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GENERAL LETTER 2006-1

DATE: April 17, 2006

TO: Connecticut Town Clerks

FROM: Eunice G. DiBella
Public Records Administrator

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Eunice G. DiBella".

SUBJECT: Format Requirements for Land Records and Indices

The Office of the Public Records Administrator issues this Statement under the authority granted by *Connecticut General Statutes* Secs. 11-8, 11-8a, 7-24, 7-25, and 1-9.

This Statement is being issued to clarify questions received by this Office regarding the requirements for maintaining land records on paper and microfilm. Many towns are now using approved imaging systems to record and manage their land records. Regardless of the use of such systems, the requirements for ongoing maintenance of paper and microfilm copies remain unchanged.

Land records and indices must be maintained in paper format. As stated in *General Letter* 2001-1, "Standards for the Use of Imaging Technology for Storage, Retrieval, and Disposition of Public Records," an electronic imaging system is permitted only if it meets given standards and "provides for a human-readable copy that is either microfilm or paper." In the case of land records and indices, which are permanent public records, the paper format remains a required component at this time. As stated in *General Letter* 2001-1, disposal authorizations for public records reformatted on a computer-based system are granted only for records having a retention period of ten years or less. To date, the Public Records Administrator has not approved a land recording system that does not provide for both a paper and microfilm component.

Land records and indices must be produced in paper format within the time periods set forth by *Conn. Gen. Statutes* Secs. 7-24 and 7-25. A document left for record must be entered to the daybook within twenty-four hours and must be indexed within five days. It must be recorded within thirty days. To meet these deadlines, towns using electronic systems must set a printing schedule that produces, at minimum, a daybook each day; a collated month-to-date index each week of the current month; and a collated year-to-date index at each month's end. Recorded documents must be printed and placed

in land record books or volumes as soon as available and within the thirty-day period. The paper used for printing permanent records must be approved by the Public Records Administrator.

Land records and indices must be duplicated on microfilm. *Admin. Reg. 11-8-21(i)* requires the microfilming of maps and also refers to the microfilming of deeds, stating, "Security film of maps placed on file in the office of the town clerk shall be required and stored in a manner similar to security film of deeds." There must be a systematic program for microfilming all land records, in accordance with *General Letter 96-2*, "Required Minimum Microfilming Standards for Public Records," and microfilm security copies must be stored at an approved offsite location.

The protection of land records is central to the protection of Connecticut citizens' rights and interests. While electronic systems may improve efficiency in processing and accessing records, they do not ensure the long-term preservation of these records. Electronic systems rely on rapidly changing hardware, software and media for data access, while paper and microfilm provide human-readable formats with exceptionally long lifespans. Paper and microfilm are the accepted standards for preservation purposes. As permanent records, land records and indices must be maintained on paper and duplicated on microfilm. The combination of vault storage of paper records and approved offsite storage of microfilm duplicates provides the foundation for the permanent preservation of these important documents.