

**MACOMB COUNTY CLERK & REGISTER OF DEEDS  
FRED MILLER**

**“100 DAY REPORT TO THE COMMUNITY”**

**April 17, 2019**

*“All this will not be finished in the first 100 days. Nor will it be finished in the first 1,000 days, nor in the life of this Administration, nor even perhaps in our lifetime on this planet. But let us begin.”*

-- President John F. Kennedy

After the Special Election for Macomb County Clerk & Register of Deeds was certified in November 2018, I assumed office and became the fifth individual to serve in this capacity in less than two years.

Predictably, helping the office achieve stability has been at the core of much of our work in the first 100 days. The Clerk & Register of Deeds team -- 90 members strong when fully-staffed -- is owed a debt of gratitude for the exceptional public service they have provided under terrific pressure and extraordinary circumstances. Their dedication continues to inspire me every day. I'm also grateful to the office's many partners who have worked to support the team during this period including the Office of the County Executive, the County Board of Commissioners, the Office of Corporation Counsel, the Finance, Facilities, I.T., and Human Resources Departments, and the Judges and Court Administration of the 16th Circuit Court, among others. We're also grateful to our "Blue and Gray Coat" security teams who work everyday to ensure our safety.

The following report to the community details some of the steps we have taken as a team to not only put the office on stable ground but position it for future excellence. Much of the work is ongoing by nature, as President Kennedy's quote above infers, but I am excited to report that significant progress has been and continues to be made to re-establish the Macomb County Clerk & Register of Deeds Office as a national leader in innovation and excellence. Nothing short of this goal is acceptable.

Respectfully,



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## **OVERVIEW**

**90 team members when fully-staffed**

**\$6.7 million General Fund budget for Fiscal Year 2019**

**4 divisions in 3 buildings**

**Court Section:** servicing the 16th Circuit Court in Mount Clemens including Jury Room, Records, and Court Clerk staff (located within Circuit Court Building 40 N. Main Street)

**Vital Records:** Birth and Death Records, Marriage Licenses, Concealed Pistol Licenses, Notary Publics, Veterans ID cards, DBA Business Registrations (located within Talmer Building 120 N. Main Street)

**Register of Deeds:** records documents pertaining to real estate such as deeds, mortgages, liens, etc. (located within Talmer Building 120 N. Main Street)

**Elections:** administers campaign finance laws for local candidates and committees; works with local clerks in administering elections (located within Clemens Center 32 Market Street)

**101,119 total visits to Clerk/ Register of Deeds Office in 2018**

40% Vital Records (39,984)

33% Register of Deeds (33,834)

27% Court (27,301)

Totals do not include online transactions or visits to the Elections Department, which oversees **645** active campaign committees

Register of Deeds recorded **141,626** filings in 2018



## **IMMEDIATE ISSUES (1 of 2)**

### **ACTIVE COMMUNICATION WITH STAKEHOLDERS & PARTNERS**

We immediately re-established communication with key stakeholders and partners to define expectations, identify areas of needed improvement as well as future opportunities for collaboration including the Treasurer, Finance Department, Court Administration and Chief Judge Biernat, IT Department, HR/LR, Corporation Counsel, among others.

Conversations with Oakland County Clerk Lisa Brown and Washtenaw County Clerk Larry Kestenbaum have provided invaluable insight into the workings of peer counties' Clerk/ RoD Offices.

### **RESOLVING EXPIRED CONTRACTS & UNPAID VENDORS**

In November 2018, three software/ database platforms that organize workflow and data within the Register of Deeds and Vital Records sections had been operating under expired contracts for eight months.

Working with the Office of the County Executive and Board of Commissioners, we negotiated and received approval of contract extensions and facilitated payment of all past due bills as well as timely payments going forward. The extensions afforded us the time necessary to assess department needs and determine next steps, which included issuing an RFP for replacement in two instances and decommissioning a platform in the other.

### **CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE ASSESSMENT & REVIEW**

We recognize that the customers we serve -- members of the public, businesses, other county departments and public entities -- deserve to be treated with respect. Everyone's time and resources are valuable and we strive to put them at the center of what we do.



## **IMMEDIATE ISSUES (2 of 2)**

### **CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE ASSESSMENT & REVIEW (cont'd)**

This started with a top-to-bottom assessment of how customers interact with the office and has resulted in:

- Updated customer service kiosks in courthouse and Talmer Building lobbies for more efficient flow and a more intuitive experience for customers. This has included refreshed signage in both locations and relocating kiosks at Talmer for a more streamlined experience
- Refreshed website to be more intuitive for accessing needed services
- Review and correction of various on-line representations of office services, location, hours, etc. including retiring outdated forms and updating outdated information
- Establishment of social media channels to more broadly communicate about available services
- Reworking office phone system to expedite service and prioritize contact with live responses (ongoing effort)
- Re-established email communications through Gov-Delivery platform to customers who have signed up for issue-specific updates

The newly-refurbished Jury Room provides a comfortable space for citizens as they wait to be called for service. We have updated and refined the portals used by jurors to complete their required surveys and continue to look for ways to engage the estimated **15,000** people who serve in this capacity each year.



## **PERSONNEL**

With five administrations in less than two years and the highly-publicized turmoil of 2017-2018, it is an understatement that the employees of the Clerk and Register of Deeds Office have endured a lot. The toll of this tumultuous period was evidenced by a deteriorated morale, loss of many valuable employees to early retirement and/ or transfer, the lack of up-to-date job manuals and descriptions, among other things.

The Clerk & Register of Deeds team -- 90 members strong when fully-staffed -- is owed a debt of gratitude for the exceptional public service they have provided under terrific pressure and extraordinary circumstances. Their dedication continues to inspire me every day. We have worked throughout the first 100 days to strengthen the team and foster a more positive environment through:

- Face-to-face meetings with every Team Member
- Bi-weekly Leadership Team meetings with Supervisors and Deputies to highlight challenges, flag urgent issues, and celebrate successes including Team Members who have exhibited exemplary service; this has helped increase communication between divisions and has been an important forum for team problem-solving
- New Office Policies and Guidelines were instituted to provide clarity on expectations for entire Team; the document was developed through a deliberately collaborative process which allowed for Team Member comments and suggestions before implementation; includes regular professional development meetings with all Team Members
- New "Clerk's Corner" Intranet platform to enhance communication and provide easy access to foundational Office documents including Office Policies, phone lists, job manuals, forms, and forums for feedback, among other things
- All divisions have begun to collect, assess, review and update all job manuals and notes; once complete, documents will exist as reference on Intranet and help standardize training and accountability (ongoing)



## FINDING COST SAVINGS

Over \$400K in projected savings to the County General Fund and the Automation Fund in first year alone; over \$33K already realized.

ACTUAL SAVINGS			
Item	Yearly Savings	Monthly Savings	100 Days Total Savings
Google Cloud Storage	\$119.88	\$9.99	\$39.96
Click-A-Tel Texting	\$83.40	\$6.95	\$27.80
Avenu Vital Records Savings	\$5,760.00	\$480.00	\$480.00
Avenu Register of Deeds Savings	\$42,259.80	\$3,521.65	\$3,521.65
SuperIndex Savings	\$351,168.00	\$29,264.00	\$29,264.00
<b>100 Days Total Savings</b>			<b>\$33,333.41</b>
PROJECTED SAVINGS			
Item	Yearly Savings	Monthly Savings	
Google Cloud Storage	\$119.88	\$9.99	
Click-A-Tel Texting	\$83.40	\$6.95	
Avenu Vital Records Savings	\$5,760.00	\$480.00	
Avenu Register of Deeds Savings	\$42,259.80	\$3,521.65	
SuperIndex Savings	\$351,168.00	\$29,264.00	
PayPal	\$300.00	\$25.00	
J2 eFax Bindovers Faxing	\$1,783.20	\$148.60	
J2 eFax Fax Filing Faxing	\$1,200.00	\$100.00	
register.com Vital Records Faxing	\$119.99	\$10.00	
register.com File Room Faxing	\$119.99	\$10.00	
register.com Court Faxing	\$119.99	\$10.00	
register.com Bindovers Faxing	\$119.99	\$10.00	
register.com Jury Room Faxing	\$119.99	\$10.00	
Bank of America (Register of Deeds)	\$479.40	\$39.95	
Bank of America (Clerk's Office)	\$719.40	\$59.95	
1&1 Web Hosting	\$131.88	\$10.99	
<b>Yearly Total Savings</b>	<b>\$404,604.91</b>		<b>\$404,604.91</b>



## PERFORMANCE METRICS

Separate and distinct from volume metrics, some of which are highlighted on page 2 of this report, performance metrics indicate in quantifiable ways how well the team is meeting the needs of our customers, including:

- 3 business-day median turnaround on e-filing cases at Circuit Court (civil cases)
- 3 business-day median turnaround of LEIN entries (entries into the Law Enforcement Information Network)
- 1 business-day median turnaround of “abstract” entries (judgements affecting Driver’s License status)
- 1 business-day median turnaround of “bindover” entries (referral of criminal cases from district courts)
- 7 day “mail back” for Register of Deeds’ filings (amount of time for certified copies to be processed and mailed back to filers)
- A comparable sample of all Clerk’s Office customers served between the first two weeks of April in 2018 and the first two weeks of April in 2019 shows that **average customer wait times have dropped over two minutes**
  - All customers:           2018 5:49                   2019 3:31
  - Court File Room:       2018 9:21                   2019 4:17
  - Court Section           2018 14:28                 2019: 5:40
  - CPL                       2018 3:48                   2019 2:40
  - Marriage                 2018 3:50                   2019 2:49

In early April, a data migration performed by an outside vendor caused a one week delay in electronic recordings (ERX) being transmitted to the Register of Deeds office. When the data was finally sent, the team faced a one-week backlog of filings, on top of regular filings and dutifully **processed 1,151 documents in one day** to maintain continuity of service.



## **COMMUNITY OUTREACH**

We have reinstated the Clerk's Mobile Office program which brings Clerk and Register of Deeds services to communities throughout Macomb County:

- Romeo -- 42-1 District Court (April 3)
- Warren -- Dorothy Busch Branch Warren Library (April 18)
- Richmond -- Richmond Community Schools Administration Building (May 9)
- St. Clair Shores -- City Council Chambers (May 30)
- and many more being planned

Clerk Miller and team have attended no less than 24 public events throughout the community to promote services available through the Clerk's Office, including:

- Congressman Andy Levin Town Hall at Lincoln High School
- Washington Township Board of Trustees meeting
- Bruce Township Board of Trustees meeting
- Clinton Township State of the Township
- Cub Scouts Pack 95 Yacks Elementary L'Anse Creuse Schools
- L'Anse Creuse Community Coalition "Dialogue Day"
- March is Reading Month events in Clintondale Schools, Eastpointe Schools, and L'Anse Creuse Schools
- Governor Whitmer/ Mayor Bloomberg opioid grant announcement in Eastpointe
- Clinton Township Police Honor Guard
- BSA Troop 1489 Eagle Scout Court of Honor at VFW Bruce Post in St. Clair Shores
- Greater Metropolitan Association of Realtors
- Macomb Community College Voter Education training



## **OTHER**

- Clerk's Crime L.A.B. (LEIN, Abstracts, and Bindovers) - Under the direction of Chief Deputy Clerk Sheila Miller, an internal team has been formed, cross-trained on specialty entries that require interaction with law enforcement, Secretary of State, and district courts partners
- Clerk Fred Miller received LEIN & Bureau of Elections Election Administrator trainings
- Oversaw safe and successful evacuation of the Talmer Building staff and public due to a burst pipe (January 28, 2019)
- Performed a requested recount in Village of Romeo Clerk election (November 2018)
- Worked with AFSCME and County HR to post security personnel at Talmer Building
- Resolved issue flagged during Financial Audit of previous elected Clerk's tenure to update internal controls for access to and deposit into county bank accounts, increasing security of taxpayer funds
- Replaced outdated server that housed citizens' Vital Records data (birth and death records, marriage licenses, CPL's, etc.) to enhance the security of data and protect citizens' private information
- Clerk Miller has refused the perks of a taxpayer-funded county car, the replacement stipend, and mileage reimbursement



## **NEXT STEPS**

- Currently undergoing a Request for Proposal for replacements for both Vital Records and Register of Deeds platforms to allow for easier access to records, reduced customer wait time, enhanced data security, budget savings, and more efficient workflow
- The Google-powered SuperIndex, which has provided free search capability for real estate documents, was decommissioned in March 2019. Because of larger changes within Google, this platform was no longer supported and the cost to extend the SuperIndex in its current form is cost prohibitive. As noted above, we are currently in the process of receiving and vetting proposals for replacement. Recognizing the impact this change on SuperIndex users, we have proactively communicated through email, website, and other channels and are actively working toward offering additional alternatives
- Designating a Senior Advocate within the department to coordinate communication with and provide special assistance to older residents
- In coordination with the Treasurer's Office, we are preparing to introduce a new campaign finance protocol to address both existing and future campaign finance violations, increase transparency for the public about the sources and expenditure of funds in political campaigns, better enforce campaign finance law, and increase cooperation and communication between county departments
- We are preparing a roll-out of a new online campaign finance reporting system
- Educate voters about the changes in voting as a result of the passage of Proposal 3 of 2018 including same-day voter registration and "Vote @ Home" no-reason absentee voting

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