



Michigan Association of Municipal Clerks

Quarterly Newsletter | Summer 2020

Letter from the President



Friends and fellow clerks,

Who could have envisioned the year we are having. Having had 2 post-Proposal 3 elections in 2019, I knew the entire state was in for big changes in voting patterns. What I could not foresee was a global pandemic compounding those changes to drastically change how we hold elections in Michigan.

Many of us are struggling to keep up with the daily AV application and ballot cycle, while fighting to keep our polling locations, and maintain enough election workers.

And from an organizational perspective, the Michigan Association of Municipal Clerks has had to adapt as well. From rescheduling our Institute, to converting our Annual Conference to a virtual one, to then cancelling the rescheduled Institute, we are all learning new ways of doing things. I hope we can get back to normal, but also keep some of the best of the necessary changes we have made.

I want to take a minute to thank our Immediate Past President, Jeremy Howard, for his leadership for the past year. He did an excellent job of making decisions that were the best for MAMC. It is regretful that we were not able to honor his service with the President's Dinner at conference as is our tradition.

Similarly, congratulations to our COTY winners, who also did not get the traditional event showcasing their accomplishments. All four awards were well deserved, and I am especially glad that we added the Deputy Clerk of the Year category. Please see the related article, but in short congratulations to Deputy Clerk of

the Year, Amy Whipple; City Clerk of the Year, Melanie D. Ryska; Township Clerk of the Year, Mary R. Clark; and Village Clerk of the Year, Angie Koon. Bravo!

Thank you to departing Board members, Dan Kasunic and JoAnne Kean. And a warm welcome to Lisa Lawitzke. Due to the election of Adam Wit as 3rd Vice President, we do have a vacancy for a Township or County member on the Board. We will announce the application process shortly.

The transition of our certification program the rebranded MiPMC (Michigan Professional Municipal Clerk) is well underway. Please update your email signature, website bio, and anywhere else you list your professional accomplishments.

MAMC continues to be a valuable resource for you and your community. I hope you will continue to participate. I look forward to the year ahead.

Sincerely,

Chris Swope, MiPMC/MMC
Lansing City Clerk

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MEET YOUR NEW BOARD MEMBER!

EDUCATION UPDATE



Hi! I'm Lisa Lawitzke, newly-elected Township Director on the MAMC Board. I started working as an Election Inspector in Bellevue Township (Eaton County) at the November, 2008 General Election, and was appointed Deputy Clerk for the township in 2010. I'm currently on the August

ballot, running for the Bellevue Township Clerk seat (with my clerk's blessing.) I've also recently been elected to be the Eaton County Representative on the board of my regional association, Capitol Area Municipal Clerks Assoc. I've completed 2 years of MAMC's Clerk's Institute, and I hope to complete my third year and earn my MiPMC next March.

I was born in Detroit, and raised in Sterling Heights, in the house where my mom still lives. The rest of my immediate family also still live in the Metro Detroit area. I attended Michigan State U., where I earned a BA in Personnel Administration in 1986. That's also where I met my future husband, John. We've been married over 33 years now. We don't have any children, but we've had lots of 'fur babies' over the years, and currently have 3 horses and a cat.

When I'm not working, I enjoy spending time with John and 'the kids,' reading, traveling, fencing (sport, not stolen goods), and doing yoga and TaiChi. I also like to do circuit training and water aerobics, but am not very good about making the time in my schedule for them.

I look forward to serving the clerking community, and plan to do that to the best of my ability as a member of the MAMC Board!

Melanie D. Ryska, MiPMC/CMC
City of Sterling Heights, Education Chair

"It all seems impossible, until it's done!" ~Nelson Mandela

Whether you know it or not, these are words Clerk's live by!!

2020 has proven the most challenging year of our careers. This canvas hangs in my office as a constant reminder that we will get through this and it will get done!

MAMC is committed to providing relevant, essential educational opportunities, despite the challenges we face! While many of our planned, in person, educations have been cancelled, we are still working hard to put together sessions to help you prevail!

The 2020 Virtual Conference sessions were well attended and with Institute being cancelled and the anticipated cancellation of Free Education Day, we are planning to have some more virtual classes in September. More information to come.

We are still planning for Master Academy, December 1-3, 2020 at the Comfort Inn Conference Center in Mt. Pleasant. We will closely monitor the Governors General Orders and hotel policies.

Thank you for your continued patience as we navigate through 2020 and try to provide the best educational opportunities possible!!

Financial Report

Lanie McManus, MiPMC
Garfield Charter Township
MAMC Treasurer

Financial Report for June 30, 2020

Bank Statement	
Beginning Balance	\$298,466.16
Deposits/Credits	\$1,656.00
Interest	0
Withdrawals	\$49,633.79
Ending Checking Balance	\$250,488.37
Ending Savings Balance	\$42,800.86
TOTAL FUNDS	\$293,289.23

2020 CLERK OF THE YEAR WINNERS



**Deputy Clerk of the Year
Amy Whipple, MiPMC/MMC
Brownstown Charter Township**

Amy Whipple was nominated by the Brownstown Township Clerk, Brian Peters.

Amy Whipple was appointed Deputy Clerk in 2006. Prior to her current position, Ms. Whipple, was the Clerk of Erie Township.

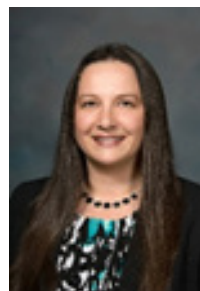
When Amy was appointed to Deputy Clerk of Brownstown Township, she was asked to get the elections department in order. Not only did she accomplish this, but she constantly works to improve and make advancements to enhance the election experience for all voters. She has worked with and mentored countless new clerks, deputy clerks, elections clerks and conducted election training for other clerks around the state. Amy has developed and shared her own manuals, training materials, strategies, policies and procedures. Her skill and commitment have been recognized and she has been invited to participate at the State level to document best practices and standard operating procedures for absent voter ballot processing in the State's Lean Process Improvement Project.

Amy has maintained memberships in the IIMC, MAMC and Association of Wayne County Clerks. As a part of these organizations, she has attended conferences, training seminars and networking events over the course of her career and worked with fellow members to coordinate election training and idea sharing events. Through her involvement in these organizations, she has achieved her MMC and CMC through the International Institute of Municipal Clerks, and her MiPMC certification through MAMC.

Clerk Brian Peters states that "Beyond her contributions to the Brownstown community, Amy consistently gives her time and efforts in support of other Clerks and election staff in the region, freely sharing her manuals and election materials, training other clerks and staff, assisting with training election inspectors in neighboring communities, and being willing to answer questions and talk through issues with her colleagues at the drop of a hat, at all hours of the day. She is highly respected by her peers."

Peters goes on to explain that "Since her appointment as Brownstown Deputy Clerk, Amy has molded the Clerk's Office into a professional department, excelling in all they do, especially elections. Amy is known to her colleagues for her attention to detail, her outspokenness on making sure elections are administered the right way.... Over her years of service, clerks and election staff have come and gone in Brownstown, but there has never been a decline in the quality of work and professionalism in the office. This is directly attributable to the hard work and dedication of Amy Whipple." Amy has strived to make sure her community is accountable to the public by installing new software and public access applications, allowing the public to search documents, agenda, minutes, financial data, etc.

Amy says "Most importantly, I have tried to do all of these things as part of a team; a team of employees in our office, a team of volunteers from our community, and a team of colleagues from around the State that share a passion for public service. As much as I have worked to build our community, our public trust, and our integrity, I have also worked just as hard to do the same for those around me in the profession."



**City Clerk of the Year
Melanie D. Ryska, MiPMC/CMC
City of Sterling Heights**

Melanie's career in municipal government began in 2002 as an Election Assistant for the City of Hamtramck. Melanie accepted the appointment of City Clerk in 2005.

She took a position as Deputy City Clerk in Grosse Pointe Woods in 2007. In 2014, Melanie joined Wayne County as the Assistant Director of Elections, broadening her knowledge of the law and strengthening her professional network. In 2017 the City of Sterling Heights appointed Melanie to serve as their City Clerk. Along with her duties as City Clerk, she also serves as a Lieutenant in the Hamtramck Police Reserves and has been a reserve since 2003.

Melanie received her CMC in 2009 and her MiPMC in 2014. She is a member of IIMC and MAMC for which she serves on the Board of Directors as Chair of Education. She also serves as Secretary of the Macomb County Clerks Association, Team Manager of the FC Union Soccer Club, Vice President of the St. Anne Athletic Board, and is a former President of the

Association of Wayne County Clerks. Melanie earned a psychology degree from the University of Michigan-Dearborn and expects to complete her Master's Degree by 2022.

Throughout her career, Melanie has been a champion for clerks across the State, oftentimes mentoring new clerks and encouraging association membership and education. She has been called upon to speak at various organizations such as the American Society for Public Administration and the Association of Wayne County Clerks, to share her experience, best practices, and provide legislative updates.

In her current position as Clerk, she worked to streamline and automate the processing of more than 200 FOIA's and more than 2,000 licenses annually. In 2017 she implemented new election equipment in the six weeks preceding the November local election, including revamping all election material for 45 precincts. Melanie has streamlined precinct AVCB, and receiving board procedures to promote efficiency and accuracy in election reporting. Melanie has worked with various ethnic communities in Sterling Heights to recruit election inspectors and focuses on hiring bi-lingual workers to assist voters.

Most recently, Melanie implemented OnBase Agenda Management system as the first phase to modernizing the City's record keeping and has begun a plan to expand OnBase to serve as the citywide content management system. Her Clerk's Office also earned the "Department of the Year" award from Sterling Heights.

Melanie feels she is dedicated to public service and appreciates the support and encouragement of her professional mentors, colleagues, staff, and especially her family, which includes her husband, Jason, and three children, Landon, MaKenzie, and Reid.



**Township Clerk of the Year
Mary R. Clark, MiPMC
Delta Township**

Mary Clark has served Delta Township as their clerk for nine years, however her career in public service started long before she was appointed and then elected to the Delta Township Board. Mary served

as the Executive Director of Big Brothers Big Sisters of Greater Lansing for 10 years, the Executive Director of the Capital Area Youth Alliance for 2 years, and as a Legislative Assistant in the Michigan House of

Representatives for 4 years.

Township Manager Brian Reed says this about Mary, "Clerk Clark has performed honorably in her position, providing innovative and above average service to Delta Township residents, wisdom and energy to local, county, regional and statewide associations, and provides volunteer time and expertise to the State of Michigan."

Clerk Clark has partnered with the Eaton County Clerk to offer space in the Township Administration building to provide County Clerk services to Delta residents. This option saves many Delta Township residents a significant amount of time as they do not need to drive to the County seat. She has also played an integral role in improving recreational amenities such as sidewalks, pathways, and parks in Delta Township. Mary recently conducted an audit of both Township cemeteries and is creating a searchable database of those buried in the Township and all documents associated with those burials, some dating back to the 1800's. She also recently conducted an audit of all 110 township owned vehicles and is partnering with other township department to track all documents, costs, insurance and maintenance of these vehicles.

Clerk Clark serves on the Election Modernization Advisory Committee at the request of the Secretary of State, is currently the 2nd Vice President of the Michigan Association of Municipal Clerks having served on the Board of Directors since 2014. She is also a member of the Capitol Area Municipal Clerks Association and has served as its President, Secretary and is currently serving her second term as Vice President.

Mary has worked to promote the education and professionalism of municipal clerks for her entire tenure as clerk. She served as the MAMC Education Chair for four years, has team taught Clerking 101 for three years and has taught Legislative Process sessions at both the MAMC Institute and Master Academy. She has also testified on behalf of clerks in both the Michigan House of Representatives and the Michigan Senate.

In her free time, Mary volunteers as a Victims Advocate for the Eaton County Sheriff's Office, is a team member of the Eaton County Child Death Review Team, a founding member of the Blue Cross Blue Shield Community Advisory Council, a founding member of the Capital Area Women's Leadership Council and is the Vice President and Chair of the Personnel Committee of the Eaton County Public Transit.

Mary has this to say about being a clerk, “I love the blend of administrative management and policy making being an elected clerk offers me. To be able to continually improve both the Clerk’s office and Delta Township, as a whole, is an opportunity I am both grateful for and very proud of.”



**Village Clerk of the Year
Angie Koon
Village of Kalkaska**

Angie Koon began her municipal career as a Records Clerk for the Kalkaska Police Department in 2001. In 2008, she took on the roles of Accounts Payable Clerk, Administrative Assistant, and Deputy Clerk for the Village of Kalkaska, while still maintaining her duties for the Police Department. In 2010 Angie was sworn in as Village Clerk at which time she assumed the positions of Payroll Clerk, Utility

Billing Supervisor, and Benefits Coordinator/Human Resources Director.

Village Council President Harley Wales nominated Angie and stated that she is an exemplary employee who shows respect to her community leaders and holds them in the highest regards. She takes her position seriously and to heart.

Angie states that with little time to prepare for the duties as clerk, her initial training was self-taught until attending Clerking 101. Angie is an active member of the MAMC, many civic programs, and serves as the Vice President of the Parish Council of Catholic Women.

Angie, states, that she takes pride not only in accomplishments as Clerk, but also in her ability to balance the numerous duties in which she is responsible for.

WELCOME MiPMC MEMBERS!

*Jacqueline Beaudry, MiPMC/MMC
City of Ann Arbor, Membership/MiPMC Chair*

Congratulations to all the new and newly promoted Michigan Professional Municipal Clerks! Thank you to everyone for your patience – just as we were ready to roll out the final stages of this long-awaited program, a worldwide pandemic changed our plans again! But we still got it done and all MiPMCs, including those who earned advanced levels, should have certificates now.

To achieve a Level 2

- Automatic for those who already recertified with CMMC; or
- For those who have not recertified, an additional 20 points from last certification date

To achieve a Level 3 (and beyond)

- 50 additional points from your last certification/level achievement
- Updated applications and guidelines can be found on the website.

Help us spread the word about our new certification program and your achievements as professional clerks. Replace CMMC with MiPMC to avoid confusion:

- Is your email signature updated? This is a no-cost change you can make right away!
- Ready for new business cards or letterhead? Make sure to promote your MiPMC!
- Update your website – another no-cost easy change.
- Applying for new positions or memberships – add your MiPMC to your professional resume or bio.
- Proudly display your new certificate in your office – you earned it!

Reminder as we get into the final months of 2020 and busy with elections, if you were eligible, but did not recertify under the CMMC program, or were told to wait for the new program and have more than 20 points earned, a one-time “certificate” will be awarded to anyone submitting more than 20 points during the 2020 calendar year. Anyone applying for a new level in 2020 should submit ALL POINTS EARNED, to receive your next level and the bonus points “certificate” to be used for a future level award.

CAPITOL UPDATE

Bill Zaagman
Governmental Consultant Services, Inc.
MAMC Lobbyist
zaagman.w@gcsionline.com



Governor Signs Bill to Encourage AVCB Collaboration

Governor Witmer signed legislation designed to give local clerks more flexibility and options in establishing absent voter counting boards. Under HB 5141, introduced by Representative Julie Calley (R-Portland), local clerks can partner with other local clerks within the same county to establish a combined absentee voter counting board or enter into an agreement with another local clerk or county clerk where that clerk performs the function of an AVCB on behalf of the initiating local clerk. Clerks will need to follow their jurisdiction's contracting policies and, in some circumstances obtain governing body approval. The law provides the ability to terminate any agreement with appropriate notice to all of the parties. The Bureau of Elections is charged with establishing the process and procedures necessary to implement any agreement between clerks. The bill is now Public Act 95 of 2020 and took immediate effect.

AV 'Pre-Processing' Bill Stalls in Senate

Legislation designed to allow clerks to perform limited "pre-processing" of absentee ballots on the day before the election stalled out in the Senate when Senate Majority Leader Mike Shirkey (R-Clarklake) sidelined the bill from further consideration. Senate Bill 757 introduced by (former Secretary of State) Sen. Ruth Johnson (R-Holly) would have allowed clerks facing significant increases in absentee balloting to open the envelope and remove the ballot and secrecy sleeve from the mailing envelope. The ballot and secrecy sleeve could then be confirmed and placed in a secure ballot storage container for tabulation on election day. The bill required that the processing be conducted by appointed election inspectors and that the process be operated with strict protocols and security measures. In addition, challengers must be allowed to observe. Despite the security measures put in place, the Senate Majority Leader has refused to allow for the bill to come to a vote before the full Senate.

House Committee Acts on AVCB Bill

The House Elections Committee moved on legislation that would move smaller jurisdictions toward establishing absentee voter counting boards. House Bill 5123, as introduced by former clerk Rep. Ann Bollin (R-Brighton Township), amended the Michigan Election Law to require every jurisdiction to establish an absent voter counting board. Current law an AVCB is permissive for all jurisdictions. Under the (H-1) compromise that moved from committee, jurisdictions with two or more precincts and at least 6,000 registered electors would be required to establish an AVCB. An AVCB would still be permissive for single-precinct jurisdictions and two precinct jurisdictions with less than 6,000 registered electors. The bill now moves on to the House Ways & Means Committee for further deliberations and action.

Senate Moves on Bill for AVCB Inspector Shifts

The full Senate overwhelmingly passed legislation amending the Michigan Election Law to clarify and allow for AVCB inspectors to perform their work in shifts. Current law is a bit unclear and states the election inspectors cannot leave the counting board after the tallying has begun and until it has been completed. Senate Bill 756, introduced by Sen. Ruth Johnson, clarifies that inspectors can be released and leave the counting board after the polls close at 8 p.m. Other shifts of AV board workers could begin at any time on election day provided they are not released until after the polls close. Also, there can be no gap between shifts and the AV ballots are not permitted to be left unattended. Lastly, at least one election worker from each major political party would always have to be present. The House Elections Committee took testimony on the bill and sent it on to the House Ways & Means Committee for further action.

House Acts on Bills to Shield Addresses of Abuse Victims

The House moved on legislation establishing the “Address Confidentiality Program” within the Department of the Attorney General. The multi-bill package would allow an individual to participate in the program if he or she were a victim of domestic violence, stalking, human trafficking, or sexual assault, or risked physical harm if his or her address were disclosed. Participants would be required to be 18 years of age or older, an emancipated minor, the legal parent or guardian appointed by a court, or the guardian of a ward to apply for certification on behalf of himself or herself, or his or her minor or ward, as a participant in the Program.

Once approved for the program, each enrollee would be issued a designated mailing address at which the Department of Technology, Management, and Budget (DTMB) would receive the participants' mail and be responsible for forwarding that mail the participants actual mailing address. Each participant’s permanent address would become confidential and could not be released. The term of the participation would be four years, unless canceled as provided under the proposed Act. The bills are Senate Bills 70 through 76 and House Bills 5054 through 5058.

Of interest to the clerk community will be Senate Bill 71, which amends the Michigan Election Law

and provides that a program participant’s address is confidential and can’t be released. The bill, awaiting action on the House floor, specifies that a program participant's voter registration application would be confidential and not subject to disclosure under the Freedom of Information Act. In addition, the bill provides that:

1. The Qualified Voter File would have to contain his or her unique ID number issued by the Attorney General.
2. Any poll list or poll book created for an election to include only the participant's name and a notation for the precinct election inspector to contact the city or township clerk.
3. A participant must vote by absent ballot while he or she was enrolled in the Program.
4. Require a city or township clerk who received an absent voter ballot application from a Program participant to mail a ballot to the participant at the designated address.

The full House acted on House Bills 5054 through 5058 and sent them over to the Senate for further action while Senate Bills 70 through 76 are awaiting further action by the full House. The Senate Judiciary and Public Safety Committee has yet to take testimony on House Bills 5054 through 5058.





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