

**TOWN
CLERK'S
OFFICE**

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Inside this issue:

- **Accurate Agendas** 1
- **Meaningful Minutes** 1
- **Retention Regroup** 2
- **Monthly Challenge!** 2

Clerk's Comments

Volume 1, Issue 1

January 2015

Happy New Year!!

We hope you all enjoyed a wonderful Holiday season with friends, family, and loved ones!

The new year often brings resolutions and in this office we have been thinking about how we can best serve our residents and be of service to our town offices, boards, and committees.

As part of this resolution we have decided to try sending out a monthly newsletter to the departments, boards, and committees. In each newsletter we will try to few topics.

We hope you find this to be a useful resource and welcome your feedback!

Best in 2015 ~ the Year of the Goat!



Linda, Deb & Donna

ACCURATE AGENDAS...

The Division of Open Government has issued several statements regarding Agendas and the need to accurately and appropriately report what topics will be discussed during open meeting sessions—here are some key points to adhere to...

AVOID ALPHABET SOUP!

Although Campbells may disagree... alphabet soup does not sit well when it comes to agendas. If you think about how many committees, boards, state agencies, projects and programs there are; you will quickly realize how confusing it can be when only acronyms are used to identify things.

Put yourself into the shoes of a resident who may be interested in the topics your committee/board will be discussing... if only they knew how to break the acronym code!



MEANINGFUL MINUTES ~ Take Our Quiz!

Take Our True/False Quiz! What **MUST** be Included in Minutes?

T	F	MUST INCLUDE	T	F	MUST INCLUDE
		1. Date, Time & Location			6. Transcript of Who said What
		2. Summary of Every Discus-			7. List of All Documents/ Exhibits used during the meet-
		3. Members Present			8. Documents/Exhibits At- tached to Minutes
		4. Members Absent			9. A person that did not attend the meeting should be able to understand what occurred and
		5. Record of All Decisions Made & Actions Taken, in- cluding votes.			

Posting

Etiquette

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[Click this link to see a visual of the ideal agenda board.](#)

1. Agendas should be pinned up left-right = Mon-Fri
2. Reduce/Trim the excess white space .
3. But... Don't reduce so much that people have to squint to read the text.
4. Remember the 48hr posting requirement... weekends & holidays don't count!

### WHAT IS A PUBLIC RECORD?

The term "public records" is broadly defined to include "books, papers, maps, photographs, recorded tapes, financial statements, statistical tabulations, or other documentary materials or data, regardless of physical form or characteristics, made or received by any" public employee. For a complete definition, see MGL c. 4, § 7

## ACCURATE AGENDAS *continued...*

### WHEN MORE EQUALS LESS....

You always hear how "less is more" but it isn't true when it comes to agendas. More detail equals less confusion! If you are discussing "Warrant Articles for Town Meeting" - LIST a brief description of each warrant article. This will give the public sufficient notice of what is to be discussed. If your board is "Voting on Appointments" - list the committee(s)/board(s) they are appointing members to.

It may seem obvious but these are common mistakes that we see all the time. If someone in the Clerk's office has to stop and think about an acronym on your agenda then chances are the residents will be confused by it too!



### RETENTION REGROUP!

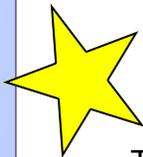
Everywhere we turn these days there are messages like "Simplify your Life", "Declutter", "Clear your Space, Clear your Mind". These apply to home and office! In the Municipal World there are very good reasons to follow these mottos but there are guidelines on how to do so.

The first step is familiarizing yourself with the State retention schedules.

[http://www.sec.state.ma.us/arc/arcpdf/MA\\_Municipal\\_Records\\_Retention\\_Manual.pdf](http://www.sec.state.ma.us/arc/arcpdf/MA_Municipal_Records_Retention_Manual.pdf)

Everyone should look at the Records in Common (page 23) AND the schedule for your specific department (Assessors pg 35, Conservation Commission pg 57, Fire Dept pg 63, etc...).

Some records you are allowed to dispose of and you don't need permission. Other records require a "Application for Destruction Permission" before you can toss or shred them. The last town audit was completed on 7/30/2014.



### CELRK'S FAVORITE!

This month our Gold Star Award goes to the Conservation Commission!

Their agendas are on point! Here's a link so you can take a peek and be inspired!

[http://www.stow-ma.gov/pages/StowMA\\_Conservation/StowMA\\_ConservAgenda/](http://www.stow-ma.gov/pages/StowMA_Conservation/StowMA_ConservAgenda/)

### MONTHLY CHALLENGE

Some employees in the Town Building/Town Hall are participating in monthly challenges~ but anyone can Participate!

[Click here for information about January's WATER Challenge!](#)

