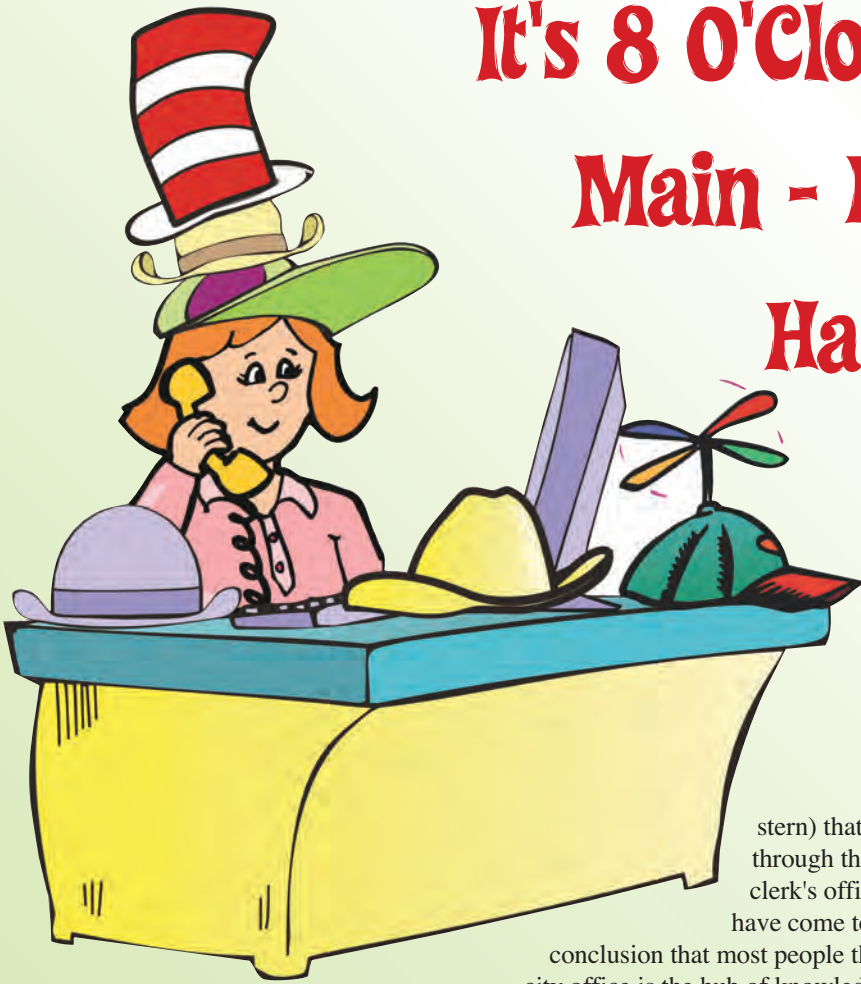


# It's 8 O'Clock on Main - How Many Hats Does a City Clerk Wear?



**I** was communicating with the county clerk last week and I realized we all resemble a Dr. Seuss rhythm.

*How many hats do I wear?*

*How many hats are over there?*

*Do not know where to put that hat?*

*Give it to me, that will be that. . .*

*A city clerk is the title for the skills*

*Let me tell you, so much more than water bills!*

*Reports, water mixers, snow chains and dogs*

*Federal, state, KDHE and "can I keep my pet hog?"!!!*

*A city clerk I am – a city clerk I shall be.*

*Hats I will wear - three, thirty or thirty-three. . .*

I am adjusting to the multitude of items, questions, requests (some quite

stern) that flow through the city clerk's office. I have come to the

conclusion that most people think the city office is the hub of knowledge and answers. "Who should we call?" – Well the city clerk of course! Folks looking for phone numbers is a common occurrence along with information about local events: What time is the church potluck? What day is the Senior Center Christmas party? Is the bank giving away calendars this year? And so the list goes on. Honestly, all that once annoyed me. I didn't have a good understanding of what it meant to be a clerk in a fair village of the 3rd class. I am a task master, get the job done, cross things off the list kind of person – but I have since come to understand this position is more than doing the tasks included in the job description. For some folks, the position is like a friend who they turn to when they have questions. Bless their hearts. . . They give me way too much credit – there are days where I still look at the wall to see if my phone number starts out with 445 or 455. . . I have become less

annoyed – I simply try and help. Willpower or age – it doesn't matter; I am glad that understanding has started to ooze.

In the past, I have alluded to the fact that being a city clerk gives me new eyes for many things. We rode to the Sturgis Motorcycle Rally in Sturgis, SD last summer, and WOW!!! I can't imagine being the clerk in that town. They go from 6,000 folks to a half a million over about a three to four week period (not quite 100 times the peeps). I absolutely cannot imagine managing that. The vision, leadership, cooperation and teamwork it must take and then just the sheer intensity of the event. I wonder if they look forward to that month of August or dread it – or both. Do any of you experience that type of influx? I found myself noticing the infrastructure of the town. It was incredibly clean, lots of cement and pavement and there were thousands of people but there still seemed to be organization and order. Yup, I was impressed – then I took off my city clerk hat and put my vacation hat on. We spent the bulk of our time riding the country. Devil's Tower, Spearfish Canyon, Custer National Park, Mount Rushmore, Needles Hiway – a very, very cool five days.

I write and re-write this column before it goes to print. There are times

where I want to share things because they are just so. . . Absurd and trying – pushing my every level of understanding. . . But cannot figure out a way to disguise them well enough to keep this column light – the mindless musings of a clerk who took a year to finally remember a four digit KPERs number. In my last column, I wrote about a message that came across my email that made me laugh. I believed the clerk shared because she just needed to know she was not alone in her frustration – that others shared her point of view. Sometimes I need to know I am not alone in the world that surrounds my chair. There are times when I simply do not know what to do. So I look back through some of the list-serveral items I have kept – read what others are seeking answers to – sometimes I reach out – thank you Elmer, Greg, Bert and KRWA. . . Alas, I am reminded, Rome was not built (or destroyed) in a day. I cannot “fix” everything with a list and a timeline. I cannot fix everything today. Some things are not for me to fix. I have tremendous respect for the clerks of 10, or 15, or 20+ years. And I envy those who ebb and flow well with the tide of being such. Anita, you make it look so easy. I appreciate the positive influence all have on those of us who are still trying to find our groove so we too can ebb and flow with some grace.

I have taken on yet another

project in the office. On a regular basis someone will inquire about maps. Water maps, sewer maps or city limits. Our maps and blueprints were all in the bottom of the closet. No rhythm or reason (or labels). So I have dug them all out with the intention of sorting, labeling and disposing of the ones we no longer need. So I am digging, unrolling, placing books on everything so they stay unrolled – and I find a map of the sewer system. I was sooooo excited!! This is one really needed the most. I get the books, lay it out flat and start to look at it a bit and see there is a note at the bottom written in colored pencil. “This is not the way the system was built”. Well Really? That’s it? There is no explanation – no nothing. This is where my ebb and flow meter goes straight from flow to EBB – hard right... Who in their right mind would think that a sewer system can be laid out through the town and no good map left for those who come later? I will tell you who – those dudes in 1937, that’s who. I have no idea why stuff like this just trips my insanity trigger. But it does. By the way, after much unrolling - we have no less than ten blueprints for city hall – eight of them different than what we know city hall to be. We have multiple duplicates of the curb and gutter project in the 50s (the dudes in the 50s weren’t like those dudes in the 30s – they passed their information on ten-fold). And scores of other items I am not sure exist in our fair village. The Historical Society has offered to look

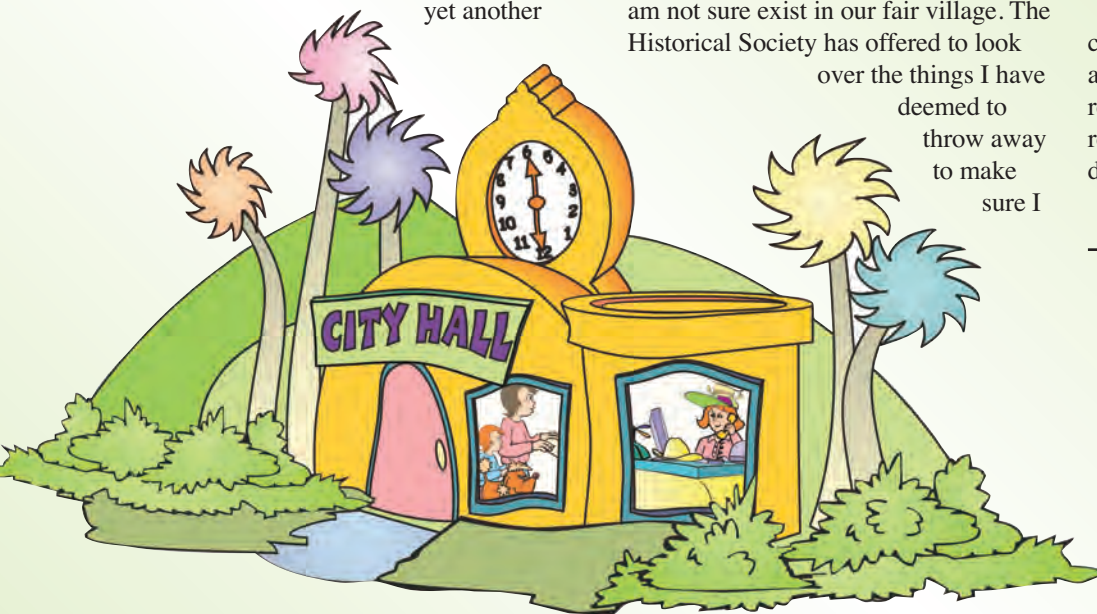
over the things I have deemed to throw away to make sure I

am not disposing of history. I went through a brief period of wanting to torch the whole lot of it at the corner of “curb and gutter” page 9 on top of the manhole that isn’t there. AH... I refrained... not an "incident" I care to explain to council.

I am considering opening a coffee shop here in the conference room of city hall. It would save so much time. Rather than the fire of rumor burning like the California Pines -- hot, tall and impressive -- we could keep the rumors a bit controlled. Embers soon squelched by accuracy. Nah, that won't work – human nature is to momentarily enjoy the hot, tall and impressive, until, of course, it burns one's self. And I really don't need ultra-easy access to caffeine. . . You get the picture. . .

All in all life here is good. As I watch and see Governor Christy in the news, along with Kathleen Sebelius, ObamaCare, America spying on Americans, pilots who land at the wrong airport and a father who was shot and killed by a retired police officer over texting at a movie. . . Let the little fires of Clifton appear impressive - burn hot and then fade. We can walk down the street, stand outside, text at the diner and park unconventional while we run to the bank - hopefully, we will never be shot, kidnapped, assaulted or run out on a rail in the place we hang our hat and call home.

I must go – it is 5 p.m. and time to cross over. . . anyway. . . I smell smoke and detect some heat – someone just read in the minutes the clerk got a new, really nice desk – the beauty is – she did!



Rhonda Meyerhoff is city clerk in Clifton, KS. Prior to moving to Clifton, she did a variety of work including serving as a medical transcriptionist, CPA assistant, rural mail carrier, a paramedic, bookkeeper and more.

