

FACC President Pat Burke's Incoming Speech 2024 FACC Summer Conference and Academy

Good afternoon, and what a beautiful afternoon it is. I stand here before you humbled by your support and friendship over the years gained through this amazing association of City Clerks! From big City Clerks to tiny Town Clerks, we are all one Clerk family, and what a family we are! At this time, I would like to introduce my family. My Town Family: Mayor Chase Chambliss and his wife Fara, Vice Mayor Paul Bonville, Councilman Frank Falcone, Councilwoman Sharon Secord and Councilwoman Barbara Mathewson. Thank you for your constant support and faith in me, and, of course, my blood family, who without their constant support, patience, and push, I would not be standing here today. First, my children: my son Chris who is here from all the way across the country from Washington State, my daughter Kim, and my son-in-law Davor. I cannot tell you how happy it makes me to see you here and, of course, my husband of 37 years, Bill, the man who always has my 6. Without his continuous encouragement my life would be completely different. Thank you, honey. I love you all.

Anyone who knows me knows that besides my family and friends I have two loves, ballet and boxing. Now, I know that they sound like they are on entirely different ends of the spectrum, but they are each in their own way, much like being a City Clerk. Let me explain. When you watch a ballet, you see the grace and poise of the dancers; they spin, jump and sometimes even glide across the stage; they dance solo or with a team. Now think of a day in the life of the City Clerk, you exhibit poise and grace every day in your office, at council meetings, and community events. You are always professional, although you are jumping from one task to another. Sometimes, the office is so busy you find yourself spinning out of control as you are pulled in different directions, but you don't lose your cool. You manage to glide through the day, take a breath and when you get home (probably have a glass of wine or two) and repeat the next day.

But then there are days when your office is like a boxing ring and you're not sure if you are the fighter or the referee! You fight for your residents, you fight for your staff and you fight for yourself. Then there are days you are the referee, trying to

solve the battles when neighbors fight, when residents reel because the trash wasn't picked up or complain their water bill is too high, or when the free roaming ducks and geese are annoying the residents in their neighborhood pond. They want **YOU** to do something about it. We are the dancers, fighters and problem solvers, the referees of our municipality, the leaders who maintain their poise and grace regardless of the fight or situation.

FACC's focus is and will always be on education and I am a strong proponent of professional development. As a seasoned Clerk and Professor, education plays a prominent role in my life. However, my presidency will focus on another aspect of education: Leadership. Clerks are the unsung Leaders! Many of you do not think of yourselves as leaders and to tell you the truth for a long time I didn't think I was a leader either. The Municipal Clerk is known as the oldest public servants in local government. Not to be confused with the oldest profession... Before there were Mayors, Town Councils and Town Managers, there were Town Clerks. The early keepers of archives, the Clerks were often called "Remembrancers;" and before writing came into use, their memory served as the public record." It is a good thing someone invented pen and paper or I think the majority of this room would be in trouble.

In 1934, while writing one of the first textbooks on municipal government, Political Scientist Professor William Bennett Munro, stated:

"No other office in municipal service has so many contracts. It serves the mayor, the city council, the city manager, (when there is one), and all administrative departments without exception. All of them call upon it, almost daily, for some service or information. Its work is not spectacular, but it demands versatility, alertness, accuracy and no end of patience. The public does not realize how many loose ends of city administration the city clerk's office pulls together."

These words, written 90 years ago, are even more appropriate today. If that is not the definition of a leader, I don't know what is. My friends, you are the hub of local government, you are the direct link between the residents of the community and their government. You are the problem solver, the dancer, the fighter and the referee. You are a leader. I think of leadership as more of a dance rather than a fight. As a former dancer I have found several principles of dance that can make you a better leader: I read an article titled Leadership is a Dance — Stretch First, Leap Later. I'd like to share the parts that stuck with me.

Learning to be a leader is a lot like learning to dance, and ultimately, becoming the choreographer. But you need to look (and stretch!) before you leap.

1. **Stretch first:** Identify and exercise those traits associated with your goals — and do it every day. By doing this you will tone the muscles that make a leader and eventually start to receive recognition for your abilities. God's gift to us is potential; our gift to God is developing it.
2. **Face the Music:** Dancers must listen openly and carefully. Becoming a leader — in any capacity — also requires listening, though not as much to music (though it can't hurt) but to finding a rhythm that lights a fire and ignites your passion and the passion of others including your elected officials and then following it to its conclusion.
3. **Practice Makes Perfect:** Seems simple right? Well, understand that this wisdom stems from reality. This is especially true if you are leading a team that relies on your wisdom and expertise as a City Clerk. It's one thing to be an expert dancer and quite another to teach others, which demands full trust. And you won't earn trust unless you keep practicing, and demonstrating continuously what makes you worth following.

When it comes down to it, good leadership, like a great dance, is experienced, felt and demonstrated through action more than words.

Ladies and Gentlemen, the Clerk's role is to ensure proper process and open, transparent government. Lead by example and be the servant leader-whom others

want to be around and emulate. Never underestimate your leadership, and never let anyone tell you that you, as a City Clerk, are not a leader.

I encourage you to sign up for a committee, participate in the process, and let your voice be heard. Come to the board meetings, ask questions, take advantage of all the lifelong learning opportunities at conferences, academies and webinars. Participate in our Athenian Leadership Dialogues, become a fellow and let your leadership shine. Get your CMC, MMC and enroll in the new Florida Certified Professional Clerk Certification Program. Network with your fellow Clerks, as I am sure they have experienced the same things as you, and most importantly, “Lead On and do the Leadership Dance!” You are the unsung leader.

Douglas McArthur said: “A true leader has the confidence to stand alone, the courage to make tough decisions, and the compassion to listen to the needs of others. He does not set out to be a leader but becomes one by the equality of his action and the integrity of his intend.”

I hope and pray that as I take on this role, I will never disappoint you, that I will always try to achieve the expectations you have set for me, and that when I turn the gavel over to Elizabeth next year I can do so knowing that in my heart and soul I did what was best for this association, and you, my Clerk family.

Thank you once again for putting your faith in me.