



Solidarity Lowell 2024 Legislative Endorsement Questionnaire - Joe Ready for Register of Deeds

Why are you running for this office? What are your top three priorities if elected?

I am excited to be running for the Register of Deeds, which has been a calling of mine, since my early youth. My parents fostered within me at an early age a deep love for real estate, the inner workings of municipal government, education, and community service. The Register of Deeds embodies these diverse areas of focus into one unique role. My early interactions as an intern, my childhood upbringing and working with attorneys recording closing documents at registries across the state are the reasons it developed into a career aspiration for me. The timing of Richard Howe, Jr's retirement is advantageous for the community as I now have both the passion, and more importantly, a perfect blend of experience to lead the registry effectively and efficiently for our communities.

My primary focus is to establish together an accessible, responsive, and secure registry, which are my top three priorities. With a background in real estate, database implementation, and community involvement, I have the knowledge and leadership ability to modernize the office, enhance technology, and safeguard consumers against fraud.

What prepares you to serve as Register of Deeds?

Anyone who looks to assume a role as the head of an agency must first know that agency's work inside and out. It is not a "learn on the job" role, to say the least. The Register of Deeds is responsible for validating that each document meets recording standards, properly indexing, maintaining and providing public access to land records, collecting recording fees, community preservation funds, technology fees and state transfer taxes.

To effectively supervise the Registry of Deeds, a candidate needs leadership skills, strong management abilities, extensive knowledge of real estate and conveyancing, familiarity with recording and indexing standards, sound accounting practices, innovative thinking, and the ability to enhance technological implementations by setting clear goals, establishing priorities, and ensuring accountability among third-party government software vendors.

My successful career as Real Estate Broker, extensive experience in administrative management, business leadership and a deep commitment to serving my community exceeds the qualifications described above. My unique qualifications and transferable experiences include working in a Registrar's Office at Suffolk Law, managing the staff at Harvard Law

Career Services, implementing custom databases, and founding and leading a successful local real estate brokerage for over 13 years.

At Harvard Law School, I managed a team that executed the nation's largest law school interview program, conducting over 11,000 interviews in five days. Additionally, I oversaw upgrades to our proprietary database software for tracking students and employment data. Testimonials on my website from colleagues at Suffolk Law and Harvard Law support these accomplishments.

In my 13-year career as a broker, I implemented and enforced policies and procedures, provided management, oversight, education, technology implementation and training to real estate sales agents. As a licensed Real Estate Broker and Instructor, I have extensive knowledge and education in real estate and conveyancing, which far surpasses that of my competitors.

Having earned a bachelor's degree in business administration with a focus on entrepreneurship, I enjoy bringing ideas to life. I have immersed myself in the Mass General Laws governing the Register of Deeds, Massachusetts Deed Indexing Standards, and Land Court Guidelines to aid registry personnel and legal professionals in assessing document suitability for filing regarding registered land. Previous experience working with Real Estate Attorneys and handling closing packages at registries statewide has provided me with a solid foundation.

My family's values of education, community service, and civic engagement, along with my journey to Eagle Scout, have instilled in me a dedication to public service. Through my extensive knowledge of real estate and conveyancing, proficiency in running an administrative office, and daily engagement with the registry as a consumer, I have a vision for meaningful change as the next Register of Deeds. I'm enthusiastically looking forward to the work that needs to be accomplished and committing myself to helping all the residents of the 10 communities of the Northern Middlesex.

What do you think are the most significant challenges facing the office, and how do you intend to address those challenges?

Here are four primary challenges facing the Office of the Registry and ways to address them:

One challenge is striking a balance between public access and protecting individuals from potential fraud. The vast amount of personal information available through the registry underscores the need for robust tools to safeguard the public. This requires a significant overhaul of our outdated consumer notification system, which currently fails to adequately serve the public. Collaborating with our software vendors to implement zero-trust cybersecurity measures and proactive policies can help mitigate the risk of cyber-attacks, ensuring data security and avoiding costly network rebuilds. This approach not only enhances departmental protection but also optimizes taxpayer resources to be better allocated towards other essential social justice programs.

Another significant hurdle is language accessibility within the registry. Currently, Middlesex North does not offer options other than English on the search functionality of the database or in the documents that are recorded. The overall website does have a selection for other language translation, but it's limited and should be expanded upon to include other popular

languages. Leveraging AI technology for document translation and creating computerized abstracts while preserving the original text can facilitate multi-language interpretation. Exploring partnerships with organizations like MassHealth, renowned for their accessibility resources, could provide opportunities for collaboration to ensure proper document translation.

Establishing digital equity frameworks to broaden registry access and empower marginalized groups with limited resources, such as devices and internet connectivity, is crucial. Initiatives like adding public search devices at Jackson St, partnering with attorneys willing to provide pro bono satellite access services in each community, and collaborating with public libraries and clerk offices to enhance access to registry resources in all communities can strengthen community engagement and inclusivity.

Furthermore, increasing education about the registry and its services to all residents of our communities is essential. Many residents lack the knowledge to utilize the Registry to protect themselves. Providing education on verifying landlord information to prevent renters from falling victim to deposit fraud, educating the elderly and other at-risk residents on avoiding real estate mail and internet scams, and emphasizing the importance of recording a homestead to safeguard against third-party creditors are key steps in promoting awareness and protection within these communities.

What progressive policies or programs will you implement if elected?

The upcoming installation of the next Register of Deeds provides a significant opportunity to review all office policies and procedures established by my predecessor, Richard Howe, Jr. It is a time to gather feedback from internal employees and work towards implementing an action plan that will create a fun and diverse workforce for the Northern Middlesex Registry of Deeds. Here are some practices that I would collaborate with the staff and community on implementing to help enhance the office:

1. Establishing Both Employee and Community Resource Groups (ERG & CRGs):
 - Create ERGs to provide support and networking opportunities for underrepresented staff.
 - Foster a sense of community and inclusion among the internal staff of the registry.
 - Create Community Resource Groups to provide support and information about the services of the registry and help underrepresented populations gain better access to services and information.
2. Implementing Mentorship Programs:
 - Develop mentorship programs tailored to help employees grow.
 - Pair employees from diverse backgrounds with experienced mentors to facilitate growth and development.
 - Support the promotion of employees within the registry to develop the skills necessary to open other advancement opportunities at public, private or non-profit sector employers, encouraging their growth, development, and success.
3. Enhancing Recruitment Strategies:
 - Implement strategies to attract diverse candidates, including partnering with MassHire and other diverse recruitment agencies.
 - Attend job fairs and conferences focused on underrepresented communities to expand the candidate pool.

- Offer internship programs to a diverse group of jobseekers who may not fully understand the registry's function or significance. Provide a road map of how the knowledge and work experience in the registry can be a stepping stone to other career opportunities.

4. Providing Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) Training:

- Offer DEI training covering topics such as inclusive leadership, bias mitigation in recruitment, and the link between DEI and innovation.
- Educate employees on the importance of diversity and strategies to foster an inclusive workplace culture.

5. Promoting Transparency and Employee Involvement:

- Encourage transparency in decision-making processes and involve employees in key decisions.
- Provide cross training opportunities within the department and career exploration with other state agencies to help develop new and innovative ideas.
- Collect regular feedback from employees on how I can improve as the Register and act on the results to demonstrate that their opinions are valued.
- Create a safe environment where employees can freely express their thoughts without fear of reprisal and ensure that everyone's voice is heard.

6. Tracking Progress and Ensuring Accountability:

- Provide progress updates on diversity initiatives to the public, community groups and the employees of the registry.
- Publicly share the results of ERG and employment practices to enhance accountability and transparency.
- Continuously strive for improvement and work towards building a more diverse, equitable, and inclusive workplace.

7. Reviewing Hiring Practices:

- Conduct a thorough review of existing hiring practices to identify and eliminate potential biases.
- Implement measures to ensure fair and inclusive recruitment processes for all candidates.

8. Climate Action:

- Seek to reduce office waste and challenge employees to adopt environmentally friendly approaches and practices towards registry operations.
- Encourage employees to share feedback on ways they create climate action outside the registry and the feasibility on implementing that within the registry.

By implementing these actions, the Northern Middlesex Registry of Deeds can cultivate a vibrant, diverse, and inclusive workforce that fosters innovation, collaboration, and employee satisfaction. This is represented in my tagline as "Together" because I believe in being inclusive in my approach to leadership and management.

What values will you demonstrate as a public official?

Over the next six years, I will be donating 300 hours of my personal time to community service in Northern Middlesex as part of my Good Deeds pledge.

The Good Deeds Pledge was sparked by conversations I've had on the campaign trail about

how I could better help the environment, the housing crisis, education, diversity, equity and inclusion and a variety of other social justice issues. These questions inspired me to challenge myself to incorporate these values not only within the operation of the Registry, but to look beyond just running the most efficient, accessible, and technologically advanced Registry of Deeds.

I was inspired by one of my favorite US presidents, Franklin D Roosevelt, who gave a campaign address in Detroit, Michigan in 1932 in which he outlined the philosophy of “Social Justice through Social Action.” It’s this philosophy that became the foundation of my Good Deeds Pledge.

I pledge that I will be in all 10 communities of Northern Middlesex, donating up to 300 hours of my personal, volunteer time, outside of the Registry hours, over the next six years. In full transparency, I will document and report back on my website every hour volunteered towards these worthy causes. I would love feedback on which program is most important to you. Please feel free to reach out to me to discuss.

Politicians are always asking for your support, but when you make a campaign contribution, hold or place a yard sign, support my campaign and vote in this election, you can know that in addition to a well-run Registry, you’re also supporting the Joe Ready – Good Deeds Pledge.