



January 15, 2025

Q4 Town Clerk update:

- **General Election:** We spent the first month of Q4 preparing for the General Election on November 5th.
 - o Out of our 3,133 registered voters on November 5th, 2,501 cast votes (a 79.8% turnout).
 - o Absentee ballots accounted for 75% of votes cast (1,881).
 - o Procedurally, this was the smoothest election over which I've presided. Volunteers were out of Tracy Hall by about 8:30pm and the tabulator count aligned with the number of names manually checked off the voter checklist.
 - o High voter turnout coupled with the fact that the state had mailed out ballots to all registered voters (many of which were undeliverable) allowed me to issue roughly 200 challenge letters to voters I believe have moved out of town. These were mainly people who hadn't voted since 2020. We currently have 3047 registered voters, of which 2,666 are "verified," 365 are challenged, and an additional 16 lack SSN or DL verification as provided by the state.
- **Training:** Lily attended the New England Association of City and Town Clerks' annual conference in Newport, RI in November.
 - o This conference featured classes with the subjects of leadership, branding and stress management. It also included a seminar on grant writing and an Athenian Dialogue, which is an eight-hour long book discussion focusing on issues relevant to clerking. I'm pleased to report that I won the trivia contest associated with the Athenian Dialogue.
 - o The NEACTC conference and Athenian Dialogue award points toward my Certified Municipal Clerk designation, which is granted by the International Institute of Municipal Clerks. Following the IIMC conference in May and my attendance at the New England Municipal Clerks' Institute and Academy for a week in July I will have accumulated enough education and experience points to apply for my CMC. Vermont also offers a Certified Vermont Clerk (CVC) designation, and I will be eligible to apply for that in 2026.
- **Recording:** Judy recorded and indexed 313 documents totaling 715 pages in Q4.
 - o With some exceptions we charge \$15 per page for recording. 715 pages of recording should have brought in \$10,725, but we only booked \$7,945 in recording fees. The difference is due to the fact that 151 of those documents were lien releases generated by the town, which are recorded at no cost. In addition, Property Transfer Tax Returns are multiple page documents, but per state statute we charge a flat \$15 fee for their recording.
- **Other Updates:**
 - o Prepped for dog license renewals. Despite my best intentions, this still involves printing out all current licenses, removing rabies certificates from the old license and stapling those certificates to the newly printed licenses. I am hopeful that after this second year using the new licensing system the office can move entirely online with scanned rabies certificates and on demand printing of license renewals. My goal this year is to have email addresses associated with all dog owners, so that I can more easily reach out to owners about delinquent dogs and expired rabies certificates.

- Surveyed COTT fees: Last month COTT Systems, which hosts our land records online, gave us notice that our next three-year contract will involve a substantial price increase. The monthly fee will go from \$290 to \$390. I sent out a survey to the other Vermont clerks, and among the 16 COTT users who responded, our new price scheme will take us from being one of the lower paying customers to the middle of the road when you look at the per-page cost and the cost per 100 residents. This increase will take effect on July 1, 2025.

Provider	Cost	Population	Pages recorded per year	Cost per page	Cost per 100 people
Cott	210	15,700	7,500	0.03	0.01
Cott	295	2500	3,200	0.09	0.12
Cott	425	9000	4,000	0.11	0.05
Cott	480	2255	3,700	0.13	0.21
Cott	390	3600	3,000	0.13	0.11
Cott	210	3000	1,500	0.14	0.07
Cott	160	2000	1,000	0.16	0.08
Cott	160	2800	1,000	0.16	0.06
Cott	160	1000	800	0.20	0.16
Cott	270	1550	1200	0.23	0.17
Cott	185	780	700	0.26	0.24
Cott	185	664	450	0.41	0.28
Cott	160	984	350	0.46	0.16
Cott	335	1660	unknown		0.20
Cott	300	1238	unknown		0.24
Cott	168	1950	unknown		0.09

(Norwich's new pricing scheme is the highlighted row in the above table.)

- **Looking Ahead:**

- **Scanner update:** After much back and forth with a company that sells large format scanners, we're still debating what model scanner to get. We asked the voters for \$20,000 towards a Bookeye 5V2 scanner, which the company informs us can't handle the size of our oldest land records books – we'd have to scan each page sideways. The scanner company recommends the higher end Bookeye 5V1a Professional, which costs about \$45,000 but which could scan even the largest surveys and books we have. We have sufficient money in our Restoration and Preservation Fund to make the more expensive purchase should we choose to. I've scoured the internet for opinions on the merits of each scanner (the r/archivists group has been particularly helpful), and plan to have a discussion with the preservation specialist who's coming to do an assessment of the vault next month. Which brings us to
- **The National Endowment for the Humanities Preservation Assistance Grant.** Two components of this grant are upcoming:
 - Judy and I will be taking Preservation 101, a 10 session live (zoom) course offered by the Northeast Document Conservation Center (NEDCC) starting at the end of January. This will necessitate the closure of our office from 2 to 4pm on:
 - January 30
 - February 6, 13, 27
 - March 6, 13, 20, 27
 - April 3, 10

- On February 3rd a representative from NEDCC will spend the day evaluating the contents of our vault in order to make a comprehensive preservation and conservation plan. The hope is that this plan will guide our decisions regarding which books / documents are in greatest need of conservation, and which books / documents can simply be scanned and left in their current state.
- **Dog Licensing:**
 - Last September the MCS 6th graders voted on the shape and color of this year's dog license tags, so please compliment a 6th grader if you like the blue paws featured on dog collars in town. Voting on license tags was a great way to introduce the sixth graders to the voting process – we talked about how you can't change your vote once it's been cast, and how you don't need to tell anyone how you voted – and I hope to do it again this September.
- **Elections:**
 - Apart from all the usual Town Meeting preparation, I'm hoping to involve MCS students in an "I VOTED" sticker design contest.
 - Barring any unforeseen special elections, there's only one election this year – which is good, because the State has notified clerks of its intention to move to new election management software after Town Meeting.