

CLERKS CORNER – VOTING

September 2015 installment

There are many facets to elections and the Secretary of the Commonwealth hosts a wonderful website with an abundance of information for all residents of Massachusetts; www.sec.state.ma.us. This website enables you to check your voter status. If registered, you will see both in which party and in which city or town you are registered as well as the location of your polling place. If unregistered, you can do so online. There are four prerequisites to becoming a registered voter in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. You must be: a US citizen, 18 years old by the election, a resident of Massachusetts, and not incarcerated by reason of a felony conviction.

When registering to vote, you must choose your affiliation. Your choices are: Unenrolled, a member of one of the four accepted political parties (Democratic, Green Rainbow, Republican, United Independent), or a member of a political designation. Political designations are formed around a particular cause or ideology. Designations are created when fifty registered voters file a form with the Secretary of the Commonwealth requesting that they, or any other voter, may change their registration to such designation. Contact information for the political parties and the 25 designations is on that same website.

A registered voter who cannot physically be at the polls for an election may be eligible to vote via absentee ballot. To vote absentee, one of the following three reasons must apply: absence from the city or town on Election Day; physical disability; or religious belief. Absentee ballots must be requested in writing by either the voter or a member of the voter's family. Although any type of written request is acceptable, the application is the best mode because it requires all the necessary information; name, signature and present address of the voter.

Time is of the essence when voting absentee to be sure it arrives in time. The Clerk must receive the request for an absentee ballot by noon on the day before the election. Absentee applications can be found at the Clerk's office, on the state website and on the Town Clerk's page at www.wenhamma.gov. Absentee ballots must be received before the close of polls on Election Day to be processed and counted with the regular ballots. Absentee ballots received after the close of polls will not be counted.

The next election in Wenham is the Presidential Primary scheduled for March 1, 2016. Those voters registered in Democrat, Republican, Green Rainbow, or United Independent parties will vote on their party ballot. Unenrolled voters and new this year, those enrolled in a designation, will be offered a ballot of their choice. Please check your party registration before Election Day to avoid problems at the polls. All changes to voter registrations must be completed at least 20 days prior to the election, in this case by February 10, 2016.

Locally, Saturday September 19th from 9am-12pm is the Annual Hazardous Waste Disposal Day at the Hamilton DPW and October 14th is Patron Appreciation Day at the H-W Library.

Dianne Kaplan Bucco was elected the Wenham Town Clerk April 11, 2014. For more information on services offered by the clerk's office, please go to www.wenhamma.gov or to www.facebook.com/WenhamTownClerk