

MORRIS COUNTY CLERK ANN F. GROSSI, ESQ. RESPONDS TO VOTER'S INQUIRY

I am responding to the "Commentary: A vote by mail open letter to the Morris County Clerk" by Ms. Kathy Yamashita, published on September 16, 2020. While I did not have the opportunity to speak personally to Ms. Yamashita and since the newspaper published her Commentary without contacting me, I, nonetheless, welcome the opportunity to clarify the election procedures.

Since my office is responsible for sending out the mail-in ballots, the only questions posed by Ms. Yamashita that falls under the Clerk's jurisdiction is the following: "If I specifically request a mail-in ballot and I decide to vote in person instead, can I go to my polling location to vote on November 3? Or am I required to use my mail in ballot because I specifically requested one?"

Pursuant to Governor Murphy's Executive Order #177 ("Governor's Order"), every "active" registered voter will automatically receive a mail-in ballot. Therefore, there is no reason to request one. If you choose not to use your mail in ballot, you may go to your polling location to vote. However, as per the Governor's Order, you will not be permitted to machine vote, unless you qualify to vote on an ADA compliant voting machine. (Contact the Board of Elections at 973-285-6715 concerning qualifications.) If you do not qualify to vote on the ADA compliant voting machine and you do not bring your completed mail-in ballot with you to deposit in a drop box located at your polling location, pursuant to the Governor's Order you will only be permitted to vote on a paper Provisional Ballot.

While I appreciate Ms. Yamashita's commentary and questions, the remainder of her queries should be addressed to the Morris County Board of Elections. The Morris County Board of Elections is a separate and independent agency from the Morris County Clerk's Office. While I understand that many residents believe that the Morris County Clerk's Office is responsible for all aspects of the election process, that premise is absolutely incorrect. This is so because elections duties are bifurcated between the Morris County Clerk's Office and the Morris County Board of Elections. The ballot box locations, polling locations, poll workers, poll worker training, security issues, schedules, personnel assigned to retrieve ballots from the ballot boxes, secured storage of received paper ballots, voter registration, maintenance/secure storage/delivery of voting machines to polling locations, security, counting of all paper ballots, and recounts, etc., falls squarely under their jurisdiction. There are four Commissioners, two Republicans and two Democrats appointed by the Governor for the purpose of overseeing the Board of Elections duties. The current Democrat Commissioners are Laurie Fierro Brownstein and Matthew Clarkin, and the Republican Commissioners are John Murphy and Diana Rochford. You may contact the Board of Elections at 973-285-6715.

I hope this clarifies any misunderstanding pertaining to the duties of the Morris County Clerk's Office. For more information, please go to www.morriscountyclerk.org

Morris County Clerk Ann F. Grossi, Esq.