



MEMO

Date: February 18, 2025

To: Charter Revision Commission

From: David Marti, Town Clerk

RE: Town Clerk position- Elected versus Appointed

I was elected to the position of Town Clerk in Somers in November of 2021. With a Bachelor's degree in Business my background was primarily in the grocery business starting as grocery clerk and advancing to Vice President of Marketing for a 90-store supermarket chain in the Midwest. I then purchased a printing business that focused on printing and signage for the grocery industry along with meeting local customer needs. As a business owner in town, I was invited to join the Rotary Club. Many fellow Rotary members served on the Town's Boards and Commissions and some even ran for offices in local government. Their examples were my motivator to run for office and to become Town Clerk of Somers in January 2022.

Since becoming Town Clerk, I aggressively pursued education towards certification. Over the past year, I received my CT Town Clerk Certification CCTC, my International Clerk Certification CMC, and my Certified Connecticut Municipal Official CCMO.

I have gained a new appreciation of the responsibility and the statute-driven assignments required by the Town Clerk and Assistant. The Town Clerk office is responsible for issuance and archiving of all Vital records of the Town (births, marriages and deaths). It is responsible for the recording and archiving of all land records in the town, including, deeds, mortgages, release of mortgages, liens, foreclosures, maps, affidavits and more, along with collecting State Conveyance tax documents and monies. It is responsible for all absentee ballots for all elections. The Town Clerk is the gatekeeper of all Freedom of Information request and oversees the FOIA guidelines followed by all Boards and Commissions as it relates to Agendas, Minutes, Legal Notices, Minority representation oversight and more. Other duties, include running Town Meetings, Enforcement and Education of the State Libraries retention schedules to town employees, issuing Sport Licenses, issuing Dog Licenses, archiving Town veterans DD214's, issuing and maintaining Trade names, issuing Tag Sales permits and organizing bi-annual Town Wide tag sales. The Town Clerk is required to learn and use 5 different proprietary software systems: Birth Vitals, Death Vitals, Election Management System, CT Voters Registration System and DEEP's Sportsman's Licensing software.

On the next page are some key reason for the Town Clerk to be Appointed and key reasons the Town Clerk should remain Elected.

Key reasons the Town Clerk should be Appointed “hired” and not Elected.

The varied, critical, statute driven responsibilities of this office demand that it be a hired position and not an elected position. The best candidate needs to be selected based on education, background and vetted through an interview process.

An Elected individual could win on popularity without the skill sets required for this critical job.

An Elected individual could be replaced in four years, creating a lack of continuity. A career professional would give the office stability and continuity.

An Elected individual narrows the Town Clerk to a resident of the Town and not necessarily the best candidate for the job.

An Elected individual might be beholding to the political party that endorsed them to run. The Town Clerk must be apolitical with no obligation to either party.

There is no incentive for an experienced Assistant Town Clerk who is not a resident to train a newly elected inexperienced supervisor that receives higher compensation. Luckily this was not the case in Somers. Deb Murphy has gone above and beyond to assist me to be a better Town Clerk every day. We act as a team and assist each other to fulfill the responsibilities of the office of Town Clerk.

Key reasons the Town Clerk should remain Elected

An Elected Town Clerk assures accountability to the voters and to statutory requirements of the position rather than to Town management.

An Elected Town Clerk has direct accountability to the voters. Must be extra responsive to electorate to be re-elected.

The case for Appointed over Elected is a much stronger case. Therefore, as the current elect Town Clerk I fully endorse this revision be endorsed and put forward to be included in this year’s Charter Revision.

One other change that I encourage the Commission to consider is the change of term from 2 years to 4 years for the Board of Selectmen and the Registrar of Voters. The learning and responsibility of both offices take a minimum two years to get acclimated and productive. So it’s over, when you just got started. The terms really need to be 4 years.

Sincerely,



David Marti CMC, CCTC, CCMO

Town Clerk Somers