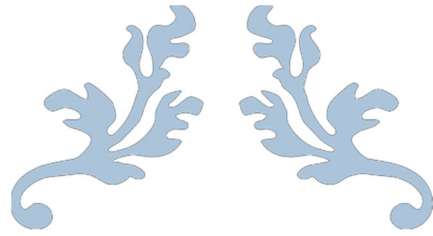




Ann Arbor City Clerk's Office

2020 Annual Report





The City Clerk's Office is committed to maintaining the integrity of city government in the City of Ann Arbor and ensuring an informed citizenry by providing access to City government through open and accessible meetings and accurate recording of the City Council proceedings; by protecting and preserving City documents and records; through the conduct of fair and democratic elections; and by providing excellent service to the public.



2020 Annual Report: City Clerk

The City Clerk serves as the Clerk of Council and is responsible for keeping a public record of all proceedings of the Council, including the certification of all ordinances and resolutions. The City Clerk is the official custodian of the city seal and any other papers, documents or records pertaining to the City. The City Clerk's Office is also responsible for the administration of all city elections.

Who We Are and What We Do

Jacqueline Beaudry, City Clerk

Jacqueline Beaudry has served as City Clerk since April 2005. She is a Master Municipal Clerk, a Michigan Professional Municipal Clerk, and holds a Master of Public Administration. Jackie was the 2019 Michigan City Clerk of the Year and is a current board member of the Michigan Association of Municipal Clerks. Jackie has also represented the United States on international election observation missions.



Jennifer Alexa, Deputy City Clerk

Jennifer Alexa joined the City Clerk's Office in August 2012, taking on the management of the City's election preparation work, including voting equipment testing and precinct set-up. She also manages the City's Freedom of Information Act requests and responses. Jennifer previously served as the elected clerk of Freedom Township. Jennifer holds a bachelor's degree from Eastern Michigan University.

Stephen Gerhart, Deputy City Clerk

Steve Gerhart joined the Clerk's Office in January 2018. He holds a Master of Public Administration and a Graduate Certificate in Economic and Community Development. Steve currently serves on the Michigan Bureau of Election's Forms Committee. His responsibilities at City Hall include management and coordination of the recruitment and training of election inspectors for each election and the supervision of the clerical employees in the City Clerk's Office.

Robert Mulcihy, Boards and Commissions Coordinator

Robert Mulcihy joined the Clerk’s Office full time in September of 2020, after previously working as a Voter Participation Specialist. He holds a Master of Public Administration. Robert manages compliance with Open Meetings Act legislation and procedures for the City’s 62 Boards and Commissions. Robert also coordinates the Ann Arbor Community Academy and assists with other duties in the City Clerk’s Office including elections administration, training City staff, and Freedom of Information Act requests.

Dena Waddell, Administrative Assistant

Dena Waddell began her current position with the Clerk's office in 2011, after previously working in the City’s Housing Department for 15 years. She assists with processing licenses, permits, voter registrations and other election related tasks. Dena also arranges burials and lot sales at Fairview Cemetery.

Rachel Weinberg, Administrative Assistant

Rachel Weinberg joined the Clerk’s Office team in July 2020, after previously working in higher education student affairs for over 12 years. Rachel assists with supporting City Council as well as the issuance of Clerk’s Office licenses and permits, absentee ballots and related election work, and manages the general Clerk’s Office email inbox.



(Rachel Weinberg, the City Clerk’s Office’s newest member, works on absentee ballot applications.)

Retirement farewell to Anissa Bowden, Administrative Assistant

Anissa Bowden retired from the Clerk’s Office in August after a 28-year career with the City, including work in the Police and Building Departments before joining the team in the Clerk’s Office.

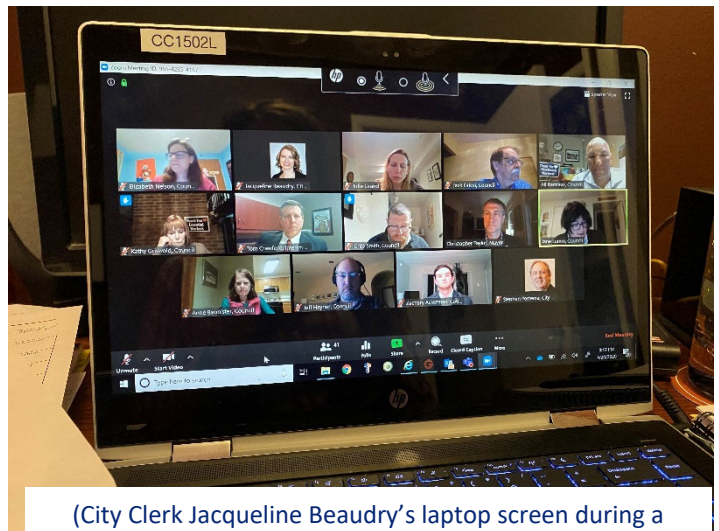


At the onset of the pandemic, City staff quickly pivoted and public meetings were converted to a remote format on Zoom beginning with the City Council meeting on Monday, April 6, 2020.

Clerk of the City Council

One of the main functions of the Clerk's Office is serving as the clerk of the City Council. In 2020, the Clerk's Office prepared and distributed notices, agendas, packets, and minutes for **49 City Council Meetings**, including regular meetings, work sessions, and special sessions; totaling more than **30,893 pages of materials for agenda packets in year 2020** (mostly in digital format!).

The coronavirus pandemic hit Michigan and the City of Ann Arbor, closing city hall in mid-March. City staff, including IT, the City Clerk's Office, the City Attorney and the City Administrator quickly pivoted and public meetings were converted to a remote format on



(City Clerk Jacqueline Beaudry's laptop screen during a remote City Council meeting, Spring 2020.)

Zoom, beginning with the City Council meeting on Monday, April 6, 2020. The electronic Zoom meetings were still televised on CTN and the public participated by calling in to the Zoom meeting to speak.

Public access to City Council and Boards and Commissions information and documents is mostly via Legistar, the City's online legislative information database. In the year 2020, the Legistar database received **over 720,000 unique page views from external traffic**.

Boards and Commissions Support

A major service provided by the City Clerk's Office included support to the City's 62 boards and commissions appointed by the Mayor and City Council. This support included providing training and technology solutions, as well as monitoring compliance with laws and policies for **489 meetings of boards, commissions, committees, subcommittees, and task forces**. Following the success of City Council's quick transition to public meetings on the Zoom platform, the City's Boards and Commissions Coordinator began the process of training staff liaisons and volunteer board members, as City business continued remotely in the pandemic well beyond the initial three-week Stay Home, Stay Safe order.

The Clerk's Office implementation of an online application process for residents to volunteer for Boards and Commissions positions provided the Mayor's Office with access to **158 applications submitted for consideration in 2020**. The increased access for residents, combined with a continued emphasis on tracking and sharing vacancy information, resulted in a **vacancy rate on Boards and Commissions of 8.49%** at the end of 2020.

[A2gov.legistar.com](https://a2gov.legistar.com)

2020 Boards and Commissions Accomplishments:

- Updated the City of Ann Arbor internal guidelines for Open Meetings Act (OMA) compliance to assist staff liaisons as meetings transitioned online.
- Created two kiosks inside City Hall entrances with phones and Zoom Meeting IDs to encourage participation in remote public meetings for individuals without computer access.
- Partnered with the City's IT Department and City Attorney's Office to create a digital Oath of Office ensuring compliance with the City Charter, while maintaining public health guidelines.

Election Administration

Since our last annual report, the City Clerk's Office has administered five elections, including two special elections, for both the Ann Arbor Public School District and the

Due to progressive voter reforms passed in 2018, 1,879 new voters were able to register and cast ballots on election days in 2020.

Washtenaw County Intermediate School District, as well as the three elections from the 2020 Presidential Election cycle. In these combined five elections, the Clerk's Office **processed 37,812 voter registration transactions including registering 7,998 new voters**. With the passage of Proposal 3 in November 2018, a series of wide-ranging Election Law changes were implemented Statewide including same-day voter registration. In the two weeks prior to each of the five elections, the City Clerk's Office registered a total of 4,311 voters, including 1,879 on Election Day alone. An astonishing 99.9% of these voters cast ballots in the election when they registered, with 79.2% of them casting their ballots via in-person absentee ballot. City Clerk's Office staff was increased in the months of June to December to include 16 temporary Voter Participation Specialists and four part-time temporary field staff, in addition to overtime and assistance from other City departments. One area this additional staff played a critical role in the Presidential Election was allowing the Clerk's Office to open a satellite at the University of Michigan Museum of Art during the 40 days leading up to the Presidential Election. This office provided University students, faculty, and staff a convenient place to register and request absentee ballots.

During the three 2020 elections, a combined 147,502 ballots were cast, including 95,446 absent voter ballots. To process these ballots, the City Clerk's Office hired community members to serve as election inspectors to staff the City's 53 neighborhood precincts and Absent Voter Counting Boards. Election **inspectors received a total of 4,304.25 hours of training and worked 21,769 hours on Election Days**. Training included specialized chairperson sessions, new inspector training, Proposal 3 training and Election Day refresher courses. Recruitment efforts for new election inspectors included the City's ongoing AAPS student inspector program and working with the University of Michigan. **44 high school students were trained and worked** the November 2020 election.

Elections and Technology

To deliver exceptional customer service for voters, the Clerk's Office has embraced technology. Ann Arbor voters rely on the Clerk's Office webpage for election information. Due to the Presidential election in 2020, **the City Clerk's webpage received 225,600 unique page views, with 128,868 of those views attributed to the elections page.** Interestingly, these numbers surpass the unique page views recorded in FY19 by 124.9% overall and 105% specifically on the elections page.

In late 2019, the Clerk's Office expanded upon a project started by students from the University of Michigan's School of Information to make information on estimated wait times at City polling places available to the community. This effort was designed to help reduce wait times, allowing voters to choose to vote at a convenient time, and lead to a more enjoyable voting experience for residents. **The line tracker webpage received 6,383 unique page views in 2020.** The project was submitted to the United States Election Assistance Commission and won a 2019 "Clearie" Award for Outstanding Innovation in Elections.

4-4 - Pioneer High School



[601 W. Stadium Blvd, Ann Arbor, MI](#)

Wait Time ⓘ

8
In line

4
Est. time (min)

Last updated at 02:52PM

(The City's Election Day Line Tracker showing polling location address, number of voters in line, estimated wait time, and last updated time made it easy for voters to plan their vote.)

Many of the changes that started during the March 2020 Primary, and as result of Proposition 18-03, were greatly accelerated due to the COVID-19 pandemic. This included the implementation of no-reason Absentee Voting. The Clerk’s Office online sign-up for automatic mailing of absent voter ballot applications increased by **788.78%**, adding **31,914** permanent AV voters in 2020.

[A2gov.org/elections](https://a2gov.org/elections)

The Clerk’s Office also partnered with the City’s Information Technology Service Unit to automate the process of sending absentee voters an email alert about their absentee ballot status. Voters who provided the City with an email address were alerted at the time their ballot was mailed out to them and again when the ballot had been successfully received by our office and was ready for processing on Election Day. This email system was very well received in the community and provided a level of assurance about ballot security and integrity during a national election with a lot of misinformation and attention surrounding the counting of absentee ballots. In addition, the email directed residents to receive a digital “I voted” sticker, perfect for displaying on social media using the hashtag, #A2Votes, to show their Ann Arbor voting pride.

Elections in a Pandemic

“Stay Home, Stay Safe” orders extended in various forms throughout the remainder of 2020, and the Clerk’s Office adapted and made changes to manage the August Primary and November General Elections during the pandemic.

Starting in June to prepare for the August Primary, the Clerk’s Office hired seven temporary Voter Participation Specialists (VPS) to meet the increased demand for absentee ballots. Along with Clerk staff and staff from other City departments, **the City sent out 33,939 absentee ballots for the August Primary**, far exceeding the previous record of 13,287 absentee ballots for the 2016 Presidential Election.

After the August Primary, demand for absentee ballots continued to grow steadily. To address this, the Clerk’s Office hired and trained more Voter Participation Specialists than any previous election, reaching 17 in total. The quality and experience the VPSs brought to their role were critical to the success of the office in managing during the pandemic. Two VPSs, Robert Mulcihy and Rachel Weinberg stayed on and joined the Clerk’s Office as full-time staff in September.

On September 8th, City Council passed R-20-334, a resolution that established a satellite office at the University of Michigan Museum of Art (UMMA). The City Clerk’s Office acted quickly and coordinated staffing, ballot quantities, and election supplies for the UMMA satellite office. Two weeks after the resolution passed, the Clerk’s Office opened its satellite office on September 22nd - National Voter Registration Day.



(Clerk’s Office Voter Participation Specialists pose for a photo on Election Day, November 3, 2020.)

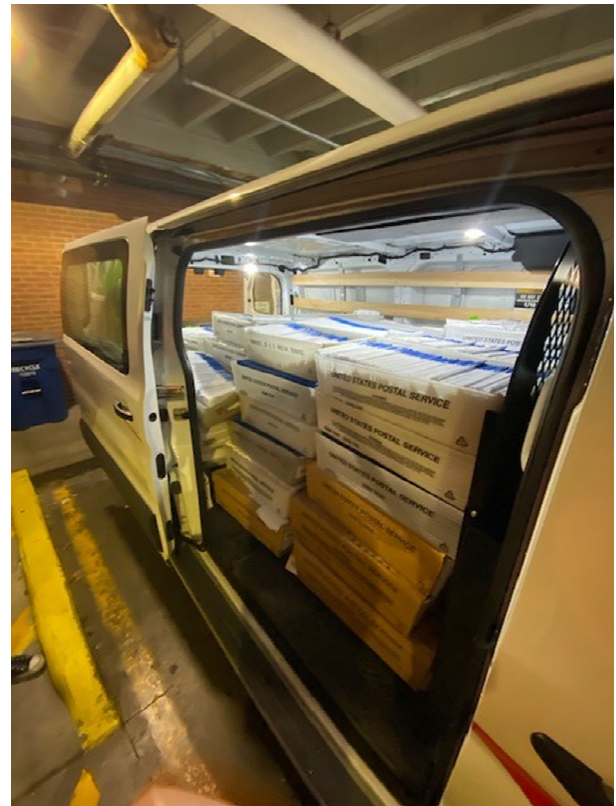
While running both the Clerk’s Office at City Hall and the satellite office, staff continued to handle massive demand for absentee ballots. The Clerk’s Office sent multiple bulk mailings of ballots, sending out 32,726 ballots in the first bulk mailing in late September, with additional bulk mailings twice weekly. As the election drew closer, the Clerk’s Office mailed ballots out daily to

ensure voters who requested an absentee ballot had time to receive their ballot, cast their vote, and return it before 8 PM on Election Day.

To meet the unprecedented demand for absentee ballots, the City Clerk’s Office established 5 secure absentee ballot drop boxes around the City, in addition to the boxes inside City Hall and at UMMA. Full-time staff checked the drop boxes every morning, including weekends, and transported ballots back to City Hall. On Election Day, special two-person teams were assigned a ballot box to check throughout the day and brought ballots back to City Hall at scheduled intervals.



(One of the City’s new ballot drop boxes, which were checked daily, located at Fire Station 6.)



(32,726 ballots loaded into a van at City Hall, heading to the Stadium Blvd. Post Office – over 2600 pounds of ballots!)

As ballots were returned, they were checked into the City’s Qualified Voter File system. A team of Voter Participation Specialists organized returned ballots by Ward, Precinct, and ballot number. A new law was approved to allow cities to “pre-process” ballots beginning on Monday, the day before the election. The Clerk’s Office was ready with over 52,000 ballots in order by ballot number and precinct order for the Absentee Voter Count Board on Monday morning. To maintain safe social distancing guidelines while handling the large increase in the volume of ballots, the Absentee Voter Count Board was held at Huron High School.

Elections and Community Engagement

To facilitate positive community engagement with the elections process, the Clerk's Office worked to make elections fun.

City voters returned 56,274 absentee ballots out of 57,571 sent, a 97.75% return rate.

For the November 2019 special election, the Clerk's Office implemented a City of Ann Arbor branded selfie booth for voters to take a voting selfie and post to social media highlighting the fact that they voted and to encourage others to do so. This was done in conjunction with the Bureau of Elections encouragement for voters to share selfies outside their polling place and avoid taking pictures during the voting process.



(A City Clerk Selfie Station located in City Hall.)

"I Voted" stickers are another popular way for voters to highlight their commitment to their community and participation in democracy. In 2020, the City Clerk's Office hosted a city-wide "I Voted" sticker contest, which awarded artists citywide, as well as winners in specific age categories. Judges included Ann Arbor Mayor Christopher Taylor, a member of the Ann Arbor Public Art Commission, a representative from Ann

Arbor Public Schools, two University of Michigan School of Art & Design Professors, four graduates of the Ann Arbor Citizens Academy, and Deputy City Clerks Jennifer Alexa and Steve Gerhart.

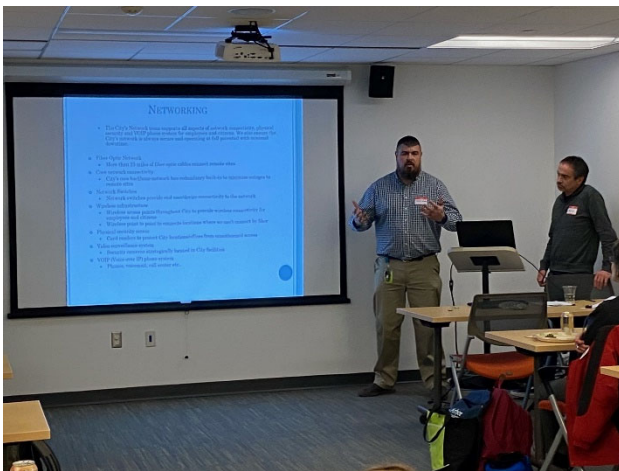
The three winning designs were made into official City of Ann Arbor "I Voted" stickers and were available in absentee ballot packages and at polling locations throughout the City of Ann Arbor for the November 2020 election.



(I Voted sticker competition winners from Left to Right:
Grades K-6 Division winner, Grades 7-12 Division Winner, Citywide Division Winner)

Program Coordinator for the Ann Arbor Citizens Academy*

Former Boards and Commissions Coordinator Kelly Beattie organized the third annual Ann Arbor Citizens Academy in 2020, providing 20 hours of community programming for academy participants to learn about local government operations and implementation of long-term plans. In addition to overall management of the Academy, Clerk's Office



(Dave Harris from IT presents during the 2020 A2CA.)

staff participated in Session 2 of the Academy, highlighting the work of the City Clerk's Office as part of the program. Graduates of the three A2CA classes currently serve on the City Council, Water System Advisory Council, City Planning Commission, Ann Arbor Public Art Commission, Housing Board of Appeals, and as Election Inspectors.

**The Citizens Academy changed its name to the A2Community Academy in 2021.*

Freedom of Information Act Coordinator

Over the past 10 years, the amount of Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) requests received annually has more than doubled and that upward trend continued in 2020 with **627 FOIA requests responded to this year**. The FOIA response process has been streamlined in part due to the partnership between the City Clerk's Office and IT to integrate response templates into the FOIA administration page and automate draft responses. The Clerk's Office works closely with the City Attorney on more complex FOIA request responses; although the vast majority of requests are for routine documents such as building permits, fire reports or financial records.

Licenses and Permits

The City Clerk's Office is responsible for the issuance of numerous licenses and permits. In 2020, **the City Clerk's Office issued 2,061 permits**. Many of these permits involve interdepartmental review, and range in complexity; some license and permit applications take only minutes to review, while others require a process that takes several weeks to finalize. The overwhelming majority of licenses issued each year are dog licenses and dog park permits.



- 740 Dog Licenses
- 309 Dog Park Permits
- 152 Liquor Licenses
- 44 Domestic Partnership Declarations
- 4 Block Party Permits
- 4 Banner Permits
- 39 Backyard Chicken or Duck Permits
- 5 Coal Tar Sealant Applicator Permits
- 16 Medical Marijuana Facility Permits
- 2 Temporary Exemptions from the Maximum Permissible Sound Levels (Noise Permits)
- 15 Fairview Cemetery plot sales
- 9 Fairview Cemetery interments

Accomplishments

- The City Clerk’s Office was awarded a Clearie award from the U.S. Elections Assistance Commission, as a winner for Outstanding Innovations in Elections for the City’s line tracker project.
- City Clerk Jacqueline Beaudry was appointed by the Michigan Association of Municipal Clerks to be a member of the Board of Directors.
- City Clerk Jacqueline Beaudry and Deputy Clerk Steve Gerhart were both asked to present at the 2020 Michigan Association of Municipal Clerks annual conference in June. The conference was presented over Zoom due to the pandemic. Steve presented on absentee ballots and Jackie co-taught Clerking 101.
- In July 2019, City Council approved Resolution R-19-372. This resolution updated Fairview Cemetery’s Rules, the first known major revision since May 2, 1938.
- Fairview Cemetery was also recognized in October 2020 by the National Park Service regarding the acceptance of the John Felix White Gravesite as part of the National Underground Railroad Network to Freedom.
- The City Clerk’s Office received a grant totaling more than \$400,000 from the Center for Tech and Civic Life for support of the November 2020 election. Funds from this grant assisted with high-speed absentee ballot tabulation equipment, procurement of secure ballot drop boxes and pandemic bonus pay for election inspectors.



(U.S. Elections Commission Commissioner Thomas Hicks present the 2019 Clearie for Outstanding Innovations in Election to City Clerk Jackie Beaudry and Deputy City Clerk Steve Gerhart.)