



Candidate Handbook

PRIMARY ELECTION GENERAL ELECTION
August 18, 2026 November 3, 2026

PREPARED BY: Heather Faust, MMC, City Clerk

City of North Port

City Clerk

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Dear Prospective Candidate:

Congratulations on your decision to run for office as a Commissioner for the City of North Port and welcome to the City of North Port election process. This information has been compiled for you and contains important information to assist you with your campaign. It is designed to supplement the Candidate and Campaign Treasurer Handbook produced by the Florida Department of State, Division of Elections, as well as [FS. Chapter 106](#) (Florida's Campaign Finance Laws).

We are here to assist you as needed. Please do not hesitate to call me at (941) 429-7056, if you have any questions at all regarding your campaign.

BEST OF LUCK WITH YOUR CANDIDACY!

Heather Faust

Heather Faust, MMC
City Clerk

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ELECTION INFORMATION AND AVAILABLE SEATS

City Commission - Nonpartisan Municipal Candidate Primary Election - August 18, 2026 General Election - November 3, 2026	
Available Seats	2 Commission Seats: District 4 and District 5
Incumbent	District 4 – Pete Emrich, District 5 – Phil Stokes
Qualifications	Must be a registered voter in the city for 12 consecutive months prior to June 12, 2026.
Term	4 years – Term begins within 5 days of certification of election results.
Salary	\$66,648.20 annually
Qualifying Officer	Heather Faust, City Clerk City of North Port 4970 City Hall Boulevard North Port, FL 34286 Phone (941) 429-7056
Before Qualifying (Must be in this order)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1 – File Appointment of Campaign Treasurer and Designation of Campaign Depository (DS-DE 9) with qualifying officer. 2 – Establish campaign account. 3 – File Statement of Candidate (DS-DE 84) within 10 days of filing the appointment of treasurer with qualifying officer.
Candidates shall file qualifying papers with the City Clerk from Noon, Monday June 8, 2026 – Noon, Friday, June 12, 2026	
During Qualifying Week	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1 – Pay assessment fee of \$666.48 to the City of North Port, out of campaign account; (1% of Commission salary of \$66,648.20) 2 – File Candidate Oath-Nonpartisan Office (DS-DE 302NP) with qualifying officer; 3. – File Statement of Financial Interests (Form 1); and 4. – File verified nominating petition with qualifying officer.



BECOMING A CANDIDATE

WHAT IS A CANDIDATE?

A candidate is defined in [FS. 97.021 \(7\)](#) as any person to whom any one or more of the following applies:

...

- (c) Any person who receives contributions or makes expenditures or gives his or her consent for any other person to receive contributions or make expenditures, with a view to bringing about his or her nomination or election to, or retention in, public office.
- (d) Any person who appoints a treasurer and designates a primary depository.
- (e) Any person who files qualification papers and subscribes to a candidate's oath as required by law.

WHO CAN BE A CANDIDATE?

Municipal elections are nonpartisan. All candidates for a city commission district seat shall have the qualifications of an elector provided for in this Charter, shall have been a resident of that particular district for a minimum of one year prior to the close of qualification period for nominees, and shall be a citizen and registered voter of the United States, State of Florida, and City of North Port within the District for which they are nominated and/or elected, [Sec. 2.05](#).

WHEN DO I ANNOUNCE MY CANDIDACY?

A candidate may announce their candidacy at any time. However, before accepting ANY contribution, or making ANY expenditure, the Appointment of Campaign Treasurer and Designation of Campaign Depository must be filed with the City Clerk's Office, pursuant to the Campaign Financing Laws of [FS. 106.11](#).

WHEN CAN I BEGIN?

A candidate may open their campaign file with the City Clerk's Office ANY TIME PRIOR to the qualifying period, however, certain documents pertaining to a candidate's campaign can only be finalized and submitted to a candidate's file during the qualifying period.

WHAT DOES A CANDIDATE NEED TO FILE?

FORMS TO FILE	FLORIDA STATUTES
<p>FILE APPOINTMENT OF CAMPAIGN TREASURER AND DESIGNATION OF CAMPAIGN DEPOSITORY. Candidates must first file an Appointment of Campaign Treasurer and Designation of Campaign Depository for Candidates Form DS-DE 9, with the filing officer, prior to collecting contributions or making expenditures on behalf of his/her campaign. Only persons designated as treasurer or deputy treasurer may sign campaign account checks. A candidate may be his/her own treasurer or deputy treasurer. Up to three (3) deputy treasurers may be appointed to sign checks in the treasurer's absence.</p>	<p>Form DS-DE 9 FS.106.021</p>
<p>OPEN CAMPAIGN CHECKING ACCOUNT AT BANK. It is recommended that the bank account be opened as soon as possible after filing Appointment of Campaign Treasurer and Designation of Campaign Depository so that the account will be in place for expenditures and receipt of contributions in connection with the campaign. The campaign account opened at the bank must be a special campaign checking account.</p>	<p>FS. 106.021</p>
<p>STATEMENT OF CANDIDATE. Within 10 days of opening campaign file, candidate must file a Statement of Candidate. The filing of this form by a candidate indicates that the candidate has received, read, and understands Florida Statutes Chapter 106 (Campaign Financing).</p>	<p>Form DS-DE 84 FS. 106.23 FS. 105.031</p>
<p>CAMPAIGN TREASURER'S REPORTS. Filing of required periodic Campaign Treasurer's Reports. A candidate will be provided with an election cycle calendar of campaign treasurer's reporting dates. Reports must be filed even if the candidate accepts no contributions or makes no expenditures.</p>	<p>FS. 106.06 FS. 106.07</p>
<p>FLORIDA RESIGN-TO-RUN LAW - 10 DAYS PRIOR TO THE PERIOD OF QUALIFYING. No person or elected officer may qualify as a candidate for more than one public office, whether federal, state, district, county or municipal if the terms or any part thereof run concurrently with each other. Elected officers must resign from the office he/she presently holds. The resignation is irrevocable. The WRITTEN resignation must be submitted at least 10 days prior to the 1st day of qualifying and must be effective no later than the earlier of the following dates: the date the officer would take office, if elected, or the date the officer's successor is required to take office. An original written statement must be filed with the qualifying officer and a copy filed with the Governor's Office in Tallahassee.</p>	<p>FS. 99-012</p>

ACCESS TO ELECTRONIC FILING OF FORM 1

The Statement of Financial Interests (Form 1) requires detailed financial information. **CANDIDATES ARE URGED TO ALLOW AMPLE TIME TO REGISTER, CREATE A PROFILE, USERNAME/PASSWORD, AND COMPLETE THE DISCLOSURE.** Waiting until the last day of qualifying may not provide sufficient time to access the system, accurately complete the disclosure, print, and file it with the Qualifying Officer.

- Filers who filed electronically in EFDMS in 2025 will use the same username and password for 2026 as they used in 2025.
- Filers who are eligible for a public records exemption and wish to have certain information redacted from their form, in accordance with the public records laws should download and complete the Public Records Exemption Request ([Confidentiality Form](#)) and mail the completed form to the Commission on Ethics prior to submitting their disclosure. That way, their filer record will be noted accordingly, and redactions applied prior to the form being published on the Commission's website.
- Links to documents containing helpful tips for e-filing and qualifying can be found on the homepage of the Commission's website.

Filers accessing the system for the first time, including Candidates, access EFDMS in one of two ways:

1. Incumbent candidates and candidates who currently hold another position subject to an annual filing requirement:
 - **IMPORTANT FIRST STEP!**
Add EthicsFDMSinfo@mail.disclosure.floridaethics.gov to their e-mail "safelist."
 - Invitations to register for filers qualifying in January will be e-mailed to the filer's e-mail address on January 1, 2026. If an e-mail is not received, check the SPAM or Junk e-mail folder.

OR

- Filers and Incumbent Candidates requiring access may request an access code beginning January 1, by visiting www.ethics.state.fl.us, and click on the E-filing link.
 - Click "I am a filer," to request registration.
 - Click "request registration e-mail."
 - Candidate will receive an e-mail from EthicsFDMSinfo@mail.disclosure.floridaethics.gov.
 - If an e-mail is not received, check the SPAM or Junk e-mail folder.

- Register account information.
 - Log in and complete the verification process.
 - Complete the disclosure in the e-filing system.
 - File/submit the disclosure electronically.
 - Print a copy of the “Verification and Receipt of Filing” OR print a copy of the completed disclosure.
 - File the verification OR the printed copy of the disclosure with the Qualifying Officer.
 - Filers who do not need to qualify for office in January will receive an invitation to register in April. If a filer requires earlier access for qualifying purposes or if they want to get a head start on completing the form, can request access from the "I am a filer" button on the [EDMS Homepage](#).
2. Candidates who do not currently hold a Form 1 office or a position with a disclosure requirement:
- IMPORTANT FIRST STEP!
Add EthicsFDMSinfo@mail.disclosure.floridaethics.gov to their e-mail "safelist."
 - Visit www.ethics.state.fl.us, and click on the E-filing link.
 - Click "I am a candidate."
 - Click "request registration e-mail."
 - Candidate will receive an e-mail from EthicsFDMSinfo@mail.disclosure.floridaethics.gov.
 - If they don't receive the e-mail, they should check their SPAM or Junk folder.
 - Register account information.
 - Log in and complete the verification process.
 - Complete the disclosure in the e-filing system.
 - Print the completed disclosure.
 - File the printed copy of the disclosure with the Qualifying Officer.

Commission staff are ready to assist Candidates with access to the new system and the completion of the disclosure for qualification purposes. Please contact us at 850-488-7864 or disclosure@leg.state.fl.us, if we can provide further assistance.

CAMPAIGN FILE & QUALIFYING

WHAT DOES QUALIFYING MEAN?

Only candidates who have been residents of the Commission District Seat they are seeking a minimum of one year prior to the closing of the qualification period and are citizens and registered voters of the United States, State of Florida, and City of North Port within the District for which they are nominated and/or elected shall be eligible to hold the office of Commissioner.

For candidates to be qualified, they must pay the required one percent (1%) Florida Election Assessment fee required by [FS. 99.093](#) for the office they seek. A candidate must also file the required documents outlined within this handbook, pursuant to [Sec. 2.05](#).

A check from the campaign account, in the amount of \$666.48 is required at the time of qualifying along with the completed forms to be provided by the City Clerk, some of which include: Appointment of Campaign Treasurer, Statement of Candidate, Candidate Oath, (Form 1) Statement of Financial Interests, and Statement of Residency.

Candidates are required to obtain signatures from no fewer than 25 qualified electors of the city. Each signature shall be in ink, and the residence address of each signatory shall be provided opposite the signature. Petition signatures shall be verified by the Supervisor of Elections at the Candidates' expense. Candidates will provide their petitions to the Supervisor of Elections, not the City Clerk.

WHEN AND WHERE DO I FILE MY QUALIFYING PAPERS?

Candidates shall file qualifying papers with the City Clerk at City Hall, 4970 City Hall Boulevard, North Port, Florida from Noon, **Monday, June 8, 2026 – Friday, June 12, 2026.**

CHECKLIST

LOYALTY OATH/OATH OF CANDIDATE. A candidate must file the appropriate Loyalty Oath/Oath of Candidate for the office they seek. The City Clerk's office will provide this form. A candidate's name, as the candidate wants it to appear on the ballot, is taken from the completed and signed Loyalty Oath/Oath of Candidate and CANNOT be changed after the last day of qualifying.	FS. 99.021 FS. 99.061 FS.105.031
STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL INTERESTS (FORM 1) and FULL AND PUBLIC DISCLOSURE OF FINANCIAL INTEREST (FORM 6)	FS. 99.061
PETITION SIGNATURES A candidate must obtain the signatures of no fewer than twenty-five (25) qualified electors of the city. Each signature shall be in ink, and the residence address of each signatory shall be provided opposite the signature. Petition signatures shall be verified by the Supervisor of Elections at the candidate's expense.	Sec. 2.05.
WITHDRAWING CANDIDACY. A candidate may withdraw his/her candidacy up until the close of qualifying and any paid filing fees shall be returned to the candidate. Withdrawal after the close of qualifying will result in forfeiture of the paid filing fee. Withdrawal of candidacy shall be in writing and filed with the qualifying officer.	FS. 99.092
FLORIDA ELECTION ASSESSMENT FEE. A candidate must pay one percent of Commission salary equally \$666.48 for Florida Election Assessment Fee. Check must be written from the candidate's campaign account.	FS. 99.093

CAMPAIGN TREASURER'S REPORTING

Campaign treasurer's reports must be filed **no later than 4:00 p.m.**, Eastern Standard Time, on or by the report's designated due date. Campaign treasurer's reports shall be filed at designated intervals as indicated on the calendar below. Reports shall be filed with the City Clerk via the online portal at [Campaign Finance Portal](#) or in the City of North Port's City Clerk's Office.

The City Clerk will provide candidates and their treasurer/deputy treasurer with information to register for an Easy Campaign Finance Portal account upon receipt of their Appointment of Campaign Treasurer and Designation of Campaign Depository (DS-DE 9). Both candidates and their treasurer/deputy treasurer must register for a portal account to complete signatures on all required campaign treasure reports.

LAST DAY TO RECEIVE CAMPAIGN CONTRIBUTIONS PRIOR TO THE NOVEMBER 3, 2026, ELECTION IS MIDNIGHT, THURSDAY, OCTOBER 29, 2026, [FS.106.08\(3\)\(a\)](#).

PENALTY FOR LATE FILING

Candidates must ensure ample time to obtain all required signatures in the portal. Forms that do not have all signatures prior to 4:00 p.m. are deemed incomplete and will incur a penalty for late filing.

If a candidate fails to file a report by the designated due date, they are subject to a fine of \$50 per day (to include weekend days) for the first three days and \$500 per day thereafter, not to exceed 25 percent of the receipts or expenditures, whichever is greater. However, for the reports immediately preceding each Primary and General Election, the fine is \$500 per day, not to exceed 25 percent of the total receipts or expenditures, whichever is greater.

Example: The treasurer files the report five days late. This is not a report due prior to an election. For the first three days, the fine is \$50 per day; the last two days the fine is \$500 per day, for a total of \$1,150. However, the total receipts were \$4,000 and the total expenditures were \$2,000; therefore, the candidate's total fine would be limited to 25 percent of \$4,000, or \$1,000. **ANY FINE MUST BE PAID FROM THE CANDIDATE'S PERSONAL FUNDS NOT CAMPAIGN FUNDS.**

YOUR REPORT IS A PUBLIC RECORD

Once the City Clerk receives your report it becomes a public record. It will be placed on our Website and will be available for inspection. The function of the City Clerk regarding your reports is ministerial. We will examine your report for completeness, but not necessarily correctness. We are not the elections police. Errors in your reporting, like other campaign violations, are the province of the Florida Elections Commission.

REPORTING DATES

DUE DATE	PERIOD COVERED	REPORT CODE
01/12/26	10/01/25 - 12/31/25	2025 Q4
04/10/26	01/01/26 - 03/31/26	2026 Q1
06/10/26	04/01/26 - 05/31/26	2026 Q2
06/19/26	06/01/26 - 06/12/26	2026 P1
07/03/26	06/13/26 - 06/26/26	2026 P2
07/17/26	06/27/26 - 07/10/26	2026 P3
07/24/26	07/11/26 - 07/17/26	2026 P4
07/31/26	07/18/26 - 07/24/26	2026 P5
08/7/26	07/25/26 - 07/31/26	2026 P6
08/14/26	08/01/26 - 08/13/26	2026 P7
08/28/26	08/14/26 - 08/21/26	2026 G1
09/11/26	08/22/26 - 9/4/26	2026 G2
09/25/26	9/5/26 - 9/18/26	2026 G3
10/09/26	9/19/26 - 10/02/26	2026 G4
10/23/26	10/03/26 - 10/16/26	2026 G5
10/30/26	10/17/26 - 10/29/26	2026 G6

Termination Reports

DUE DATE	PERIOD COVERED	REPORT CODE
09/10/26	After June Qualifying	TR
11/16/26	Primary Election	TR
02/01/27	General Election	TR

CAMPAIGN FINANCING

The campaign treasurer OR deputy treasurer of a candidate, as well as the candidate must make an effort to become familiar with the provisions of [FS. Chapter 106](#) Campaign Financing. Florida Statutes outline the laws governing campaign financing and political advertising in the State of Florida.

The Florida Elections Commission governs the campaign financing laws of Florida and considers violations. The Commission has the authority to impose civil penalties and can also initiate criminal proceedings for violations of [Chapter 104](#) or [Chapter 106](#) Florida Statutes.

It is ultimately the treasurer and/or candidate's responsibility to become familiar with the campaign financing and advertising laws in Florida. Candidates and treasurers are encouraged to contact the City Clerk to receive guidance in situations where campaign financing or advertising laws are complex. Here are some helpful bookkeeping suggestions:

- (1) Keep a schedule of the dates campaign treasurer's reports are due. Be aware of the reporting period each report covers (a schedule of dates is provided for your convenient reference in this handbook).
- (2) Keep a copy of each report filed for your records.
- (3) Log each contribution when received; log the date, name, address, occupation (if more than \$100), and amount. Categorize contributions separately: loans, monetary, in-kind. Contributions must be deposited within 5 days of receipt.
- (4) Log each expenditure as it occurs; log the date, name, address, purpose and amount. Keep all receipts in connection with the campaign account.
- (5) Keep a ledger of all petty cash expenditures. Petty cash spent should be logged in a ledger and does not need to be reported on the campaign treasurer's report. Only the total amount of petty cash withdrawn from the campaign account for spending during a reporting period should be reported on the campaign treasurer's report.

In-kind contributions have a monetary value. This type of contribution is not the same as money but is still considered a contribution under Florida Statutes. When completing the campaign treasurer's report, the amount of in-kind contributions for the "reporting period" must be listed, but the value of such contribution is not added in with the actual money. In-kind contributions, in combination with monetary contributions, cannot exceed \$1000 per individual contributor per election.

- (6) Monitor cash flow. Know how much money is available in order to avoid authorizing expenditures when money is not available. Remember that debit or credit transactions on campaign accounts fall under the same rules as expenditures by campaign check.
- (7) File reports on time to avoid fines.
- (8) Contributions of \$100 or more in the form of cash or cashier's check are not permitted.

ADVERTISING

POLITICAL ADVERTISING

As a candidate, you must have the proper disclaimer prominently displayed on all political advertising including signs and bumper stickers. There are two acceptable disclaimers; either "Political advertisement paid for and approved by (name of candidate) for (office sought)" or "Paid by (name of candidate), (party affiliation), for (office sought). See [FS. 106.143](#).

CAMPAIGNING NEAR POLLING PLACES

No person, political committee, or other group or organization may solicit voters inside the polling place or within 100 feet of the entrance to any polling place, a polling room where the polling place is also a polling room, an early voting site, or an office of the supervisor of elections where absentee ballots are requested and printed on demand for the convenience of electors who appear in person to request them. Before the opening of the polling place or early voting site, the clerk or supervisor shall designate the no-solicitation zone and mark the boundaries, see [FS. 102.031](#). Also, see Fla. State Division of Elections [DS-DE11](#) Polling Place Procedures Manual.

POLITICAL SIGNS

Placement of political signs is governed by various state, county and municipal ordinances and regulations. Candidates and their representatives are strongly encouraged to read and comply with all applicable regulations. The City of North Port, Unified Land Development Code [Chapter 5](#) regulates signs within the city's jurisdictional limits. Signs are not allowed to be placed in the City's right-of-way, and any sign placed in or extending into the right-of-way is subject to removal. Signs are allowed to be placed on private property only.

Additionally, Florida Statutes include provisions in [F.S. 106.1435](#) and [F.S. 479](#):

Pursuant to [F.S. 106.1435](#):

- (1) Each candidate, whether for a federal, state, county, or district office, shall make a good faith effort to remove all of his or her political campaign advertisements within 30 days after:
 - (a) Withdrawal of his or her candidacy;
 - (b) Having been eliminated as a candidate; or
 - (c) Being elected to office.

However, a candidate is not expected to remove those political campaign advertisements which are in the form of signs used by an outdoor advertising business as provided in Chapter 479. The provisions herein do not apply to political campaign advertisements placed on motor vehicles or to campaign messages designed to be worn by persons.

- (2) If political campaign advertisements are not removed within the specified period, the political subdivision or governmental entity has the authority to remove such advertisements and may charge the candidate the actual cost for such removal. Fund collected for removing such advertisements shall be deposited to the general revenue of the political subdivision.
- (3) Pursuant to Chapter 479, no political campaign advertisements shall be erected, posted, tacked, nailed or otherwise displayed, placed, or located on or above any state or county road right-of-way. For more information see [FDOT](#).
- (4) The officer before whom a candidate qualifies for office shall notify the candidate, in writing, of the provisions in this section.
- (5) This provision does not preclude municipalities from imposing additional or more stringent requirements on the usage and removal of political campaign advertisements.

Important Contact Information:

Florida Department of Transportation – The Office of Right of Way

Tel: 850-414-4545

www.fdot.gov/rightofway

City of North Port – Code Enforcement Office

Tel: 941-429-7186

www.northportfl.gov

CANVASSING BOARD SCHEDULE

In accordance with [Section 101.5612\(2\) Florida Statutes](#), you are to be notified of the pre-election testing (logic and accuracy) of the automatic tabulating equipment for the 2026 General Election. Dates and times have not been provided by the Supervisor of Election at this time. Once provided, a schedule will be emailed to you.

NOTE: All canvassing board meetings, including the logic and accuracy test, are open to the public and take place at the Office of the Supervisor of Elections, First Floor, Sarasota County Terrace Building, 2001 Adams Lane, Sarasota 34237.

CANDIDATE RESOURCES

PHONE

City of North Port - Office of the City Clerk (941-429-7056)

Florida Department of State - Division of Elections (850-245-6200)

Florida Elections Commission (850-922-4539)

Florida Commission on Ethics-Financial Disclosure (850-488-7864)

ONLINE - WEBSITES

<https://www.northportfl.gov>

City of North Port webpage

<http://election.dos.state.fl.us>

Florida Division of Elections webpage

<http://www.fec.state.fl.us>

Florida Elections Commission webpage

<http://www.ethics.state.fl.us>

Florida Commission on Ethics webpage

EMAIL

Heather L. Faust – City Clerk

hfaust@northportfl.gov

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION | OTHER LINKS

[Become an Election Poll Worker](#)

[The Florida Election Code - 2019](#)

[Code of North Port - Elections](#)

[Chapter 286 - Open Meeting Laws](#)

[Precinct Finder \(Supervisor of Elections\)](#)

[Chapter 112 - Code of Ethics for Public Officers](#)

[Register to Vote \(Supervisor of Elections\)](#)

[Chapter 119 - Public Records](#)

[Candidate & Campaign Treasurer Handbook](#)

[FL Commission on Ethics Guide to the Sunshine Amendment and Code of Ethics](#)

Online Sunshine

Florida Statute Chapter 104 - Election Code: Violations; Penalties

Violations of these or any other election laws should be reported to the Florida Elections Commission or the Division of Elections.

Florida Elections Commission

107 W. Gaines Street
Collins Building Suite 224
Tallahassee, FL 32399
850-922-4539

Florida Division of Elections

500 South Bronough Street
R A Gray Building Room 316
Tallahassee, FL 32399
850-245-6200

Voter Fraud Hotline

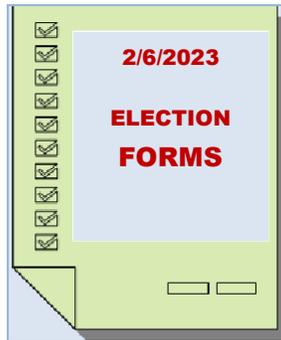
Main Line: 1.877.868.3737

If you are hearing or speech impaired, please contact the Division using the Florida Relay Service, 1.800.955.8771 (TDD) or 1.800.955-8770 (Voice). For more information visit the [Florida Relay Service](#).

CLICK HERE

[Florida Division of Elections | Frequently asked questions](#)

ELECTION FORMS



<u>Form DS-DE 9</u>	Appointment of Campaign Treasurer
<u>Form DS-DE 84</u>	Statement of Candidate
<u>Form DS-DE 302NP</u>	Candidate Oath - Candidate with no party affiliation
<u>Form DS-DE 11</u>	Polling Place Procedures Manual
<u>Form DS-DE 12</u>	Campaign Treasurer's Report Summary
<u>Form DS-DE 13</u>	Campaign Treasurer's Report - Itemized Contributions
<u>Form DS-DE 14</u>	Campaign Treasurer's Report - Itemized Expenditures
<u>Form DS-DE 87</u>	Waiver of Report

**THE CITY CLERK HAS A NOTARY PUBLIC AVAILABLE TO
THE CANDIDATE FOR NOTARIZING DOCUMENTS**