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Laure Morgan

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Branding: Bringing More Respect and Value to the Profession of Municipal Clerks in Texas

Laure Morgan, TRMC, CMC, MPA, CPM
City Secretary, City of Brownsville, Texas

Abstract

What is in a title? How can Municipal Clerks or City Secretaries in Texas increase awareness and respect for their profession? The office of Municipal Clerk, also known as City Secretary, in Texas, is established by statute, and municipal clerks are the heart and soul of municipal governments. They work with the mayor, the city council, the city manager (when there is one), and all administrative departments. The expertise, service, and information that the municipal clerk possess is needed daily. Despite their realm of expertise and duties, many municipal clerks are still thought of as just secretaries by their city administrators, their city council, and their citizens. This is detrimental to many of the men and women in this profession, who are certified, educated, and have given many years of service to the profession. This distorted perception is a hindrance to their office and career advancement. Many municipal clerks are passed over for promotions, pay increases, or, in some instances, have had their offices done away with due to the lack of knowledge of the vital role that they play. Many of these municipal clerks possess the ability and education to advance to other management positions in municipal government but are often passed over due to the perception of their profession by the people with the power to promote them. Municipal clerks are typically perceived as being at the top of their career ladder in municipal government with no hope for promotion. Municipal clerks need tools to increase awareness and respect for their profession. Examining the current situation faced by municipal clerks and the problems faced by those in the profession can help these clerks answer the above questions and provide options that can be used to brand or promote their profession, skills, and the office. Once the position of Municipal Clerk is more clearly understood by other city officials, those officials will find it easier to recruit and retain qualified municipal clerks and will recognize them as a potential talent pool for other management positions.

Study of Current Situation with Municipal Clerks

Origins and Statutes

The International Institute of Municipal Clerks (IIMC) explains the following regarding the history of the Municipal Clerk position:

Over the years, Municipal Clerks have become the hub of government, the direct link between the inhabitants of their community and their government. The Clerk is the historian of the community, for the entire recorded history of the town (city) and its people is in his or her care.

The eminent political scientist, Professor William Bennett Munro, writing in one of the first textbooks on municipal administration (1934), stated: "No other office in municipal

service has so many contracts. It serves the mayor, the city council, the city manager (when there is one), and all administrative departments without exception. All of them call upon it, almost daily, for some service or information. Its work is not spectacular, but it demands versatility, alertness, accuracy, and no end of patience. The public does not realize how many loose ends of city administration this office pulls together.”

These words, written more than 80 years ago, are even more appropriate today.¹

It is important to remember that the Municipal Clerk position in the State of Texas is created by statute in Local Government Code §22.071 and 22.073, stating that “the other officers of the municipality are the secretary, treasurer, assessor and collector, municipal attorney, marshal, municipal engineer, and any other officers or agents authorized by the governing body”² and further outlining the duties of the secretary as the following:

- (a) The secretary of the municipality shall attend each meeting of the governing body of the municipality and shall keep, in a record provided for that purpose, accurate minutes of the governing body's proceedings.
- (b) The secretary shall:
 - (1) engross and enroll all laws, resolutions, and ordinances of the governing body;
 - (2) keep the corporate seal;
 - (3) take charge of, arrange, and maintain the records of the governing body;
 - (4) countersign all commissions issued to municipal officers and all licenses issued by the mayor, and keep a record of those commissions and licenses; and
 - (5) prepare all notices required under any regulation or ordinance of the municipality.
- (c) The secretary shall draw all the warrants on the treasurer, countersign the warrants, and keep, in a record provided for that purpose, an accurate account of the warrants.
- (d) The secretary serves as the general accountant of the municipality and shall keep regular accounts of the municipal receipts and disbursements. The secretary shall keep each cause of receipt and disbursement separately and under proper headings. The secretary shall also keep separate accounts with each person, including each officer, who has monetary transactions with the municipality. The secretary shall credit accounts allowed by proper authority and shall specify the particular transaction to which each entry applies. The secretary shall keep records of the accounts and other information covered by this subsection.
- (f) The secretary shall keep a register of bonds and bills issued by the municipality and all evidence of debt due and payable to the municipality, noting the relevant particulars and facts as they occur.
- (g) The secretary shall carefully keep all contracts made by the governing body.
- (h) The secretary shall perform all other duties required by law, ordinance, resolution, or order of the governing body.³

As a result of the phrase, “all other duties,” municipal clerks are responsible for a plethora of duties, which varies across municipalities, often based on the size of the municipality. These duties include keeping the city’s official records, preparing agendas, taking minutes, processing payroll, paying the bills, preparing the budget, and collecting taxes and fees. In addition, the clerk

may be responsible for budgeting and finance, personnel, planning, grant administration, economic development, and public relations. The clerk may be the equivalent of a department head and is responsible for administrative support, recordkeeping, election administration, and finance. The clerk is the official historian and is the keeper of the corporate seal and all official papers belonging to the municipality.⁴

Certification Process

The Texas Municipal Clerks Association, Inc. (TMCA) administers the Texas Municipal Clerks Certification Program (TMCCP) at the University of North Texas. The certification program is a professional development course of study that includes university-level courses and attendance at professional development seminars. Personal development is as much a goal of the certification as career development—the municipal clerk gains a greater sense of confidence and self-esteem as professional growth and development occur. The Texas Municipal Clerks Certification Program provides current insight into such areas as public relations, interpersonal communications, and community organization, improving on-the-job ability and enhancing the clerk personally and individually. Increasing personal awareness, flexibility, knowledge, and innovations result in new professionalism. Successful completion of TMCCP requires approximately 200 hours of individual home study and online homework, examinations over each of the four courses, and attendance at eight two-day seminars. Some enrollees complete the program in as few as three years. Once certified, the clerk earns the Texas Registered Municipal Clerk (TRMC) certification. After that, recertification is required every five years, which requires an additional 80 hours of professional development course work, including attendance at six two-day seminars and a selection of educational opportunities to earn points towards recertification.⁵ In 2021, 410 municipal clerks are enrolled in TMCCP, working toward certification, and 415 municipal clerks are enrolled in recertification.⁶

Municipal Clerks in Texas can also obtain certification through the International Institute of Municipal Clerks (IIMC), which offers two-levels of certification, Certified Municipal Clerk (CMC) and Master Municipal Clerk (MMC); however, a clerk must obtain their CMC before obtaining their MMC. IIMC's process for certification grants credit for education, certification through one's state organization, work-experience, and service to the profession.

Municipal Clerks in Texas--Demographic Breakdown

According to TMCA, Inc./TMCCP, there are approximately 1233 municipal clerks/city secretaries in the State of Texas, and, as of today, there were 1036 members of TMCA, of which 991 were female and 45 were male, with 503 members currently hold their TRMC certification. Since the certification program started, a total of 1026 municipal clerks have completed their TRMC certification.⁷ Several members who hold their TRMC certification also have their CMC certification or MMC certification through IIMC.⁸

Problems with Current Situation

You're Just a Secretary, Right?

Municipal Clerks are often still thought of as just secretaries by their city administrators, their city council, and their citizens. Their knowledge and expertise is not fully realized as they are relegated to as a person in the office merely providing clerical and support services. This is detrimental to many of the men and women in this profession who are certified, educated, and have given many years of service to the profession. Many municipal clerks are passed over for promotions, pay increases, or, in some instances, have had their offices done away with due to the lack of knowledge of the vital role that the municipal clerk must play in every municipality. Many of these municipal clerks possess the ability to be promoted to other management positions in municipal government, but they are often not considered due to the perception of the position by the people with the power to promote them.

Municipal clerks are typically perceived as being at the top of their career ladder in municipal government, so, with no hope for promotion, the only way they can advance their career is to leave their current city for another position in a larger city, with a different level of government, or in the private sector. If they stay, they see others advancing within their current city to positions of higher pay and often feel left behind and stuck, and report lower levels of job satisfaction. The level of job satisfaction of municipal clerks has been found to decrease with higher levels of education and training. Municipal clerks express frustration with a lack of appreciation for their work and a lack of respect for their profession by city administrators, city councils, mayors, and citizens who do not view them as a professional, even though many clerks are responsible for duties that mirror those of the city administrator, have an intimate knowledge of the day-to-day operations of the municipality, and are the heart and soul of their municipal government.⁹

Women in Municipal Management and Administration

From the demographics obtained from TMCA, Inc., 95.6% of the members of TMCA are women, and 4.4% of the members are men.¹⁰ Since women make up the majority of the municipal clerks in Texas, if they want to have a chance to move up to a higher position, it is prudent to examine the women who currently hold municipal management and administrative positions. Only about 13% of all chief administrative officer positions in municipal government are filled by women, the same percentage as in 1981, and some ask why this percentage has not changed. Some suggest that the answer is complex, but does not seem to be related to women's academic preparation, since, as of 2006, 59% of Master of Public Administration (MPA) degrees were earned by women; however, challenges exist in career advancement for women in municipal management. Women make up 34% of all assistant positions, 30% of department head positions, and 53% of all assistant-to-the-CAO (chief administrative officer)-positions; hence, many women wonder why they are not getting the top job.¹¹ Heidi Voorhees and Rachel Lange-Skaggs suggest that these challenges to career advancement are due to four reasons:

- 1) Women believe they must have all the necessary experience before they apply for the next position;
- 2) Women face certain challenges while trying to achieve a work/family harmony;

- 3) Women who are assertive can be perceived differently than men who are assertive; and
- 4) A woman's career progression may be hampered by the attitudes of hiring authorities.¹²

Municipal Clerks could be classified as an “assistant CAO role,” since they are often asked to serve as the acting or interim city manager when a vacancy in the city manager position exists; however, those with hiring authority, like city councils, have misconceptions about women’s abilities, especially if they held the position of municipal clerk, which prevents them from being viewed as a qualified candidate for the CAO position. Another obstacle for women municipal clerks is that they are often not encouraged to advocate for themselves, and if they are considered to be overly aggressive, they are not well received by supervisors or those with hiring authority; however, if these women are thought to be too collaborative, then they are perceived as not being tough enough or not having the ability to lead. Success and likability are positively correlated for men and negatively correlated for women, but female managers bring different priorities to the table, voice different policy preferences, and are perceived to be more responsive during interaction as opposed to male managers.¹³ Good leadership in local government is dependent upon a leader’s commitment and desire to serve the community, and women have been rated more positively in taking initiative, practicing self-development, and exhibiting integrity and honesty than men. A study by the ICMA Task Force on Women in the Profession indicated that on more than one occasion women had received treatment or comments from elected officials that were inappropriate or disrespectful and that they had been questioned on their inability to balance work and other personal commitments; hence, several of these women viewed gender as an future obstacle to career advancement.¹⁴ Municipal clerks are often overlooked for higher management positions or are reluctant to advocate for themselves or apply for a higher position, due to these factors.

Males in the Municipal Clerk Profession

Since only 4.4% of the members of TMCA, Inc. are male, analyzing why males do not seem to be drawn to the profession of Municipal Clerk and asking how more males could be attracted to the profession is important to bringing more diversity and respect to the profession. Victoria Gordon suggests that municipal clerks are different because their job duties and responsibilities are set by statutes, the position operates fairly autonomously, and the position is most often held by females.¹⁵ The position of municipal clerk requires a talented and organized leader, so elected officials and city managers need to recognize the role that women and men play in advancing women in municipal government. Reasons that more males are not pursuing the municipal clerk profession could be attributed to the following:

- 1) The profession is dominated by females;
- 2) the profession is viewed as being a dead-end job or as being the top of their career ladder;
- 3) the profession is devalued by elected officials and administration;
- 4) municipal clerks are often underpaid in relation to their range of duties and compared to those doing similar work in the private sector;
- 5) most clerks begin their jobs with no training, and clerks in small municipalities find it difficult to attend training, due to the small staff; and
- 6) there is a lack of respect and appreciation for the profession.

If more males could be attracted to the municipal clerk profession, then perhaps this would increase pay scales, training opportunities, career advancement opportunities, and respect and appreciation for the profession.

Job Satisfaction and Perception of the Municipal Clerk

In order to understand municipal clerks, we must first understand what makes them a unique subset of municipal employees, what motivates them, what inspires them, and what satisfies them.¹⁶ Job satisfaction is an employee's reaction to what he or she receives from the job and work environment, and job satisfaction limits the turnover costs to the organization in terms of hiring and the training of new employees. In another study about municipal clerks in Nebraska, a relationship between job satisfaction, age, length of tenure, and education was found. Job satisfaction declined after five years on the job and after increased educational attainment.¹⁷ Perhaps this is because the longer a municipal clerk stays on the job, the more the clerk sees the lack of opportunity for advancement or pay increases, and the lack of appreciation and respect for the professionalism that the position requires. Many municipal clerks, especially in smaller cities, often find that the more professionally and efficiently they perform their job and run their department, the more additional job duties are added with no additional pay adjustment or formal recognition. They are seldom considered as candidates for higher management positions in their cities, and if they apply to a larger city, they are often told they do not have the required experience in a larger municipality.

Job Advertisements and Pay Scales

A lack of perception and understanding can also be seen in the unrealistic and insulting job requirements and the varying and low pay scales found in job advertisements for the position of municipal clerk. Most municipalities in Texas place their job advertisements for municipal clerk positions on the Texas Municipal League's Career Center website or on the Texas Municipal Clerk Association's Job Opportunities webpage. Job seekers for the position of municipal clerk find requirements for minimum typing speeds and a maximum education level of a high school diploma, which is insulting to potential applicants if a municipality is attempting to find an experienced, qualified, and certified municipal clerk. Salary levels start as low as \$25,000-30,000 per year.

Our City No Longer Needs This Position

Cities across Texas are hiring city managers with experience outside the public sector, and these city managers, along with city managers who have worked in the public sector, are faced with increasing demands to trim the budget. The payroll budget is typically the most expensive part of the city budget. These city managers often try to find positions that can be combined or that are, in their opinion, no longer needed.

In 2015, Lila Fuller, the former City Secretary for the City of Nacogdoches, Texas for 18 years, retired. Fuller had a Deputy City Secretary, who had worked under her for several years and who had been the former City Secretary for another City, and this deputy was a certified city secretary, with her TRMC certification. The deputy would have been the presumptive person to

move up, based on succession planning; however, the City Manager, at that time, told the deputy that the position was being cut from the budget as it had become an “antiquated” position. The duties of the City Secretary were given to the City Manager’s administrative assistant, and the deputy was moved to the finance department and lost her certification, since the city would no longer pay for her to recertify. The administrative assistant has now been given the title of City Secretary and is not certified.¹⁸ Keep in mind that 48.6 % of the members of TMCA, Inc. have their TRMC certification.¹⁹

In 2013, Charles West, the Town Manager of the Town of Argyle, Texas, presented a plan for restructuring the town staff. His plan focused not on the performance of each employee, but only on whether responsibilities could be shifted. He made the decision to eliminate the town secretary position, solely from a financial standpoint. He felt he could absorb all the duties of the Town Secretary. He stated that Codi Delcambre, the Town Secretary who had worked for the city for over fifteen years, was an excellent employee, but he felt that some of her tasks overlapped with the Town Manager’s tasks and that it was the “easiest position to eliminate.” Ms. Delcambre was given little notice of the decision before it was made. Delcambre also served as the Human Resource Officer. West also stated that he felt that Argyle would probably reinstate the town secretary position in the future, once the town’s finances were in line.²⁰ Later, Argyle did reinstate the Town Secretary position, but this was too late for Ms. Delcambre.

Real-world scenarios, like the two above, of the Municipal Clerk position being devalued and eliminated by city managers and city councils in Texas are threats to the profession.

TMCA Salary Survey and Typical Job Requirements

Each year TMCA, Inc. conducts a salary survey for the members of TMCA, Inc. The 2021 TMCA Salary Survey is the most recent survey published on the webpage, and the salary ranges are from \$24,000 to over \$175,000 per year, with 208 members responding.²¹ When reviewing job advertisements on the TML Career website and the TMCA Employment Opportunity website, the education qualifications required vary from a high school diploma to a master’s degree, and some require that the applicant already have the TRMC certification or be able to obtain it within two to three years of employment. Larger municipalities tend to require more education and certification.

Monty Van Wart’s job analysis study of Iowa’s municipal clerks identified the core functions of municipal clerks as: 1) Executor of records, 2) Administrative support, 3) Finance, 4) External relations, 5) Legal compliance, 6) Elections’ administration, 7) Departmental director, 8) Supplying support for boards and commissions, 9) Municipal planning, and 10) Personnel.²² Van Wart also identified three broad classes of municipal clerks. The first class includes those who are the general administrators in towns often with populations under 1,000, and where the clerk’s duties are diverse and extensive. The second class includes municipal clerks who tend to be a chief administrator for cities with populations of 1,000 to 10,000, and where the clerk coordinates city activities on behalf of the mayor. The third class includes municipal clerks who become department heads in cities large enough to have developed complete municipal specializations, which have either a full-time city manager or mayor. In such cities, the clerk’s office typically specializes in official record keeping for the council, public recordkeeping, administrative support for the council and mayor, and other functions.²³ These job functions and broad classes are typical of municipal clerks in Texas, except that in Texas the clerk handles record management and records retention with their duties dependent on the services their city provides and city size.

Evaluative Criteria

Texas Municipal Clerks Association Strategic Plan—Strategic Initiatives

The Strategic Plan for the Texas Municipal Clerks Association, Inc. identifies some of the organization's threats as cities devaluing the municipal clerk position, lack of knowledge of what a city secretary/clerk really does, job perception, and city councils and city managers not understanding the benefits of certification. The plan further identifies a weakness as the lack of assistance in how to make one's skills and knowledge marketable and attractive when applying and interviewing for other positions, and it identifies some of the organization's opportunities as city administrations recognizing the value of a professional municipal clerk and developing relationships with city managers through the Texas City Managers Association. TMCA's Strategic Initiatives identify two initiatives which speak to this issue, which are as follows:

- 1) STRATEGIC INITIATIVE #3: PROMOTION OF THE TEXAS REGISTERED MUNICIPAL CLERK (TRMC) CREDENTIAL –TRMCs are recognized by city officials and citizens as ethical professionals whose leadership and technical skills are vital to a city's success; and
- 2) STRATEGIC INITIATIVE #4: PROMOTION OF THE PROFESSION – TMCA enhances and communicates the identity and vital role of the municipal clerk to a city's success.²⁴

TMCA suggests the following goals and strategic actions relevant to this research question and necessary to accomplish these strategic initiatives:

- 1) Strategic Initiative #3—Goal 1: Awareness of a program of higher learning that enables municipal clerks to be successful, knowledgeable, and competent leaders in their cities.
 - a) Strategic Action 1: Budget and administer an annual marketing plan to promote and educate the importance of a certified municipal clerk.
 - b) Strategic Action 2: Promote TMCCP through TMCA.
 - c) Strategic Action 3: Continue to educate mayors, councils, and city managers of the benefits of certified municipal clerks.
 - d) Strategic Action 6: Produce a promotional video on Top Ten Reasons Your Municipal Clerk Should Be Certified.
- 2) Strategic Initiative #4—Goal 1: The profession is advanced by well-educated municipal clerks who know their value to the success of their cities.
 - a) Strategic Action 1: Promote the profession through participation in Municipal Clerks Week and other activities.
 - b) Strategic Action 2: Teach succession planning implementation so as to promote continuity of the profession.
 - c) Strategic Action 4: Emphasize the importance of a professional image and proper business etiquette.
 - d) Strategic Action 5: Emphasize to members the important role a municipal clerk performs as a municipal officer.
 - e) Strategic Action 6: Provide the career-building training necessary for municipal clerks to apply, interview for, and transition into new positions.²⁵

The TMCA, Inc., IIMC, and individual municipal clerks must find a way to bring a more professional perception to the position, and the profession needs to be viewed as one held by vital leaders in municipal government. The Strategic Plan suggests that TMCA should demonstrate proactive advocacy of the municipal clerk profession and must continuously deliver the message that Texas Registered Municipal Clerks are essential to Texas municipal government efficiency, transparency, accountability, and effectiveness.²⁶

Recommendations from International Institute of Municipal Clerks

Melissa Henley suggests that the municipal clerk's office should be like Amazon and create a recognizable brand. She suggests asking questions like, "do you know what your customers want from you?" and "do you know how to deliver it?"²⁷ She suggests approaches to answering these questions in order to brand the municipal clerk's office to improve perception and create value. These approaches are rethinking the role of one's office, conducting an honest assessment of one's office from the eyes of one's internal and external customers, branding for the future, and marketing the municipal clerk's office.

Rethinking involves the municipal clerk taking the time to define who they are, what they stand for, and how they accomplish their mission in order to improve the internal and external reputation of their office. If one's external and internal customers cannot accurately answer the question, "What does the clerk's office do?" then the clerk needs to rethink the department's role. These efforts should involve making the internal and external customers understand and appreciate the importance of the clerk's office in furthering the municipality's mission and objectives. The first step in creating or enhancing a brand identity is to determine who the customers are and what they need from the clerk's office, and the next step is understanding the difference between what one is providing and what one's customers say they need. Marketing the clerk's office involves demonstrating the office's problem-solving skills. The best form of marketing is advertising what the office has done and the ways in which the office has been a solutions-oriented partner.²⁸

Examples and Approaches of Municipal Clerks

Municipal clerks in Texas along with TMCA, Inc. have developed several approaches in order to brand their offices and the profession and to improve the perception and value of the profession in their individual cities. These involve the following approaches:

- 1) elevator speech;
- 2) accurate and improved job descriptions;
- 3) branding;
- 4) emphasizing the importance of certification, recertification, and continued training and education; and
- 5) succession planning—training of an assistant or deputy municipal clerk.

Sherry Mashburn, a past president of TMCA, Inc., suggested creating an elevator speech for municipal clerks, in order to assist with branding their office and the profession as leaders as well as communicating their value to others. An elevator speech is a short explanation that can be recited in the time it takes to ride in an elevator with someone to help clerks respond professionally to the question asked, "What is a city clerk, and what do you do?" Mashburn presented the idea of

an “elevator” speech to the TMCA board as a tool for Texas clerks to communicate their true value to the organization and the community. The elevator speech encourages Texas clerks to look at what is in their toolbox and use it. The Elevator Speech is as follows:

Functioning much like the Secretary of State, the City Secretary/Municipal Clerk is the local official who maintains the integrity of the election process, ensures transparency and access to city records, facilitates the city’s legislative process, and is the recorder of local government history. The City Secretary acts as the compliance officer for federal, state, and local statutes, including the Open Meetings Act and the Public Information Act, and serves as the filing authority for campaign finance reports and financial disclosure statements.

This elevator speech can be used in several ways by Texas clerks and can be useful when communicating the clerk’s true worth to the council, the city, and the community.²⁹

Possible Solutions based on Literature Review

After reviewing the current situation faced by municipal clerks in Texas, the problems with the current situation, and the evaluative criteria, based on past and current research and recommendations, some possible solutions that municipal clerks and TMCA, Inc. can implement to promote their individual offices and professions are as follows:

- 1) promotion of their Texas Registered Municipal Clerk Credential, Certified Municipal Clerk and Master Municipal Clerk credential;
- 2) promotion of the profession to the following groups and individuals, in order to brand the office and profession and in order to encourage people in all demographic groups to enter the profession:
 - i) to city managers;
 - ii) to mayors and city councils;
 - iii) to citizens/public;
 - iv) to new city clerks;
 - v) to students in high schools and universities; and
 - vi) to male candidates;
- 3) branding the individual office of municipal clerk, by identifying its internal and external customers and what they need and by using the recommended elevator speech;
- 4) educating new city council members about the vital role the municipal clerk plays in municipal government and leadership;
- 5) increasing job satisfaction as certification, education and tenure increases;
- 6) creating more competitive salaries in line with the training, expertise, and spectrum of duties;
- 7) attracting more males and younger candidates to the profession;
- 8) promoting the profession in universities to students pursuing public administration bachelor’s and master’s degrees;
- 9) promoting municipal clerks as potential candidates for assistant city manager, city manager, or other upper city management positions;

- 10) encouraging municipal clerks to complete bachelor's and master's degrees as well as the Certified Public Manager program to enhance their management and leadership skills; and
- 11) tooting one's own horn, meaning promoting the profession, office, and accomplishments during periodic reporting to the city council, the department's performance evaluation, and the clerk's individual performance evaluation.

Recommendations

Each municipal clerk is different, with differing education, training, experience, and tenure, and with varying job duties, depending on the size of the municipality. Each municipal clerk has different career aspirations, which could possibly change with education, tenure and age. Attracting a wider demographic of applicants to serve as municipal clerks could bring further legitimacy, value, job satisfaction, and improved perception to the profession, and bringing more value and better perception to the profession could also enhance pay scales and create more opportunities to advance in the same or other municipalities. City managers and city councils should also be concerned about attracting and retaining a qualified, educated, ethical, and effective municipal clerk for their cities, who can contribute to their leadership team and who could make future contributions when given the opportunity for career advancement, especially since this can minimize turnover and training expense.

A municipal clerk must have the city manager's and city council's support to obtain their certification, attend seminars, and be a member of TMCA, Inc. and their local chapter, since the clerk will also learn from the membership and networking opportunities. Municipal clerks in small cities often do not have the time or money in the budget to attend training or be part of their local chapter. Each municipal clerk must thoroughly evaluate their skills and the services that they provide to external and internal customers, and then they must determine what they want to achieve professionally, what reputation they want their office to achieve, and how to get there. They must then formulate a plan of action using the strategies and recommendations that are available to them, which involves convincing their city managers and city councils of their value. Each municipal clerk, and any deputy clerk, must choose from the solutions, recommendations, and strategies above and work towards the ones that are achievable and desired; TMCA, Inc. and their local chapter can partner with municipal clerks in achieving these goals. Perhaps the most viable solutions for an individual municipal clerk are as follows:

- 1) Promotion of the profession in all interactions with the following groups and individuals in their city, in order to brand their office and highlight their professionalism:
 - i) to city managers;
 - ii) to mayors and city councils;
 - iii) to citizens/public; and
 - iv) to new city clerks;
- 2) branding the individual office of municipal clerk, by identifying its internal and external customers and what they need and by using the recommended elevator speech;
- 3) educating new city council members about the vital role the municipal clerk plays in municipal government and leadership;

- 4) promoting municipal clerks as potential candidates for assistant city manager, city manager or other upper city management positions; and
- 5) tooting one's own horn, meaning promote the profession, office, and accomplishments during periodic reporting to the city council and the department's performance evaluation as well as the clerk's individual performance evaluation.

Another recommendation or solution, since the title of clerk or secretary does not carry professional weight and respect, could be to lobby with the Texas Legislature and TMCA, Inc. to officially change the name of the position to Chief Records Officer (CRO), Chief Information Officer (CIO), or Chief Administrative Coordinator (CAC), as a title change would better reflect the level of professionalism required for the position and garner more respect.

Since municipal clerks are the heart and soul of municipalities and tie up the loose ends of municipal administration, it is in the hands each municipal clerk to bring respect and value to their office, to improve the perception of their office, and to make their intentions known. City managers and elected officials that overlook the exceptional and untapped resource of their municipal clerk are doing their city a disservice; in addition, city managers and elected officials need to make a point to recognize the municipal clerk formally and informally.³⁰

Notes

¹ "History of the Municipal Clerk," *International Institute of Municipal Clerks*, accessed April 18, 2020. <https://www.iimc.com/DocumentCenter/View/178/History-of-the-Municipal-Clerk?bidId=1>.

² Local Government Code, Title 2. Organization of Municipal Government, Subtitle B. Municipal Form of Government, Chapter 22. Aldermanic Form of Government in Type A General-Law Municipality, Subchapter C. Other Municipal Officers, Section 22.071, Texas Legislature, accessed March 14, 2020.

<https://statutes.capitol.texas.gov/Docs/LG/htm/LG.22.htm>.

³ Ibid.

⁴ Victoria Gordon, "Exploring the Job Satisfaction of Municipal Clerks," *Review of Public Personnel Administration*, 190-208, May 16, 2011. doi:10.1177/0734371X11408570.

⁵ "TMCCP Overview and History," *Texas Municipal Clerks Association, Inc.*, accessed April 18, 2020. <https://municlerks.unt.edu/tmccp-overview-history>.

⁶ Miriam Sheehan, Assistant Director, *Texas Municipal Clerks Association, Inc.*, e-mail interview by Laure Ann Morgan, June 11, 2021.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Victoria Gordon, Jeffery L. Osgood, and Jeremy Phillips, "Municipal Clerks: Examining A Model of Job Satisfaction," *Public Personnel Management* 39 (4): 327-352, 2010, accessed March 30, 2020. <https://doi.org/10.1177%2F009102601003900403>.

¹⁰ Miriam Sheehan, e-mail interview by Laure Ann Morgan, June 11, 2021.

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