

**Norfolk County Registry of Deeds  
2010 Annual Report to the Town of Wellesley  
William P. O'Donnell, Register  
649 High Street, Dedham, Massachusetts**

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, the year Governor John Hancock signed legislation creating Norfolk County, also known as the County of Presidents - the home or birthplace of John Adams, John Quincy Adams, John F. Kennedy and George H.W. Bush. The Registry operates under the supervision of the elected Register, William P. O'Donnell. In over two hundred years of continuous operation, the Registry has progressed from the days of scribes with quill pens to computers, scanned documents and off-site access. However, in all that time our objectives have remained the same: accuracy, reliability and accessibility for the residents of the twenty eight communities that comprise Norfolk County.

Improved technology and management of records and increased levels of customer service remain areas of major focus for the Registry of Deeds.

Highlights and initiatives include:

- A community outreach office hours program that brought Register Bill O'Donnell and the mobile Registry of Deeds to Wellesley on May 12, 2010.
- Free public viewing access for every document including land plans recorded by the Registry since its inception in 1793 via the internet at [www.norfolkdeeds.org](http://www.norfolkdeeds.org). The Registry regularly updates and enhances the site to include recent news, trends, press information, and answers to frequently asked questions.
- On Monday, October 19, 2009 Register O'Donnell placed Book 27,047 on the shelf in the Registry's Chambers Records Room representing the 10,000th volume to be bound and made available to the public since Register O'Donnell took office.
- Register O'Donnell was on hand on Wednesday, January 20, 2010 when the first electronically recorded live document came into the Registry. Now that the Registry has completed the electronic recording test phase, O'Donnell, who anticipates making the system available to Registry users in the near future, also said, "The electronic recording modernization initiative is being developed so it will be a viable recording option for Registry users and the general public.
- A continuing technology fund investment in computer hardware in the Registry itself to insure that all who want to access the records can do so.
- The expansion of the internet accessible indexing system back to 1920.
- A full service telephone and walk-in customer service center and the addition of closing rooms and tables to encourage the citizens of Norfolk County to feel comfortable in using their Registry.

Wellesley showed a healthy increase in real estate activity in fiscal year 2010 recording a total of 728 deeds, 36% more than in fiscal year 2009. The average price of a Wellesley real estate sale (greater than \$1,000 - residential and

commercial properties combined) stood at almost \$1.1 million falling just 1%, a modest decline when compared to many other Norfolk County communities. There were 1,829 mortgages recorded in Wellesley in fiscal year 2010 which translates to an increase of 6% over last year. Wellesley homeowners took advantage of their right to record a Declaration of Homestead with 474 new recordings which reflects an increase of 29% over last year.



Register William P. O'Donnell preparing to put on the shelf the 10,000<sup>th</sup> Volume of his administration



Register William P. O'Donnell and First Assistant Richard F. Kennedy record the first electronically submitted document