

**TOWN OF WELLESLEY ANNUAL REPORT FOR FISCAL YEAR 2011
NORFOLK COUNTY REGISTRY OF DEEDS**

The Registry of Deeds is the principal office for real property records in Norfolk County. The Registry receives and records hundreds of thousands of documents each year, and is a basic resource for title examiners, mortgage lenders, municipalities, homeowners, and others with a need for land record information. The Registry of Deeds has been a vital component of Norfolk County government since 1793 when Governor John Hancock signed the act creating Norfolk County. Four United States Presidents, John Adams, John Quincy Adams, John F. Kennedy, and George H.W. Bush, were born in Norfolk County, the County of Presidents.

Fiscal Year 2011 Highlights

- Improvements to the physical appearance of the historic Registry Building continued with the unveiling of the “Historic Picture” collection in the first floor of the Registry. Photographs depicting original and historic buildings and scenes throughout Norfolk County were donated by cities, towns, and historic societies for reproduction and permanent display in the Registry.
- Norfolk County Registry of Deeds “Disaster Recovery Plan” was enhanced and “business as usual” ensured for the entire Registry Building with the purchase and installation of a generator.
- Free public viewing of every document, including land plans, recorded by the Registry since its inception in 1793 is available on the internet at www.norfolkdeeds.org.
- The internet accessible indexing system has been expanded back to include references from as early as 1900. The indexing of documents recorded prior to 1900 is underway and once completed will allow real estate professionals, historians and the public alike to search by name and view handwritten documents dating back to 1793.
- Begun in Fiscal Year 2010, electronic recording continues to expand with 8,649 documents transmitted and recorded electronically and over \$1.1 million dollars in fees collected during Fiscal Year 2011.
- The Customer Service Center continues to provide the citizens of Norfolk County with quality assistance in all areas of Registry operations.
- On a weekly basis Register O’Donnell and his staff visited town halls, senior centers, and other community groups throughout Norfolk County. During the visits Register O’Donnell discussed important issues affecting real estate such as the new Massachusetts Homestead Law. Using computer laptops and printers registry staff was able to access all of the Registry’s land records and respond to a vast array of inquiries from citizens. Register O’Donnell and his staff visited Wellesley Town Hall on April 27, 2011.

- Ongoing Registry efforts including the donation of clothing through the “Suits for Success” Program, and the Annual Holiday Food and “Toys for Tots” drives have been successful through the generosity of the Registry’s users, employees, and residents of Norfolk County.
- Closing rooms and tables are available daily for the use of the public.
- The Registry’s internet website www.norfolkdeeds.org is regularly updated and enhanced to include recent news, trends, press information, and answers to frequently asked questions.

The Registry recorded 8,438 documents in Fiscal Year (FY) 2011 related to Wellesley real property, up 15% from last year’s total of 7,330. Increasing by a similar percentage was the average price of a Wellesley real estate sale (greater than \$1,000 - residential and commercial properties) which reached 1.2 million dollars from a high of 1million dollars during FY 2010. Despite this apparent rebound from what has been a challenging few years both regionally and nationally with respect to the real estate market, the total dollar volume of sales remains down. Wellesley’s total volume of sales topped at 473.2 million dollars in FY2011, a 3% dip from FY 2010’s high of 485 million dollars. Actual real estate transfers are also down with 13 % fewer Wellesley deeds recorded in FY 2011 than in 2010. Historically low interest rates during FY 2011did prompt a significant increase in mortgage activity with 2,281 new Wellesley mortgages recorded during the period translating to a 25% jump in mortgage activity and a 36% increase in total mortgage indebtedness. Wellesley residents also took advantage of the new Homestead Law and recorded 524 Declarations.

Norfolk County Registry of Deeds operations are effectively self-supporting, and generate significant surplus revenues. These revenues support other operations and contribute to the General Fund of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. Registry revenues also subsidize county and state public safety and corrections costs. The Registry continues to focus on maintaining and improving its state of the art technology and on providing a trained customer service staff ready to answer questions and assist the citizens of Norfolk County and all Registry users. In over two hundred years of continuous operation, the Registry has gone from the days of scribes with quill pens to computers, scanned documents and off-site access. However, in all that time the Registry of Deeds objectives have remained the same: accuracy, reliability and accessibility for the residents of the twenty eight communities that comprise Norfolk County.