

Cities and towns across South Carolina will hold council elections this year. Leading up to each election, city officials work hard to ensure their elections are conducted smoothly and fairly, breathing a sigh of relief after the polls close. But for city clerks, the work continues after the voters have spoken.

Municipal clerks must ensure several post-election duties are conducted before their election work concludes. First, the clerk must receive written certification of the election results from the municipal election commission. Once received, the municipal clerk should file the results and certifications permanently. Other election records like statements of candidacy, newspaper notices and petitions for nomination of council members and mayor are to be retained for two years.

Municipal clerks should ensure each newly-elected councilmember takes the oaths of office required by the South Carolina Constitution and the Code of Laws. Councilmembers and mayors should recite the oath of office found in Article VI, Section 5 of the state Constitution and they should also recite the oath of office found in Section 5-15-150 of the state Code of Laws.

Both oaths should be administered by someone authorized to administer an oath. Notaries public, judges and some ministers may administer the oath. After they are sworn into office, the clerk should ensure that the elected officials sign both oaths, which should be filed and retained according to the *South Carolina General Records Retention Schedules for Municipal Records*.

Some clerks in South Carolina ask the council to review and enter into the minutes the results of the election. While this is a point of local preference, it serves as another method for ensuring the dissemination and recording of the election results.

Beyond the mandated post-election duties for the city clerk, there are several others clerks should consider to help new councilmembers transition from citizen to public servant.

Clerks should play a key role in a councilmember's orientation. The clerk should provide the council's rules of procedure, meeting schedule, meeting minutes and procedures for agenda preparation and delivery to new members so they can hit the ground running. And because clerks serve as a primary point of contact for many elected officials, the clerk should learn the newcomer's preferred method of communication.

Finally, the clerk (along with all city officials) has a duty to listen. The municipal clerk should set aside his pre-election thoughts about the new councilmember or mayor and be willing to listen to new, and old, ideas. Then the clerk should do her best to help her council reach its goals.

Election duties for the municipal clerk do not end once the polls close. And by ensuring they are performed properly, clerks around the state can help their new councilmembers get their municipal careers started on the right foot.