinton; and Amy Steklof, Penfield.**

### **Orleans County:**

Karen Narburgh, Town Clerk for the Town of Carlton shared a unique experience. The Town Historian of over 40 years passed away. As many of us can relate, small town historians keep historic records in their home, wherever they can find the room to store them. Upon the historian's passing, the Town went in and removed all the Town records filling a conference room. They hired a resident to take over and go through the records to organize for filing. Well, come to find out, the resident threw hundreds and hundreds of records, pictures, and news articles in the dumpster! So, what does any dedicated Town Clerk do...just as Karen Narburgh did - they dumpster dive!! That's right, Karen spent hours digging through rotten food, maggots, dirty diapers, and other things she did not want to mention. Oh, and it rained the night before, so everything was wet. She spent about 40 extra hours over the following week to get everything dried out. Now that's dedication!!



## Districts of the New York State Town Clerks Association

## IIMC News

**Susan Haag, RMC MMC**  
**Town of Austerlitz**  
**NYSTCA Ex-Officio**  
**IIMC Region One Director**



**M**y second year as your IIMC Region One Director began this May in Little Rock, Arkansas. What a great time it was with roughly 21 clerks attending from Region One. I had the privilege of carrying the New York State flag for the Opening Ceremony on Monday morning. This ceremony always brings tears to my eyes with so many nations represented. The All-Conference Event was a fun evening as everyone dressed in denim and diamonds as the Conference Theme was "Like a Diamond, Multifaceted Leadership." Conference ended with banquet and welcoming our newest Region One Director, Kathy Montejo, from Maine. I want to thank our out-going Region One Director, Ann Quirk, from Massachusetts. Ann was a pleasure to work with and another friend I've made along the way. She will be missed! Mark your calendars now for next year in Minneapolis, Minnesota, May 14-17, 2022.

The Region One Annual Meeting held this past March in Sturbridge Ma. got super reviews. Those who attended gave super reviews on the

education as we learned about Communication-in all its forms, the good, the bad and the ugly! We learned a little about branding ourselves and how to present ourselves through different types of media. Overall, such a great learning experience!

Region One was also able to finally adopt a set of By-Laws. Can you believe we have never had any? Our very own Allison Vento represented New York on the By-Law Committee and served as its Co-Chair. Thanks, Allison, for your hard work!

Speaking of the Region One Annual Meeting...It's coming to New York March 29-31 in Cooperstown! We'll be meeting at the Otesaga. More information to come! Make sure to put money in your budget, especially if you are working on your CMC or your MMC.

If you are a member of IIMC look for the IIMC Region One Newsletter this summer!

**Allison Weber, RMC**  
**Town of Manlius, Town Clerk**  
**OCTCA President**  
**NSYTCA District Director**



## Why Everyone Should Attend IIMC Regional Meetings An Open Letter to My Fellow Clerks

Dear Clerks,

I am here to tell you that regional meetings need to be at the top of your to-do list.

I recently had the opportunity to attend the IIMC Region I Meeting in Sturbridge Massachusetts. This was my first IIMC regional meeting and I honestly had no idea what to expect. When you hear the term regional meeting you may imagine a group of clerks from a defined region gathering to have an organized discussion about agenda items. You would not be completely wrong.

You may then also say to yourself "Self: It would be so very nice to travel to a meeting right now, but listen self, you just don't have the time because (Insert Universal Clerk Tasks and To-Do Lists Here)"

Regional meetings are so much more than business meetings. Regional meetings are about education, professionalism, and networking. My dear fellow clerk, please put yourself first in these three areas if you are able. Our jobs are rewarding for sure, but they can also be challenging and exhausting. This regional meeting recharged my batteries, and I came back to the office renewed.



March 7 is the Region 1 Meeting for IIMC

Yes, the regional meeting included a very important business meeting, but the education component was the key takeaway for me. Education in our profession is critical. There is always more to learn. This session focused on professional communications in many forms and I learned things that have helped make me a better clerk. Even in writing this letter, I have used at least three techniques to try to be impactful and help get my point across.

Lastly, spending time with other clerks that have a common thread of being municipal clerks, made me feel understood. The time spent networking, learning, and laughing in the company of my peers was so worth it. I am a better clerk because I went and that means that my residents are getting better service too.

My training taught me that I should be brief and impactful. I did not do the education component of this meeting justice. I encourage everyone to reach out to their IIMC region directors and learn more about regional meetings in your area.

Take care of yourselves and each other.



*IIMC Region 1 Director and NYSTCA President Susan Haag had the honor of representing New York State in the Parade of Flags.*



*(Standing) Kathy Newkirk, retired Town of Bethlehem Clerk, Allison Weber Town of Manlius Clerk and (seated) Susan Haag, Town of Austerlitz Clerk / IIMC Region 1 Director, Allison Vento, Town of Pomfret Clerk were proud to represent the New York State Town Clerks Association at the IIMC Conference.*

## **PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE**

*continued from page 1*

And you have a footprint left by the previous town clerk. But my goodness – you don't know it all! I still don't know it all. No one is completely prepared for the position. And if you are a tax collector – that starts immediately too! I remember my first taxpayer coming through the door early and waiting patiently while I struggled to unlock the vault. Meeting minutes, dog licenses, conservation licenses, marriage licenses, resolutions, bonding, special elections, special districts... Why does this resident bring a FOIL request every few days? Every day can bring a new circumstance and experience. You can become overwhelmed easily.

But remember – there are 933 Town Clerks, so there are 932 other clerks you can reach out to. Town Clerks are resourceful, and we help each other. We have strong networks, from neighboring Town Clerks and local associations to this fantastic state association that brings us all together. I attended my first conference at the urging of one of my fellow clerks.

I'll never forget that first conference and the relationships established there that exist to this day. While checking in at the hotel, another clerk in line asked where I was from and I told her. It turned out that her daughter had attended the local community college in Dryden and she had told her daughter to reach out to my predecessor if she found a need, and that happened. She and I have a friendship that dates back to that conference in 1999. I was impressed with the education sessions, with the ability to now have faces and contact information for the state agencies that I reported to on a monthly basis. I was impressed with the professionalism and pride exhibited by the clerks in attendance and the officers and directors of the association. I found my community at that conference. I understood the value of the educational opportunities this association provides. Again – remember there are only 933 of us in all of New York State.

I've always been a member of the association, and have served as District Director, Treasurer, 3rd, 2nd & 1st Vice President. I've served on and chaired several committees. I have a good understanding of how the association operates. I have made friendships here that I know will last a lifetime. I've seen parts of our state that I probably wouldn't have been aware of except for my positions in this association. I know that if I'm travelling in the state and find myself in a predicament or in need of information, I can call a fellow clerk. Over the years fast friendships have been formed that I know will continue beyond any of our careers as town clerk.

In 1982 Margaret Lamoree, Town Clerk in

the town of Sanford in Broome County, saw a need to unify the Town Clerks in New York State. She brought together a group of Town Clerks from across the state, and with foresight and vision, this Association was formed. The mission of the association is to provide educational opportunities for and promote the professionalism of the position of Town Clerks. We work continually to provide that for our members. We reach out through our district directors to the clerks in each district. We provide regional trainings. We provide an annual conference with days of education sessions.

We have adapted to change and continue to evolve. We have joined social media. Check out our Facebook page where clerks from across the state can ask questions and discuss various topics. We have gathered results from a survey, and we held a retreat in June with the goal of branding our organization and moving forward in a manner that makes sense currently without disregarding our past. I expect that you will begin to see the results of these efforts soon.

I'm grateful for all those who have served in this position before me and for the teams that served with them. Because of them I have a firm foundation to stand on. I'm grateful for all those that have been involved in association activities in every position with me over the years. It takes so many hands to make this a successful association and I am thankful for them all.

I am one of 933 Town Clerks in New York State. I am proud to serve as President of the New York State Town Clerks Association and am looking forward to the coming year!

## **SUSAN HAAG**

*continued from page 1*

always done a super job in every situation, but I hope I have risen to the occasion and made good decisions for the betterment of our Association.

I will always cherish these years and look back on them as a major part of my career. I want to thank God for allowing me this opportunity. His grace and mercy have gotten me through! I want to thank you all for your guidance, knowledge, friendship and love that you have shared throughout the years. I would not have made it through without these. I also want to thank you for your confidence in allowing me to serve as president, especially for a 3rd term. Even though these have been very happy years and I've had so much fun, I'm looking forward to relaxing a bit as Ex-Officio and watching Bambi shine! Thank you from the bottom of my heart!

## New York State Town Clerks Association

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### On the Cover

Dryden, population 14,489, began as a town in the New Military Tract, created to provide land to Revolutionary War veterans, and allocated in 1790. The state identified Dryden as one of the original components of Tompkins County, created in 1817.

**Is your town photogenic?** Send us a photo and it may be our next cover feature! Details on page 3.

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**Publication Schedule**  
Spring, Summer, Fall and Winter

**Submissions welcome!**  
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