

**Florida League of Cities  
Cities of Excellence  
City Clerk of the Year Award**

Name: Helen Spencer  
Title: City Clerk  
Jurisdiction: City of Fort Walton Beach

Forty-one years ago, a young, energetic woman walked through the doors of the City of Fort Walton Beach City Hall. Today, City Clerk Helen Spencer arrives to work everyday with the same attitude, willingness and energy she did back in 1967.

As the clerk for the City of Fort Walton Beach, Mrs. Spencer holds the history of Fort Walton Beach in the palms of her hands, both figuratively and literally. As soon as you walk into her office, you are taken back in time by the pictures of yesteryear. Mrs. Spencer has seen Fort Walton Beach transform from a small little town on U.S. Highway 98 into a center piece of Florida's Emerald Coast.

As the City Clerk for the last 24 years, Mrs. Spencer manages a variety of functions, including the oversight of official City records, preparation for City elections, management of the City's leases and deeds, preparation of minutes and agenda packages for City Council and appointed boards and committee members and the destruction of certain documents in accordance with Florida Law.

Mrs. Spencer has introduced several new ideas and technologies to the City Clerk's job that have made her department more efficient. Starting in 2004, her staff began

converting City Council minutes, ordinances, and records to laser fiche. The City also began putting all City Council agendas and back-up materials on the City's website for public view prior to meetings. Now, City employees and citizens have better access to the records and meeting agendas through the hard drive and on the City's web site, [www.fwb.org](http://www.fwb.org). Citizen access to public records is a high priority of Mrs. Spencer, and she understands that new technology is the key to better access.

In addition to her duties with the City's public records, Mrs. Spencer also serves as an "agent" for the Mayor and City Council Members. She coordinates the appearances of elected officials on the City's monthly radio show and public access television program. The television program, *City Desk*, allows one staff member and one elected official the opportunity to discuss the staff member's department, upcoming events and other issues surrounding the City. When scheduling appearances, she matches timely issues to Council Members with specific interests in those areas and corresponding professional staff. For example, she matched a Council Member with a background in the Federal Bureau of Investigation with the Police Chief and a Council Member with an engineering background with the Utilities Department.

Mrs. Spencer is also the liaison for the Mayor and Council Members between the Florida League of Cities, the Northwest Florida League of Cities, and the Okaloosa County League of Cities. She coordinates special events for the Mayor and Council, such as the City's twilight holiday parade, the Memorial Day service, City ribbon cuttings and ground breakings and the Billy Bowlegs Pirates Festival.

Beginning in the early 1990s, Mrs. Spencer joins the Fort Walton Beach Chamber of Commerce each year, to plan the City's 4<sup>th</sup> of July celebration at the Fort Walton Landing. She held organizational meetings for the event beginning in January of each year. By the day of the event, every detail goes off without a glitch. Several years ago, Mrs. Spencer worked with a local developer to double the amount of fireworks at the celebration. Her goal was to make the event the "biggest and best" in the area. In addition to the fireworks, Mrs. Spencer lined up musical acts, dancers, and other forms of entertainment for the crowds. At this year's celebration, over 10,000 people, half the population of Fort Walton Beach, attended the celebration! While the City handed over the primary organization of the 4<sup>th</sup> of July celebration to the Fort Walton Beach Chamber of Commerce this year due to budget issues, Ms. Spencer is still holds a primary role in the planning and execution of the event.

As if all the work with the City's records, elected officials, and planning for the 4<sup>th</sup> of July Celebration isn't enough, Mrs. Spencer also coordinates the property sales in the City's Commerce and Technology Park, oversees the City's Special Events Committee, operates the sale of City logo items from the "City Store", keeps a scrap book of official events, and receives and processes all applications from citizens wishing to serve on one of the City's twelve advisory boards.

Dedicated to her community, Mrs. Spencer serves as the Vice President of the Sugar Beach Sertoma Club and is a member of the Beta Mu Master sorority. She has

participated on the Local Issues Committee and many other committees at the Greater Fort Walton Beach Chamber of Commerce. She is a Certified Municipal Clerk, a member of the International Institute of Municipal Clerks and the Florida Association of City Clerks.

With 41 years of service to the citizens of Fort Walton Beach, Mrs. Spencer truly possesses an extraordinary understanding and a unique perspective of the City's history. She is a committed, innovative and loyal employee of the City and is uniquely qualified for the "City Clerk of the Year" award.