

OFFICE OF THE CITY CLERK

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

1. What is the cost of a certified copy of a birth, death or marriage certificate?

Long form copies of each type of certificate are \$7. A “short form” birth certificate is \$4.

2. Is a birth certificate a public record?

Unless the child was born out of wedlock, a birth certificate is a public record and can be obtained by anyone. If the child was born out of wedlock, the record is considered “impounded” and is only available to the parents, a court-appointed guardian, or the person whose birth certificate is being requested. Positive photographic identification is required to be presented to obtain these impounded records.

3. Is a death certificate a public record?

Yes.

4. Is a marriage certificate a public record?

Unless one of the parties to the marriage was born out of wedlock, a marriage certificate is a public record and can be obtained by anyone. If the child was born out of wedlock, the record is considered “impounded” and is only available to the party born out of wedlock, his parents or a court-appointed guardian. Positive photographic identification is required to be presented to obtain these impounded records.

5. How can I obtain a copy of a birth, death or marriage certificate?

In Person

Come into the Customer Service Center located in Room 112 of the Searles Building any time Monday through Thursday, 8:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. or Friday 8:00 a.m. to 12 noon. For more efficient service, call ahead and order the certificate at (978) 983-8515. If the record is impounded, be sure to bring a photographic identification. **PLEASE BE ADVISED OUR OFFICE IS PROHIBITED BY LAW TO CONFIRM THE EXISTENCE OF AN IMPOUNDED RECORD.**

By Mail

Send a written request with the name or names and date of birth, death or marriage along with a check or money order for \$7 per certificate ordered payable to the City of Methuen and a self-addressed, stamped envelope to:

Office of the City Clerk
Searles Building – Room 112
41 Pleasant Street
Methuen, MA 01844

If the request is for an impounded record, the written request must be by a person eligible to be granted access to the record and the request must be notarized.

6. What are the requirements to obtain a marriage license?

Any couple planning on getting married anywhere in Massachusetts can obtain a license at any Clerk's Office in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. The license must be obtained within 60 days of the planned wedding date. There is a three-day waiting period between applying for the license and its issuance.

Both parties must appear to apply. They will fill out their marriage intentions, take an oath swearing the information on the intention is accurate and pay a \$15 fee. The marriage license can be picked up by anyone after the three day waiting period has passed, but it should be by someone who will be asked to review the license to ensure the information is accurate.

7. What is necessary to obtain a license for my dog?

The licensing period for dogs is April 1 through March 31. Thus, all licenses must be renewed during the month of April annually. A current rabies certificate is required to license your dog, and the fees are \$10 for spayed/neutered animals, \$15 for intact animals. Certification of spaying or neutering is required the first time an animal is licensed.

8. What is a business certificate, and why do I need one?

A business certificate is required for any non-incorporated business conducting business in a community in a name other than the name of the proprietor. Thus, John Doe running the "John Doe Restaurant" does not need a business certificate, but John Doe running the "Good Eating Restaurant," would need a business certificate. Its purpose is to give the customers of a business a way of knowing with whom they are doing business, in the event such knowledge becomes necessary. A business certificate IS NOT a license to do business.

9. How do I obtain a business certificate?

A certificate from the Building Inspector must be obtained at that office located at 90 Hampshire Street, Methuen (the Quinn Public Safety Building) which provides zoning clearance for the type of business at the particular location in question. That certificate should then be brought to the Office of the City Clerk for completion of an application that will include the name and home address of the proprietor as well as the name of the business. The certificate and the application are then placed on file and are public records.

The cost of a new business certificate is \$15. A business certificate must be renewed after 4 years, with a renewal cost of \$10.