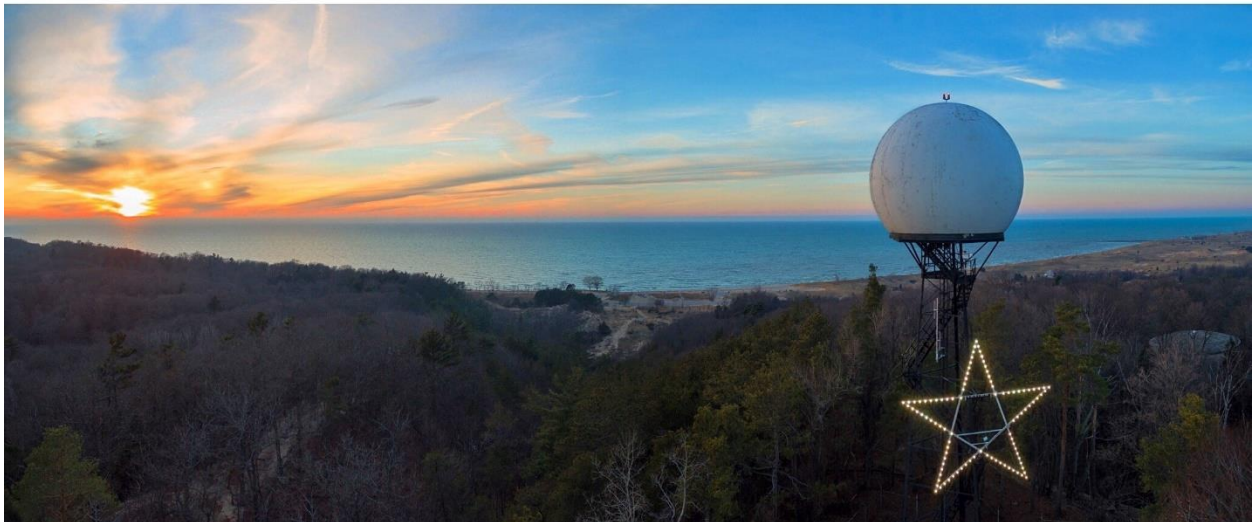


**ANNUAL REPORT FOR 2019**  
from the  
**ALLEGAN COUNTY CLERK AND REGISTER OF DEEDS**  
**BOB GENETSKI**  
respectfully submitted  
**TO THE ALLEGAN COUNTY BOARD OF**  
**COMMISSIONERS**



*Saugatuck's Mount Baldhead in the evening at Christmas Time. Photo by Jeff Zita of Saugatuck*



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The Offices of the Allegan County Clerk and Register of Deeds are located at:

The County Courthouse  
113 Chestnut Street  
Allegan, MI 49010

And can be reached by phone: (269) 673-0450 for Vital Records, 673-3290 for Elections

(269) 673-0300 for Circuit Court Records

(269) 673-0390 for Register of Deeds



Thursday, February 27, 2020

Chairman Storey and Honorable Allegan County Commissioners Thiele, Jessup, Cain, Dugan, DeYoung, and Kapenga:

On behalf of Chief Deputy Clerk Jackie Porter, Chief Deputy Register Patricia Fales and our entire team of hardworking professionals in the Office of the County Clerk and the Register of Deeds, it my pleasure to present to you the *Annual Report for 2019* covering both the Offices.

I am extremely proud of the many big challenges we accomplished during the year in review in service to the people of Allegan County. Though it is hard to choose one advance over another, the addition of the new records system- a goal going back nearly a decade- represents a monumental accomplishment in what we can now offer our taxpayers in expanded services.

In the Circuit Court Records Division of the Clerk's Office, our talented deputy clerks did awesomely in 2019. Staff ensured that all aspects of the 48th Circuit Court workload continued to flow efficiently despite higher caseloads and a lot of new customers all the while working through a major office renovation (with our special thanks to Allegan County Facilities).

It was an "off-year" for elections, but somehow the Elections Division kept quite busy as this year was the first full year of managing the new provisions of election law under Proposal 18-3. As well, the Division had to manage the controversial recount of a school Bond issue vote.

Gentlemen, while this report contains many graphs, numbers and charts of events and issues handled by our employees, I pray that you look beyond the numbers and know that Allegan County is truly blessed in the dedicated deputies that go the extra mile every day at 113 Chestnut Street to ensure that our customers feel respected and cared about. No statistics will properly demonstrate the concern our staff shows for THE PEOPLE OF ALLEGAN COUNTY day in and day out. I hope you enjoy the report.

Sincerely,



Bob Genetski - Allegan County Clerk - Register of Deeds

# Office of the Register of Deeds

By Law, the Register of Deeds is the “keeper of Public Record” for land documents. The recording of a document with this office does not make the document legal. The action of recording makes the document public.

## Division Overview

The Register of Deeds Division records all documents pertaining to real property including deeds: mortgages, liens, power of attorneys, certificates of trust; federal, state, and MESC tax liens; master deeds and plats; sheriff’s deeds and redemption certificates.

The hardworking deputies in the Register’s Office must be familiar with more than 200 different types of legal documents and the unique statutes for recording each of them. Our staff works closely with attorneys, real estate agents, banks, title agencies and the public. The number one goal is to provide customer service – polite, professional, accurate and timely.

Register of Deeds Office Quick Facts-

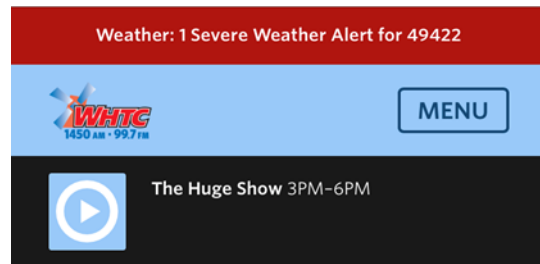
Chief Deputy Register: Patty Fales

FTE’s: Four (with a combined 95 years of expertise in recording)

Money Collected for 2019 (including State Transfer Tax): \$6,092,395.60

Total Documents Recorded in 2019: 22,927

Records available: From 1835 to present



News ▶ Local

## More Allegan County Records Online

Allegan County Clerk and Register of Deeds Bob Genetski announced a new record system that he says will shorten wait times for residents and expand services for his office.

Thursday, August 01, 2019 5:30 a.m. EDT

The Register’s Office had a big year in 2019 in upgrading technology to better serve our constituents. After a multi-year search for a new land records system, the contract was awarded to Kofile Technologies of Dallas, Texas. Deputies in the Office worked with Allegan County Information Services and the contractor while implementing and training on *County Fusion*.

The new technology has increased the speed of work in the office and added the long awaited service of an online searchable database for land records that allows customers to search on the Internet and purchase copies of records 24 hours a day from any location with internet service. The online searchable database has been the number one most requested service by our customers for many years, and Register of Deeds Office is very excited to be able to provide it.

(Register of Deeds Division Overview - Continued)

**Allegan County Register of Deeds**  
Bob Genetski

**Allegan County Register Online Services**

**Welcome!** Our Online Services provide a convenient and centralized way to access documents recorded in our office. You have the ability to search records and view document images.

Please login to website using the fields to the right, either via the Login as Guest/Public Button or the username and password if you are a credentialed user.

Additional information about the site is available once you login.

**Bob Genetski, Register**  
Allegan County Register of Deeds  
113 Chestnut Street  
Allegan, MI 49010  
Phone: [269-673-0390](tel:269-673-0390)

Public users please log in here.  
[Login as Public](#)

Registered users please log in here.  
Username:   
Password:   
[Forgot Password?](#) | [Need Help?](#)  
[Login](#) [Clear](#)

Build: 1053 191212\_0745\_A19\_JUN  
©All rights reserved, Allegan County

Powered By **KOFILE** TECHNOLOGIES

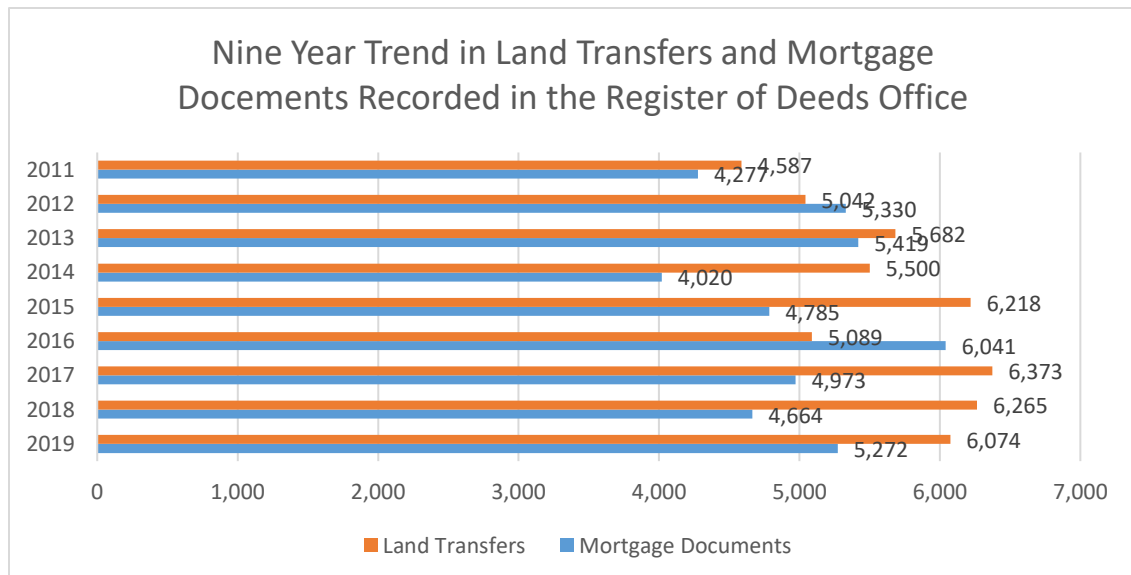
The new webpage that now allows the public to search land records online.

The new online service allows members of the public to login as public and to then search and purchase many recorded documents by simply using a credit card to make a one-time purchase.

For best results, current web browser versions are always recommended. JavaScript must be enabled to utilize the site. If you are having difficulty, please ensure that you have installed all available software and security updates.

Document Recording:

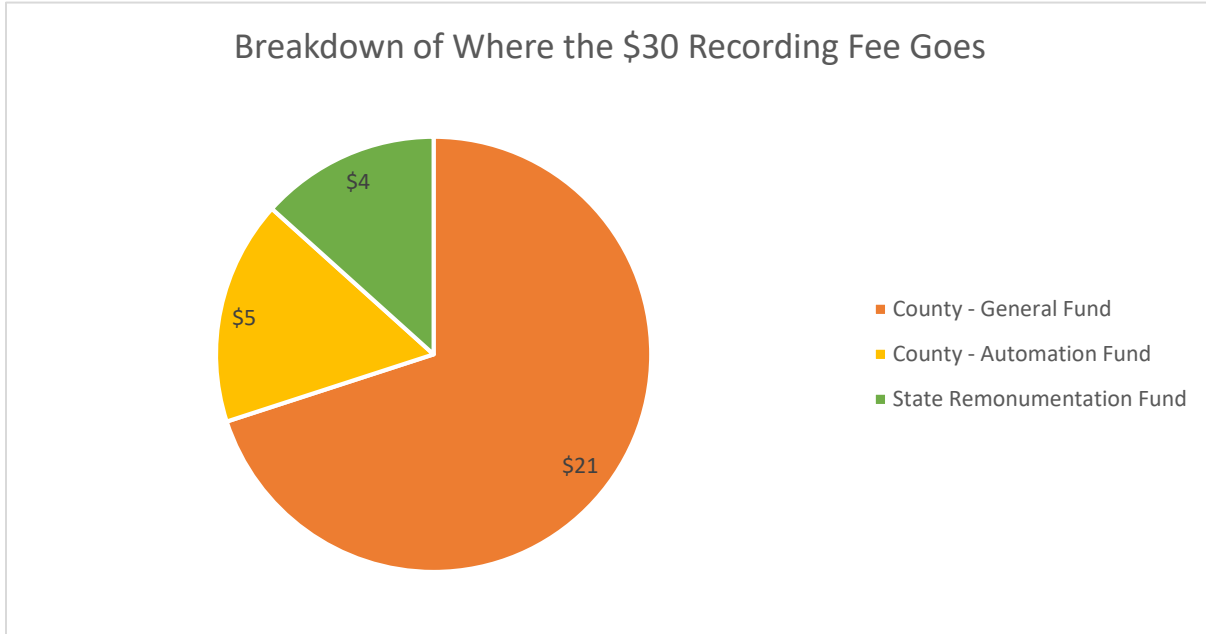
*Trends in Documents Recorded:* The total number of documents recorded in ROD dropped from 2018 to 2019 from 23,159 to 22,927- meaning that 232 fewer documents were recorded during the latter. At the same time, land transfers dropped by 191 documents while mortgage documents recorded saw an increase of 608 from 4,664 to 5,272. Over the last nine years, total documents recorded in the Office



range from a high of 28,422 (2012) to a low 23,073 in 2014.

(Register of Deeds Office – Continued)

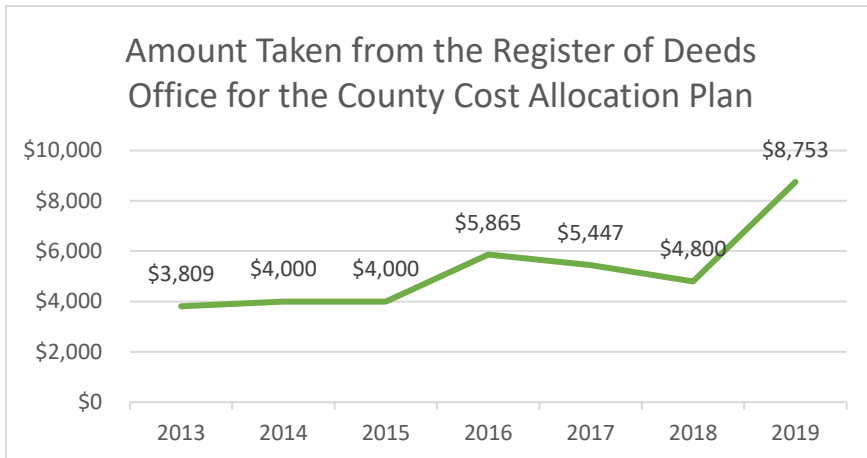
**\$\$\$ Where the Money Goes \$\$\$** - *BREAKING DOWN THE RECORDING FEES*: With each document recorded at the Register of Deeds, the Office collects \$30\*. Of that amount, the County General Fund receives \$21, while \$5 of that goes to the Automation Fund (for upgrading technology in the Register’s Office). The Remaining \$4 goes to the State Remonumentation Fund.



\*The \$30 recording fee was implemented October 1<sup>st</sup>, 2016 after being increased by the State Legislature. Prior to that, the fee of \$14 was broken down to the same three sources at \$5, \$5, and \$4 allocations.

**SEVEN YEAR TREND OF DEPOSITS MADE TO THE REGISTER OF DEEDS AUTOMATION FUND:**

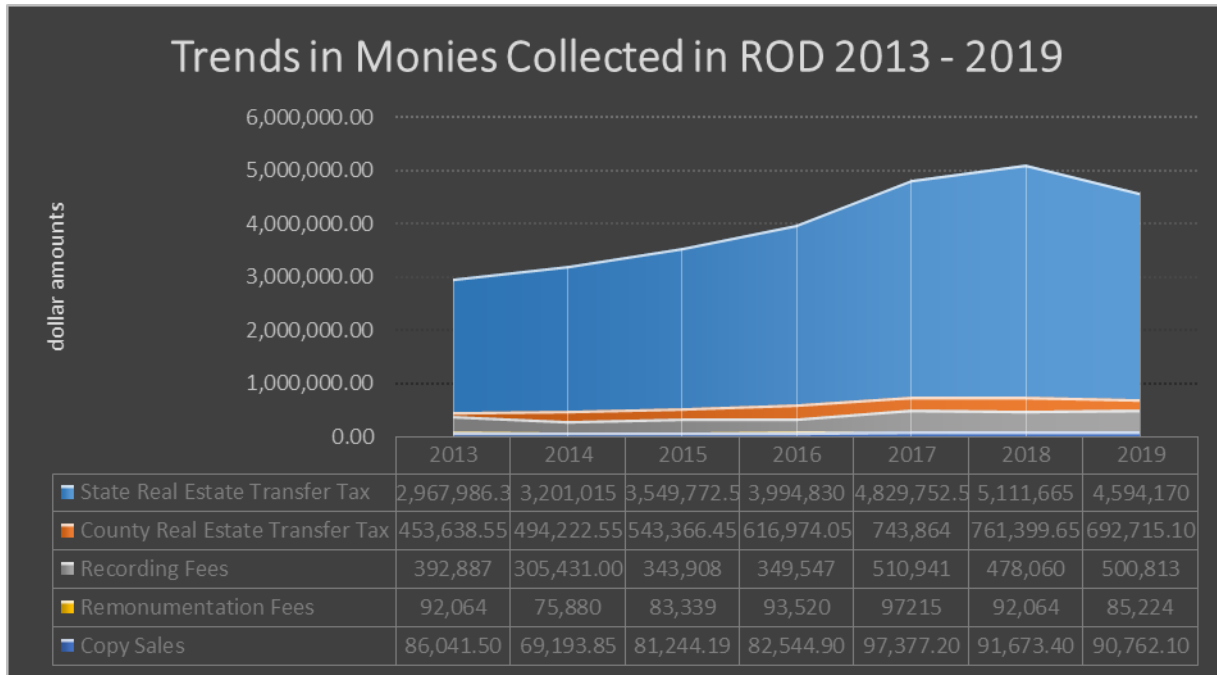
Year	2019	2018	2017	2016	2015	2014	2013
Amount Deposited	\$114,450	\$115,050	\$121,255	\$118,321	\$115,082	\$108,507	\$134,580



**SEVEN YEAR TREND IN MONIES DEDUCTED FROM THE AUTOMATION FUND TO COVER COUNTY COST ALLOCATION PLAN:** Since 2013, the Register of Deeds Automation Fund has sent a total of \$32,150 to cover rent, door security, and overhead at the Courthouse Building.

(Register of Deeds Office – Continued)

*Trends in Monies Collected in the Register of Deeds Office from 2013 – 2019 (not including passports)*



Interestingly, although the number of documents recorded was down by 232, the amount of monies collected in 2019 for recording fees increased from \$478,060 in 2018 to \$500,813. The amounts of State and County Real Estate Transfer Tax taken in declined slightly. State Real Estate Transfer Tax receipts dropped from \$5,111,665 (2018) to \$4,594,170 during 2019. During the same time period County Real Estate Transfer Tax collected declined to \$692,715.10 from \$761,399.65 the previous year – the 2018 amount signifying the highest amount of real estate taxes taken in by the County with the lowest amount being \$453,638.55 of 2013.

**Definitions-**

State Real Estate Transfer Tax: collected on all deeds recorded and sent to the State of Michigan.

County Real Estate Transfer Tax: collected on all deeds recorded and sent to the County General Fund.

Recording Fees: collected on every document recorded (of the nearly 200 hundred different types of documents) most of which goes to the County and a small portion going to the state (see pie graph on the previous page for breakdown).

Remonumentation Fees: collected on every document recorded (with the exception of State Liens, Federal Liens, County Treasurer documents and MESC Liens) and sent to the state for the cost of surveying land corners. These monies are collected as part of the \$30 recording fee.

Copy Sales: collected on each document- \$1 per page and \$.20 per image (bulk sale to two title companies).

(Register of Deeds Office – Continued)

**PASSPORT SERVICES:**



The Register of Deeds Office helped customers from Allegan County (and beyond) to obtain their United States Passport by accepting 349 Passport Applications in 2019.

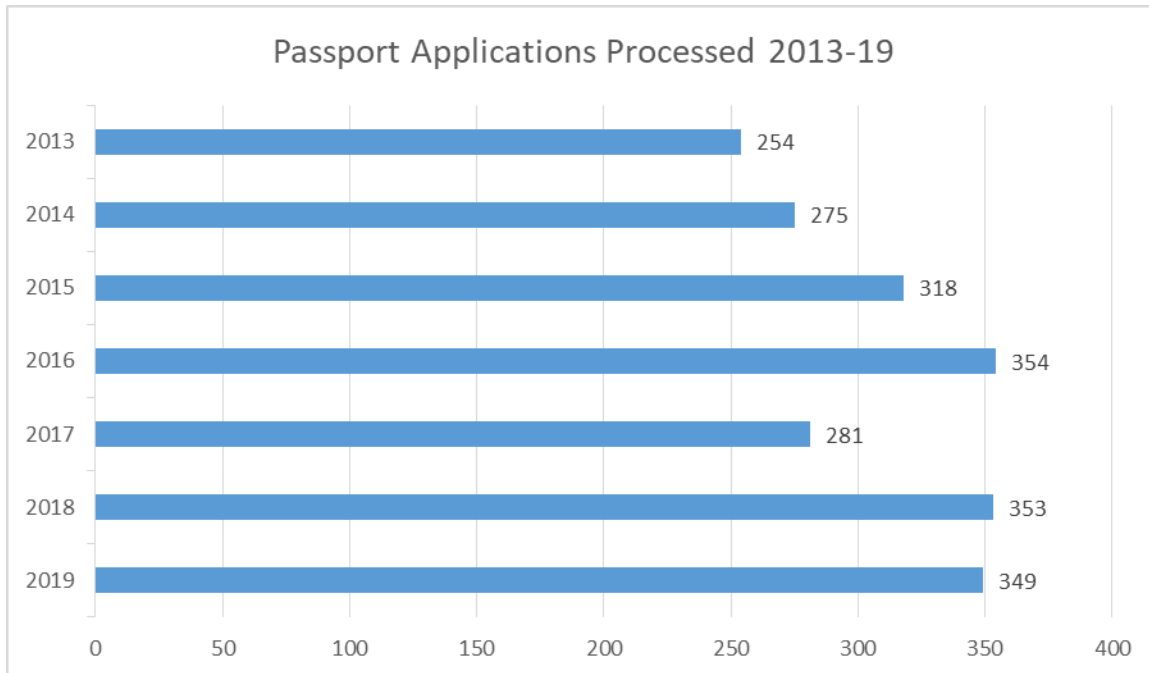
The fee for obtaining a routine passport through the office is \$145 (which was \$135 until a mandated increase by the federal government that went into effect in April 2018).

With the change, \$110 of the total goes to the U.S.

Department of State while the \$35 is collected by the Register of Deeds Office and goes into the County General Fund.

Blank application forms are available in the office or online and in addition to the check or money order, a customer will want to bring in a valid photo ID and supporting documents (such as a birth certificate). The Register of Deeds Office is pleased to offer passport size photos taken in the Office for initial applications for \$10. Customers may still bring their own passport size photos if they wish.

*Seven Year Trend in Passport Applications:*



*In 2019, deputy registers helped 349 visitors apply for Passports. The number is four fewer than in 2018 and five fewer than the Office’s high of 354 applications reached in 2016. The Register’s Office has been performing this service since 2013. Prior to that the service was offered through the Vital Records Division of the County Clerk’s Office.*

*The lowest number of applications received in the last seven years was 254 attained in 2013.*



(Register of Deeds Office - Passport Services Continued)

*Revenues to the County General Fund from Passport Applications (at a rate of \$35 per application since April 2<sup>nd</sup> 2018; prior to the increase the County earned \$25 per application):*

YEAR	Applications	Revenue to the County	Revenue at \$35/\$25*
2019	349	\$12,215	\$12,215
2018	353	\$ 8,925	\$8,925/\$2,450*
2017	281	\$ 7,025	\$ 7,025*
2016	354	\$ 8,850	\$ 8,850*
2015	318	\$ 7,950	\$ 7,950*
2014	275	\$ 6,875	\$ 6,875*
2013	254	\$ 6,350	\$ 6,350*

In addition to revenues from Passport Applications, the Office also took in \$1,690 for taking Passport photos in 2019. This is up from \$710 for photos in 2018.



REAL ID IS COMING SOON... AS IF THERE WERE NOT ALREADY A LOT OF GOOD REASONS TO GET A PASSPORT, a U.S. Passport is considered valid documentation to obtain REAL ID- compliant Driver's License. Beginning October 1, 2020, Michigan residents (and all travelers) will need to present a REAL ID- compliant Identification card to fly

within the United States and enter certain federal facilities under federal law.

Each deputy in the Register of Deeds Office is annually certified as a Passport Acceptance Agent by the United States Department of State.

The Office offers Passport Services from 8:00 AM and 4:30 PM Monday through Friday.

Unlike our competition, there is no appointment necessary.

These appointments take between 20 and 30 minutes provided the applicant has all of his or her necessary documentation.



(Register of Deeds Office – Continued)

### Centennial Farms and the Register of Deeds Office:

As the number one agricultural producing county in the state, Allegan County is blessed with many families that have been tilling the land for generations. Allegan County families that have farmed the same land for 100 years or more will want to visit the Register of Deeds Office for a copy of the deed or mortgage documents that show the history of the property & ownership of the working farm. This is the documentation the Historical Society of Michigan will request for the Michigan Centennial Farm Program.



Questions on Centennial Farms? Contact the Historical Society of Michigan at (517) 324-1828 or by email at [farms@hsmichigan.org](mailto:farms@hsmichigan.org).

### Farmland and Open Space Preservation Applications:

Under Public Act 116 of 1975, Allegan County Farm owners can enroll their land in the *Farmland and Open Space Preservation Program*. The Trend in applications recorded in the Register of Deeds Office under PA 116 are listed by year below:

#### Year / Number of Applications Recorded

2019 / 103

2018 / 123

2017 / 127\*

2016 / 48

2015 / 110

2014 / 38\*\*

\*= six year high

\*\*=six year low



Bob Genetski detasseling corn.

# Office of the County Clerk

## CIRCUIT COURT RECORDS

### Division Overview

The Circuit Court Records Division of the Clerk's Office is the fundamental access point to the 48th Circuit Court for all parties in a civil, criminal or Family Court matter. This office is where customers have their first interaction with the court system. The talented deputy clerks work



hard to make any experience at our window as seamless and pleasant as possible by providing access to public court records and by answering questions regarding procedures, access to court related resources, Friend of the Court, the Public Defender's Office and the Legal Assistance Center.

The Office is also the point of entry for those called to Circuit Court jury duty.

This Division's services include processing documents necessary to initiate new cases filed with the



THE CIRCUIT COURT RECORDS DIVISION PROCESSED 942 JURORS FOR JURY DUTY WITH THE 48<sup>TH</sup> CIRCUIT COURT IN 2019. THIS DUTY ENTAILS CHECKING IN JURORS, THE SELECTION PROCESS, AND ORCHESTRATING REIMBURSEMENTS FOR THEIR SERVICE. THE NUMBER OF JURORS PROCESSED NEARLY DOUBLED FROM 424 IN 2018.

Court as well as receiving, reviewing, and processing all documents pertaining to pending legal matters before the Court, pulling records for the scheduled hearings, and clerking in the courtroom. Our staff is friendly and polite – emphasizing customer service- knowing that many of the people who need our service might be navigating a complex legal system for the first time.

### Collection and Disbursement of Monies for the Court

The Clerk's Office is responsible for receipting in all payments for the 48th Circuit Court. This includes all statutorily mandated fees and court ordered fines, costs, restitution and juvenile delinquent fines for family court. These payments may be made at the Circuit Court Records window or online.

For 2019, the Circuit Court Records Division received \$210,500.72\* in collections for Adult Cases and disbursed \$188,739.18\*\* to crime victims. At the same time, collections from Juveniles was \$15,474.47 while \$24,654.96 was forwarded by the office to crime victims.

\* The \$210,500.72 is the second highest amount collected by Office in the last five years.

\*\* The \$188,739.18 is the second highest amount dispersed in the last five years.

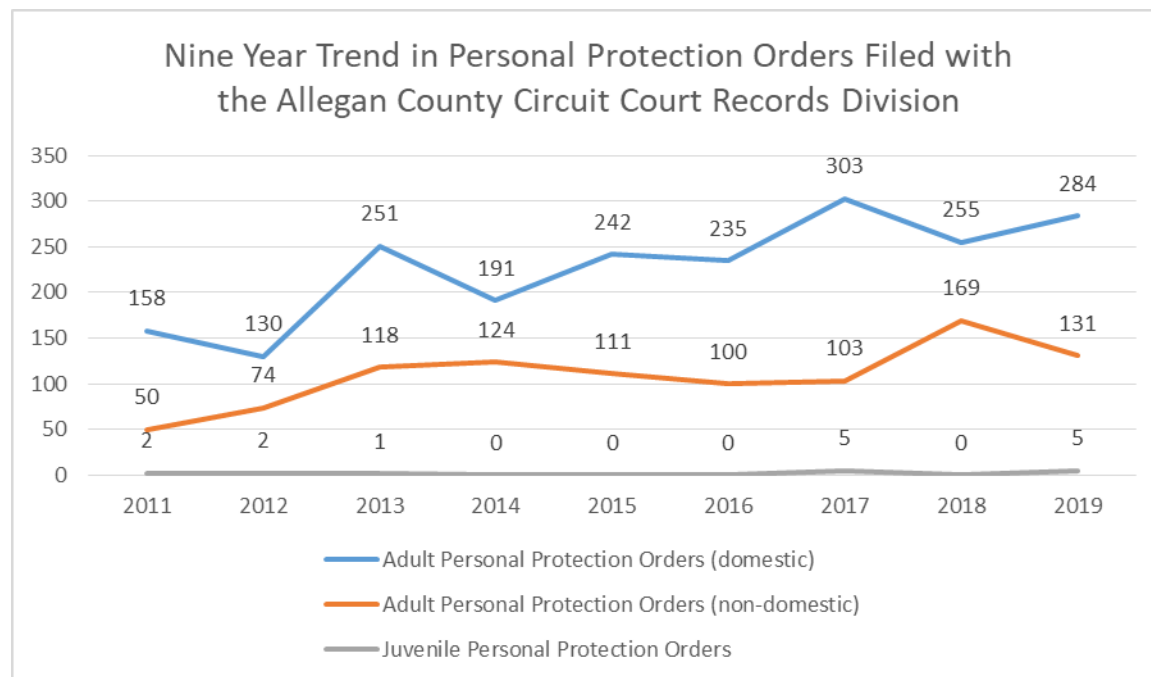
(Circuit Court Records Division – Collections and Disbursement of Monies)

Restitution Payments- Collections/Disbursements

Type		2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
Adult	Beginning Balance:	\$16,964.20	\$17,990.13	\$10,394.26	\$2,337.46	\$29,515.73
	Collections:	\$113,272.40	\$124,020.00	\$245,026.56	\$186,124.09	\$210,500.72
	Total:	\$130,236.60	\$142,010.13	\$255,420.82	\$188,461.55	\$240,016.45
	<b>Dispersed to Victims:</b>	<b>\$116,469.11</b>	<b>\$131,856.73</b>	<b>\$253,083.30</b>	<b>\$185,945.82</b>	<b>\$188,739.18</b>
Juvenile	Beginning Balance:	\$49,607.55	\$43,119.45	\$7,922.64	\$7,729.07	\$16,718.87
	Collections:	\$18,217.69	\$17,507.67	\$15,029.98	\$24,125.67	\$15,474.47
	Total:	\$67,735.24	\$60,627.12	\$22,952.62	\$31,854.74	\$32,193.34
	<b>Dispersed to Victims:</b>	<b>\$24,660.79</b>	<b>\$52,704.48</b>	<b>\$15,223.56</b>	<b>\$15,135.87</b>	<b>\$24,654.96</b>

**Personal Protection Orders**

Personal Protection Orders in Allegan County are filed with the deputy clerks in the Circuit Court Records Division. Unfortunately, 2019 saw the number of Adult PPO’s (domestic) increase to 284 over the 2018 total of 255. Also unfortunately, the number of Juvenile PPO’s increased to 5 (equally a nine year high) up from 0 in the previous reporting year. Personal Protection Orders in non-domestic situations declined, however, to from 169 in 2018 to 131 in 2019.



### **Reporting to State Agencies**

The Circuit Court Records Division is responsible for reporting all convictions of a felony, high court misdemeanor or probation violation to numerous state agencies. Depending on the situation, the Office might communicate with the Michigan Secretary of State, Michigan State Police, and/or the Michigan Department of Corrections. These reports help create accurate records for the public to access at the state level. In addition, all cases involving a motor vehicle are abstracted to the Secretary of State so that the state may take necessary actions to uphold the law and protect the citizens of Michigan.

### **Permanency Indicator Record**

Since 2015, the Circuit Court Records Division has prepared and submitted the Permanency Indicator Record to the State Court Administrator’s Office (SCAO). The information collected for this report will provide the circuit courts and the State Court Administrative Office with specific statistical information and data to determine compliance with statutes and court rules and to make management decisions about the effective and timely processing of child protective cases in order to achieve permanency for Michigan’s neglected and abused children. The Family Court along with the Clerk’s Office plays an integral role in permanence measures set by the State Court Administrator’s Office.

MIKE BUCK – CHIEF JUDGE OF PROBATE COURT  
“DESPITE THE OVERWHELMING CASELOADS THE CLERK’S OFFICE CONTENDS WITH, I CONTINUE TO RECEIVE EXCELLENT SERVICE FROM BOB’S STAFF. I AM ESPECIALLY APPRECIATIVE OF THE PERSONAL ATTENTION GIVEN TO OUR CITIZENS IN THE PROCESS OF ADOPTION. THESE ARE SOME OF THE FEW TYPES OF CASES WE CAN ALL JOIN IN THE CELEBRATION OF FAMILIES, AND WE DO.”

## CIRCUIT COURT RECORDS DIVISION QUICK FACTS

Chief Deputy Clerk: Jackie Porter

FTE’s: 6

Circuit Court Caseloads for:

2019 – 3,900  
2018 – 3,675  
2017 – 3,395  
2016 – 2,309

Circuit Court Records Provides the essential framework behind the scenes for the 48th Circuit Court by collecting and disbursing monies to many circuit court, county, state and private sector accounts involving:

Restitution, Attorney Fees, Bonds, Victim Rights Fund, Fines, State Minimum Costs, Filing Fees, Motion Fees, Jury Trial Fees, Garnishment & Subpoena Fees.

The Division serves as a pass through entity whereby restitution payments are collected and sent to victims of crimes. In 2019, \$213,394.14 dollars were collected by Circuit Court Records for disbursement.

The Division also processes adoptions.

(Circuit Court Records Division – Continued)

**Friend of the Court**

This Division interacts with the Friend of the Court as well. The Office processes family cases initiated by F.O.C. and can also attest a “true copy” of a Friend of the Court order.

**Adoptions**

*Trends in Adoptions in Allegan County:*

Year	2019	2018	2017	2016	2015	2014	2013	2012	2011
Adoptions	74	36	45	46	68	55	84	121	105

The adoption process in Allegan County begins in the Circuit Court Records Office. Deputy Clerks work with petitioning parents, Family Court, agencies and attorneys to facilitate the process. While all adoptions in Michigan are closed, once a year the Clerk’s Office participates in “National Adoption Day” during which families participate in a public ceremony at the Courthouse. This ceremony is one of the most moving and heartwarming events of the year anywhere in Allegan County.

Adoptions in Allegan County were up in 2019 to 74 from 36 in 2018 (a nine year low). The nine year high is 121 children adopted attained in 2012.



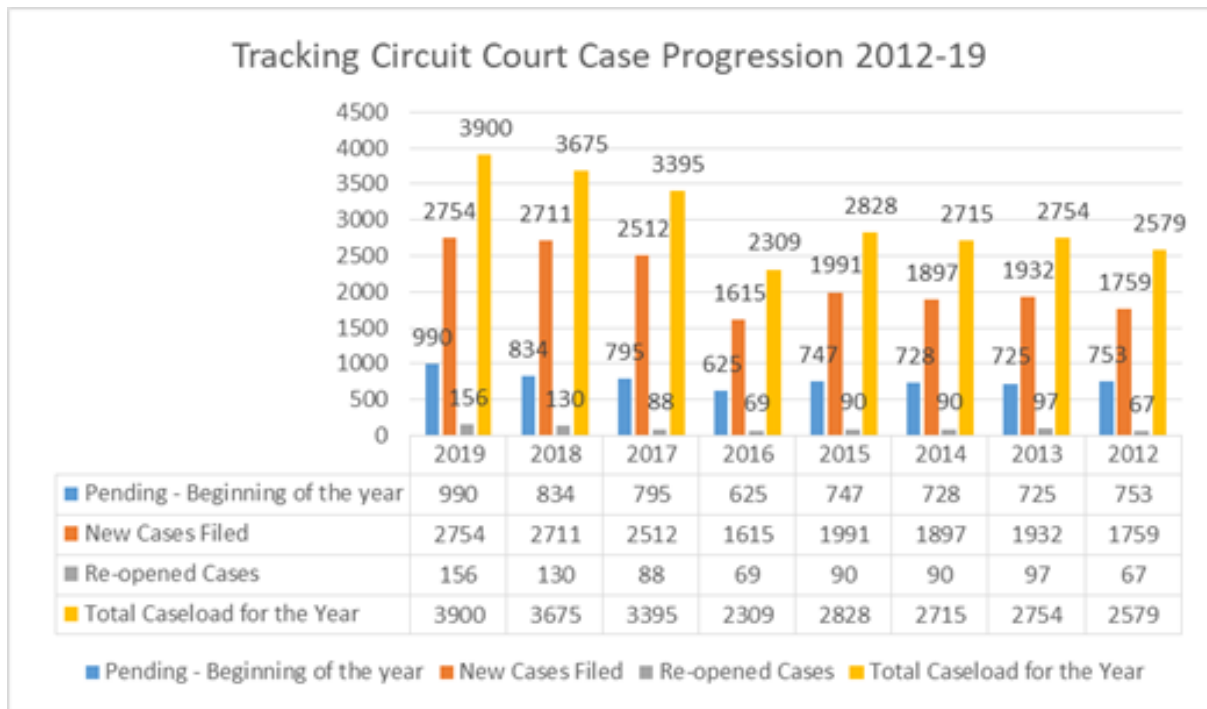
(Circuit Court Records Division – Continued)

*Trends in Family Court Filings (other than adoptions) in the Circuit Court Division:*

Year	2019	2018	2017	2016	2015	2014	2013	2012	2011
Juvenile or Neglect Cases	349	387	474	502	667	530	732	762	1,011

**Annual Report to the SCAO**

The Michigan State Court Administrator’s Office annually requests of all counties a caseload report that identifies important case data, such as the number of new cases filed each year as well as the age of each case from the initial filing date to the date of disposition. Each year, the Circuit Court Records Department helps prepare and submit this data to the state. The Clerk’s Office collaboratively works with the Circuit Court staff to review these statistics and improve upon the previous year’s data. Improvements to our procedures help to ensure that our residents are satisfied with their overall court experiences.



# VITAL RECORDS

## Division Overview

The Vital Records Division assists Allegan County residents with filing and obtaining birth certificates, marriage certificates, death certificates, and with genealogy research.

In addition, the Division assists with applications for Concealed Pistol Licenses (CPL's), the recording of home births, notary applications, business registrations (DBA's) and provides the free service of registering military discharge papers (otherwise known as DD 214's).

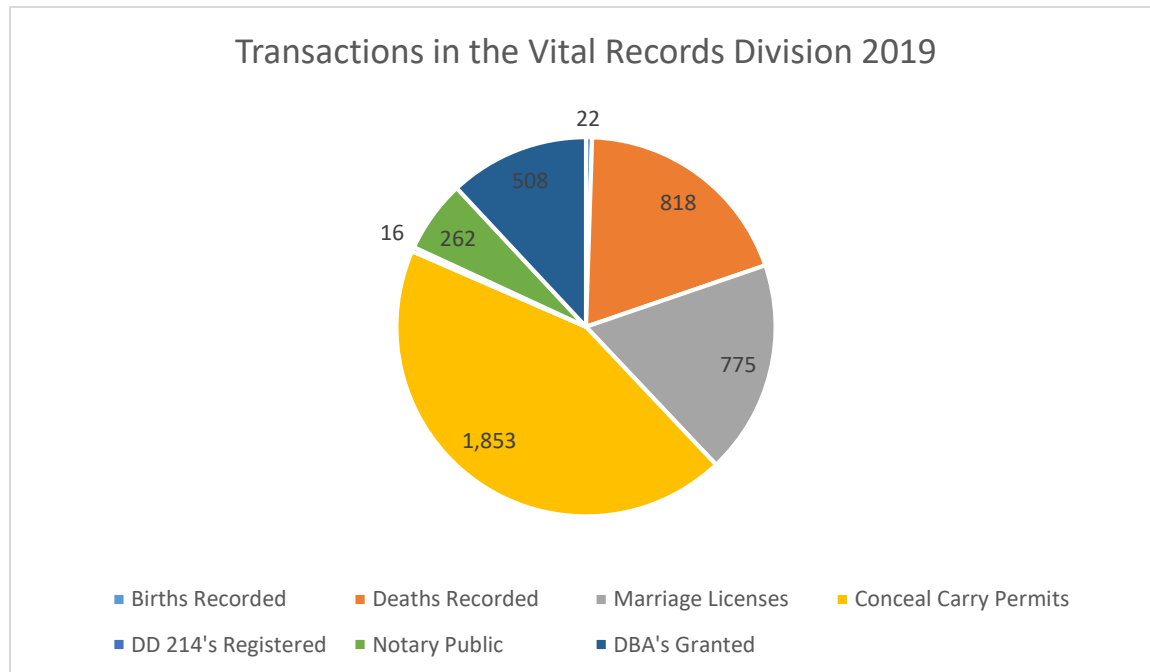
Certified copies of products can be obtained by visiting our office between 8 AM and 5 PM, Monday through Friday. If someone is unsure of a record, phoning first at (269) 673-0450 is never a bad idea. Application forms for many of our services can be found online at:

<http://cms.allegancounty.org/sites/Office/Clerk/VitalRecords/SitePages/Home.aspx>

Overall transactions in the Vital Records Division were down in 2019 as deputy clerks processed 4,254 versus 4,356 in 2018. Again, the largest number of transactions were Concealed Carry Permits as 1,853 were processed. While in 2018, the Office saw a 20 year record for marriage license applications issued, this year death certificates filed in Allegan County hit a record of 818. Death Certificates were 2<sup>nd</sup> to CPL's in the number processed through the Clerk's Office. At 775, the number of marriage license applications was third among all transactions handled by the office.

Year	Number of Transactions
2016	4,389
2017	4,210
2018	4,356
2019	4,254

DBA's (or Doing Business under an Assumed name filings) rebounded slightly when 508 were processed in 2019 following a seven year decline among constituents; DBA's were the 4<sup>th</sup> highest number of transactions. The number of Notary Public applicants increased to 262 – the highest number recorded since 2004. Home births accounted for just 22 of the Office's total transactions of 2019. There were only 16 DD 214's filed on the





(Vital Records Division – Continued)

Trends in Live Home Births



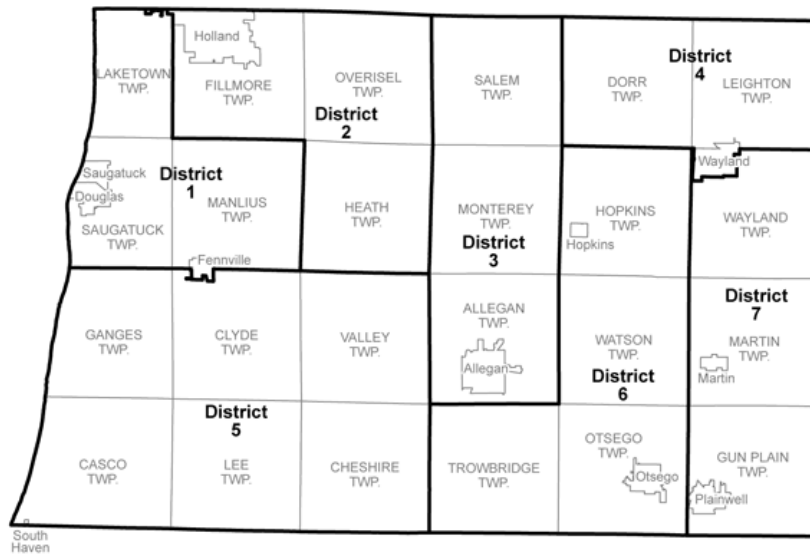
Since the Affordable Care Act became law, there are no longer any “birthing hospitals” in Allegan County. So (except in cases of emergencies), the only birth certificates initiated in the Allegan County Clerk’s Office are those for “Live Home Births”, whereby the newborn and his or her mother or father physically come to the office with identification. When identification of the parent is verified, the most recent birth in Allegan County is recorded. One copy of the certificate is retained at the county and another is sent to the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services – Office of Vital Records.

*Recent Trends in Live Births Recorded in Allegan County.*

Year	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
Births Recorded	19	12	27	25	30	29	35	22

In 2019, home births in Allegan County dropped to 22 from the 10 year high of 35 in 2018.

*Geography of home births:* When broken down by the seven County Commission Districts, the midwife was busiest once again in Commissioner Thiele’s District 3 where seven home births occurred. Chairman Storey’s District 2 logged five, which was the second most in the County.

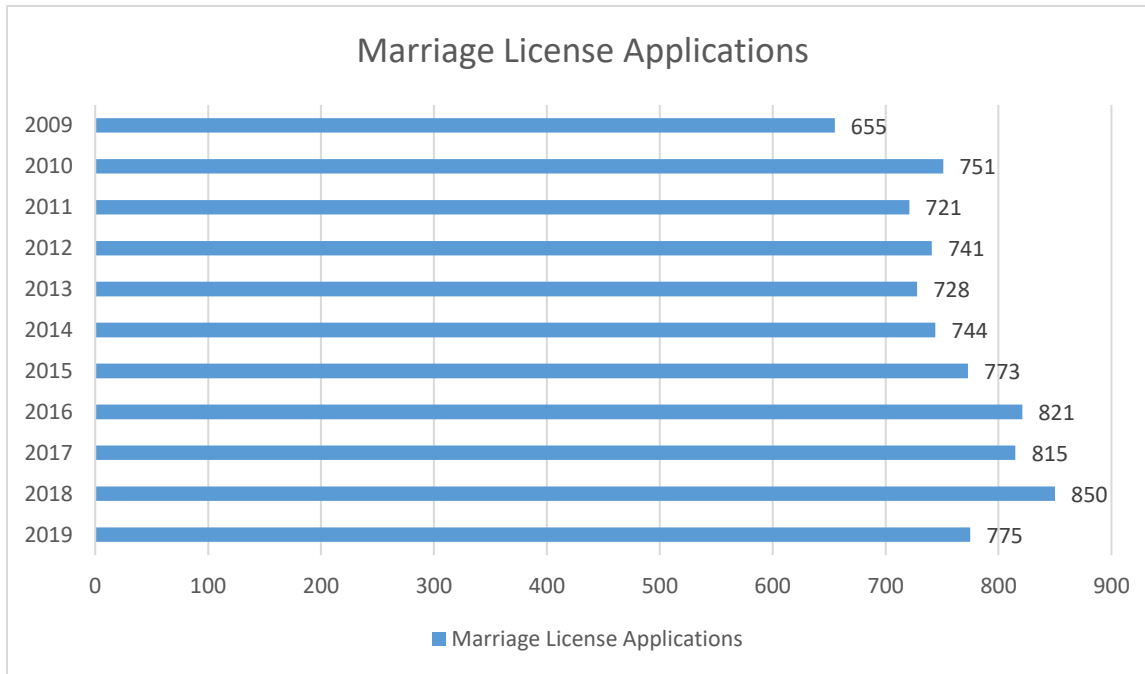


Live births broken down by County Commission District:

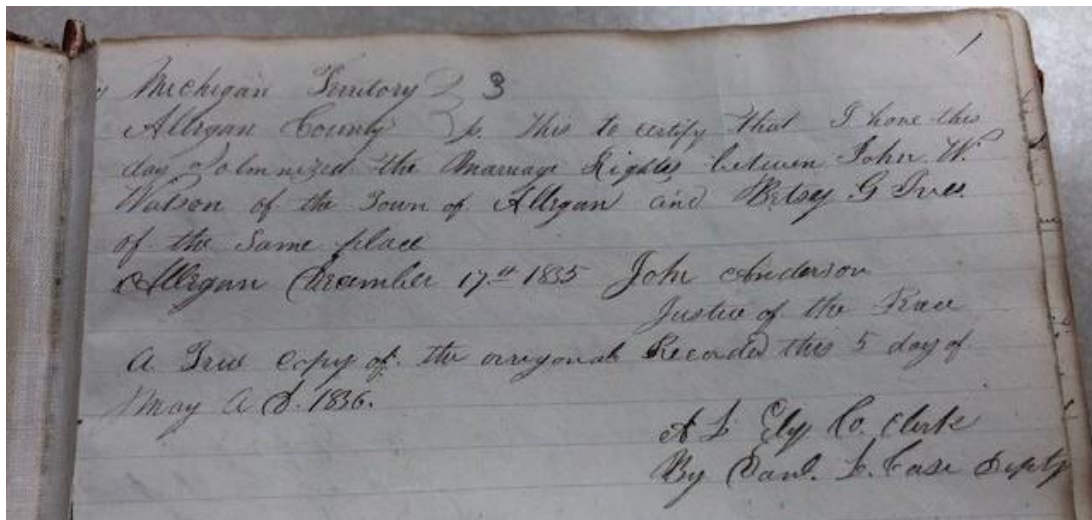
- District 1 (Kapenga) - 2
- District 2 (Storey) - 5
- District 3 (Thiele) - 7
- District 4 (DeYoung) - 3
- District 5 (Jessup) - 1
- District 6 (Dugan) - 2
- District 7 (Cain) - 2

(Trends in the Vital Records Division – Continued)

Trends in Marriage License Applications: The number of Marriage License Applications declined from a 20 year record of 850 in 2018 to 775 in 2019. It also marks the lowest number of applications since 773 were processed in 2015. The lowest number in the last 10 years of Allegan County residents saying “I do!” was hit in 2009 when 655 applications were filed.



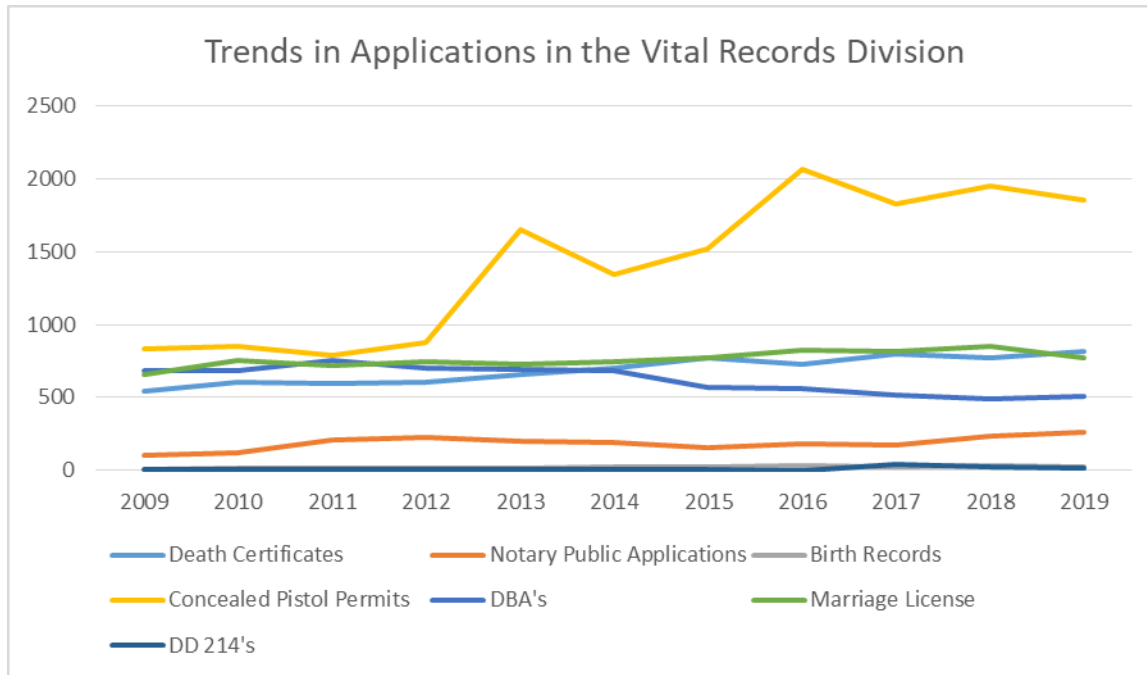
Did you know??? The earliest recorded marriage license in the vault at the County Clerk’s



Office is for a ceremony that took place in the

“Michigan Territory” for the marriage of John W. Watson of Allegan to Betsy Ives of Allegan. The ceremony occurred on December 17th, 1835 and was solemnized by Justice of the Peace John Anderson. The certificate was recorded in May 1836 with County Clerk A. L. Ely.

(Trends in Vital Records Division – Continued)



VITAL RECORDS DIVISION / QUICK FACTS

Chief Deputy Clerk – Jackie Porter FTE's – 2

Earliest Records on File:

September 1<sup>st</sup>, 1835 County Organized (within the "Michigan Territory")

December 17<sup>th</sup>, 1835 First Marriage License

June 25<sup>th</sup>, 1836 Circuit Court Records

October 4<sup>th</sup>, 1836 Board of Supervisors Proceedings

January 24<sup>th</sup>, 1867 First Birth Recorded

February 13<sup>th</sup>, 1867 First Death Record (William Collman of Cheshire, died at one year, one month and 5 days. Cause of death: "Too Powerful Medicine")

DBA's dropped to 490 in 2018.

The number of Veterans' Discharge Papers (DD 214's) filed with the Office has declined 2 years in a row. After a 20 year high of 44 were processed in 2017, only 16 sets of DD 214's were registered in 2019.

An eleven year history of applications through the Vital Records Division shows some fairly static trend lines with the exception of Concealed Carry Permits. From 2009 through 2019, CCP applications grew by 1,023 (830 in 2009 to 1,853 in 2019). During the same 11 year period, Notary Public Applications fluctuated with a low of 100 in 2009 to a high of 262 recorded in 2019. Births in Allegan County ranged from as few as 213 to a high of 473 in the previous decade, a high of 35 babies were born in the County in 2018, dropping to 22 in 2019. The eleven year high of deaths recorded in the County of 818 occurred in 2019 while only 547 were logged in 2009 – the eleven year low.

A seven year decline in DBA's (or business licenses for Doing Business under an Assumed Name) reversed in 2019 when 508 were filed with the Clerk. From a high of 751 in 2011, the number of

Sports

### Allegan County clerk urges veterans to file discharge papers

By Sentinel Staff  
Posted at 11:02 AM

ALLEGAN COUNTY — The Allegan County clerk’s office processed two dozen honorable discharge papers from military veterans in 2018.

This is the second-highest number of DD 214’s, Certificate of Release or Discharge, filed with the office since 2005 when the office started tracking them. The highest number of papers filed in Allegan County was 44 in 2017.

“In the last two years, we have processed more veterans’ discharge papers than the previous seven years combined,” said Bob Genetski, Allegan County clerk. “Our campaign to help veterans connect more easily with benefits they have earned is working.”



*It was my honor to thank Mr. David Low of Wayland for his service to our Country during World War II.*

### Trends in Filings of DD 214’s for our Veterans:

One of the most important (and least known) services the Vital Records Division offers is the recording of military discharge papers otherwise known as DD 214’s. Most often, when U.S. Military Veterans return to civilian life, they are given only one copy of their papers of honorable discharge. If the papers are lost or destroyed, the federal government can be very difficult to deal with when a veteran tries to replace the originals.

These papers are extremely important for veterans as they try to obtain VA benefits, GI Bill benefits, and even to obtain the “Veteran” designation on a Michigan Driver’s License.

For this reason, the Office of County Clerk is working hard to encourage Allegan County veterans to file their papers of honorable discharge with the Office. It’s a quick process; it’s FREE, and it gives veterans and their families peace of mind.

When a veteran comes in to file his or her honorable discharge papers, he or she will receive the original papers back, two free certified copies, and the individual will have access to free certified copies for any of their needs for the rest of their life. As well, the information on the form is kept completely secure.

The number of DD 214’s filed with the County Clerk dropped to 16 in 2019 from 24 the previous year.

#### *Trends in DD 214 Filings*

Year	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
Number Filed	7	7	5	11	10	5	7	4	1	44	24	16

(Trends in the Vital Records Division – Continued)

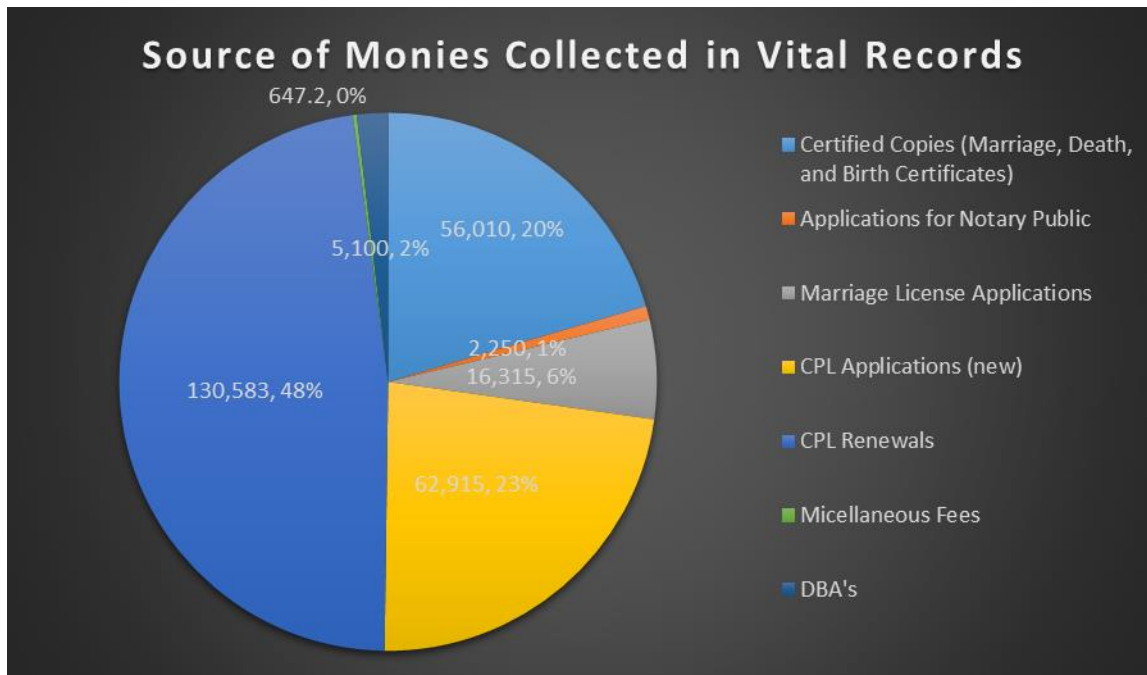
### \$\$\$ Where the Money Comes from and Goes... \$\$\$

The Vital Records Division took in **\$263,164.60** from the following sources:

- Marriage License Applications – Fee of \$20
- Filing of a DBA – Fee of \$10
- Application for a Notary Public – Fee of \$10
- (new) CPL Applications – Fee of \$100
- CPL renewal - Fee of \$115
- Miscellaneous Fees\* - Fee of \$10
- Certified Copies (of Marriage Certificates, Death Certificates, and Birth Certificates) - Fee of \$10 (first copy), \$4 for each subsequent copy

*\*Fees for things such as replacement of a lost CPL Card etc.*

Of the \$263,164.60 collected from transactions in the Vital Records Division during 2019, the source and percentage of the total collected appear in the graph below.



The largest amount of money \$130,583 or 48% came in from renewals of Concealed Pistol Licenses. Initial CPL applications accounted for 23% or \$62,915 of the transactions while Certified Copies collected 20% or \$56,010. Marriage License Applications brought in \$16,315 for 6% for the total.

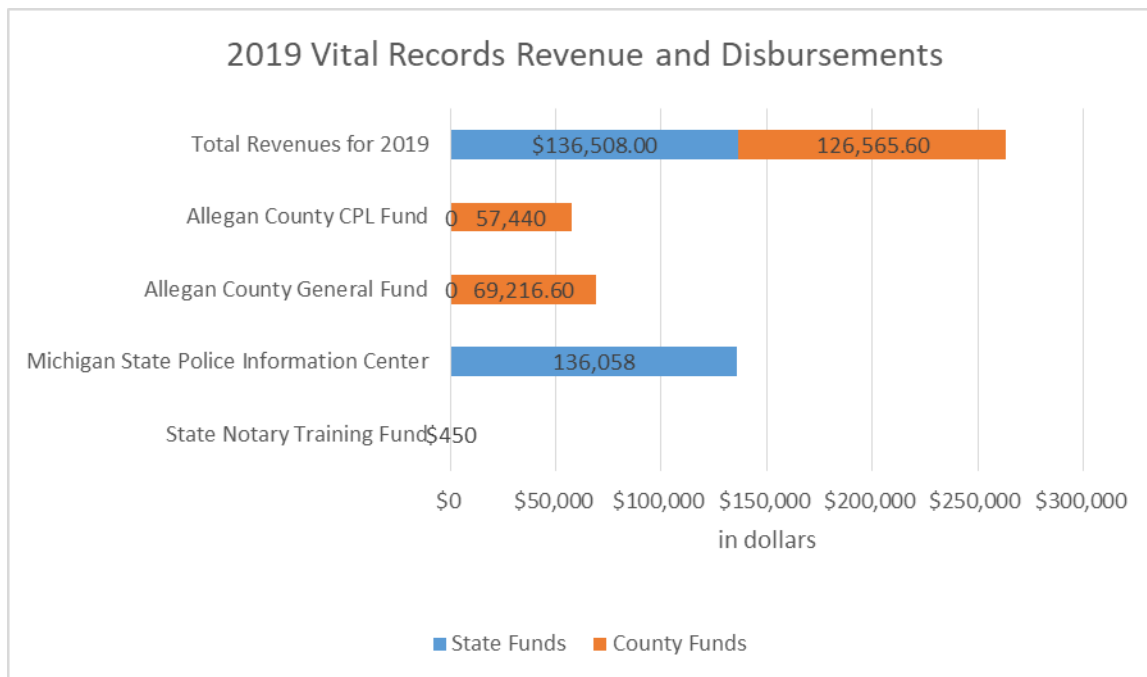
DBA's and Applications for Notary Public made up 2% and 1% of the money collected or \$5,100.40 and \$2,250.

Miscellaneous Fees account for less than 1% of the \$263,164.60 for 2019.

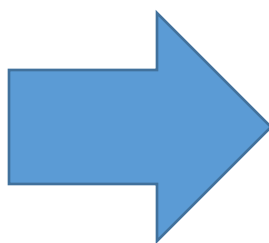
(Trends in the Vital Records Division – Continued)

Fees collected in the Vital Records Division are deposited in four different accounts two at the county level and two at the state level. The accounts are: Allegan County’s General Fund; the County CPL Fund (used to pay for materials, training and staff who process CPL applications) which receives \$26 (of \$100) for each new CPL application and \$36 (of the \$115) for each renewal; the Michigan State Police Information Center receives \$74 for a new CPL application and \$79 for a renewal (for the cost of background checks for CPL applicants), and \$2 of the \$10 notary application fee goes to the State Notary Training Fund.

The breakdown of where all the monies end up looks like this:



The Office collected \$263,164.60 in 2019. The monies depicted in orange went to Allegan County accounts. Amounts in blue were sent to the State of Michigan.



On December 3rd of 2018, the State of Michigan began to offer CPL renewals online. CPL holders continue to receive their renewal notice by mail from the Clerk’s Office. The letter informs them of how they may renew online at [Michigan.gov/CPLrenewal](http://Michigan.gov/CPLrenewal) through use of a PIN included in the letter. This saves CPL holders a trip to the County Clerk’s Office and has been very popular with county residents so far. Allegan County continues to receive the \$36 for each renewal whether the customer does so in person or online.



## Elections

While 2019 was considered an “off-year” for elections, there were three eligible dates for school districts, libraries and local governments to put proposals before Allegan County voters. In certain jurisdictions, voters went to the polls in May, August, and November. As the first elections since the passage of Proposal 3 of 2018, election inspectors from Leighton Township to Casco Township and all points in between stepped up to the challenge of learning and implementing many new laws regarding voter registration and absentee voting.

### Division Overview

The County Clerk is the chief election officer in Allegan County. While local jurisdictions run much of the day-to-day operations of elections, the County Elections Division is responsible for the administration of elections, the accurate accumulation of countywide results, and the maintenance of elections records. Elections Coordination collaborates with the staff of the County Clerk’s Office, state agencies, other county clerks (across Michigan and throughout the United States), as well as township and city clerks throughout Allegan County. This covers three basic areas related to elections: maintaining the Qualified Voter File, meeting the Campaign Filing and educational needs of candidates, and serving the election needs of Allegan County residents.

### THE QUALIFIED VOTER FILE

The Qualified Voter File (QVF) is a state-run database of every legally registered voter in Michigan.

Maintaining the integrity of the QVF is essential to each citizen’s right to vote. To ensure the accuracy of voter rolls of Allegan County residents, the Election Coordinator facilitates entry of newly registered voters, address updates, and removal of electors who have moved, request to be removed from the list or who have passed away. The coordinator also communicates with other states to scrub rolls when a voter moves across state lines.

Changes in handling voter registrations and absentee ballot eligibility occurring under Prop 3 of 2018 mean that the county and local clerks have an even more difficult job- particularly in dealing with voters who register less than 15 days out from an election and register by mail. Under the law, these voters must be contacted by mail and informed that they must visit their local clerk with identification to confirm their registration prior to an election. These changes add a lot of pressure on clerks in tracking newly registered voters.

## Elections Division

At a glance-

Chief Deputy Clerk: Jackie Porter

FTE’s: .84

Coordinating Elections for:

45 “In-County” Precincts

10 “In-County” School Districts

Voter turnout in 2019:

18.52% in the May 7<sup>th</sup> Special Election

16.38% in the August 6<sup>th</sup> Special Election

18.98% in the November 5<sup>th</sup> Regular Election

Turnout in Number of Voters:

3,475 for the May 7<sup>th</sup> Special Election (18 jurisdictions)

1,894 for the August 6<sup>th</sup> Special Election (3 jurisdictions)

8,467 for the November 5<sup>th</sup> General Election (14 jurisdictions)

Total number of Registered Voters in Allegan County:

86,753 (at print)

Number of Elections Managed:

2019 – 3

2018 – 3

2017 – 3

2016 – 4

## Campaign Finance

Maintaining the many election files that serve Allegan County candidates, residents, and the public at large is a constant challenge. Election Coordination continues to make every effort to align Allegan County filing policies with the ever-changing Campaign Finance Law governed by the Bureau of Elections in Lansing.

During 2019, the Clerk's Office accepted campaign finance reports from 23 city council candidates and 2 ballot initiative groups while processing candidate filings from dozens of candidates for city council.



*Seen here with his wife Josephine, Clyde Township Trustee Bernie McCloud has been on the Board for over 30 years. So, he has a little experience filing for office. Clerk Genetski is on the left.*

## Elections and the Public 2019 Elections

The County Clerk's Office oversaw special elections in May, August, and November. These elections, though they often have less turnout than even year contests, command a lot of time and resources from the Office not limited to ballot preparation, programming and Election Inspector training. In addition to these tasks, the County Clerk served as Clerk to the Allegan County Board of Canvassers and works with the Board to schedule, prepare agendas for their meetings, and administer the members'

determinations. The Board –consisting of two Democratic members and two Republican members from the County- meets after each election to certify the results. The Canvassers also conduct any election recounts.

## May Election

The May 7<sup>th</sup> Election was conducted in 18 jurisdictions throughout Allegan County. Voters living in six school districts (Delton-Kellogg, Fennville, Zeeland, Hudsonville, Martin, and Saugatuck) voted on millage and bond proposals. Electors living in the Holland Public School District voted on an increase for the Holland Area Community Swimming Pool Authority while voters in Casco Township had a law enforcement millage renewal of .65 mills on their ballots.



## May Election: Saugatuck Public Schools Recount



### Recount: Saugatuck school bond fails by 3 votes



by: 24 Hour News 8 web staff

Posted: Jun 3, 2019 / 09:06 PM EDT / Updated: Jun 3, 2019 / 09:07 PM EDT

SAUGATUCK, Mich. (WOOD) – A recount Monday confirmed that Saugatuck Public School's May bond request failed by a narrow margin.

The highly contentious Saugatuck Public Schools Bond Proposal failed by three votes on the May 7 ballot. Shortly after the Allegan County Board of Canvassers certified the election, eight citizens challenged the results of the election charging that absentee ballots had been miscounted (among other things).

The June 3<sup>rd</sup> recount drew statewide attention. Held at the Allegan Library, every one of the 2,085 ballots were hand tallied by the bi-partisan Board of Canvassers. The final result was 1,041 in favor and 1,044 opposed – exactly the same as counted by the tabulators on election night.

The hand count was a validation of the hard work, professionalism and training of our local clerks and election workers.

## August Election

The August 6<sup>th</sup> Election was a small one. Voters in Lee Township went to the polls and approved millage renewals for township roads and First Responders. Electors in Dorr Township rejected a library millage by 100 votes (529 to 629).

Voters in the City of Holland, voting on a candidate for the At-Large seat on City Council, pared down three candidates to two for the November election.

## November Election

A special election was held on November 5, 2019 that included a township road millage in (Salem Township), five school proposals (Plainwell, Saugatuck, Caledonia, Hudsonville, and Thornapple-Kellogg), and races for city council in the cities of: Allegan, Douglas, Fennville, Saugatuck and Wayland.

Of note, there were numerous certified "Write-in" Candidates:

1 in the contest for Allegan City Council

2 for the Fennville City Council race

4 in the election in the City of the Village of Douglas – where despite the three winning candidates all running as "write-in" candidates, local election workers were able to tabulate all ballots by hand and the County Clerk's Office was able to have unofficial results online by 10:00 PM.

Given the unusual number of "write-in" candidates, the County Clerk's Office conducted special training for Election Inspectors regarding all aspects of "write-in" ballots including the tallying thereof.

### KEEPING VOTER ROLLS UPDATED

From January 1<sup>st</sup> through December 31<sup>st</sup> of 2019, the active voter count for Allegan County increased from 84,668 to 86,753. This continues a long trend of increases in the list maintained by the Elections Divisions. With a population of over 117,000 – Allegan County Voter Rolls are kept clean and up to date through a lot of work on the part of our diligent city and township clerks.



### Managing Elections under Proposal 3 of 2018

With passage of Proposal 3 of 2018, county and local clerks statewide began administering the new election **burdens placed on local municipalities** in the *Michigan Constitution* by radical special interest groups. Some of these burdens now represent **unfunded mandates on counties, cities and townships**. These “one size fits all” solutions to fix “problems” (that very few taxpayers ever considered troublesome) demonstrate the arrogance of the **radical special interest groups** who ran the ballot initiative – thinking that smaller cities and townships and their citizenry in rural counties operate similarly to Flint, Detroit and Southfield.

The provision for “same day voter registration” encourages irresponsible individuals to wait until the day of an election to register to vote. Once that individual shows up at the precinct, he or she drains resources from their more responsible friends, neighbors and family members who took the time to register well before an election. Those who wait to register to vote until Election Day will increase wait times, create longer lines at polling locations, and inconvenience other voters.

The provision in Proposal 3 that dictates local clerks be in their offices for 8 hours the weekend prior to an election represents an **unfunded mandate on the local jurisdiction**. It is also **waste of resources** and demeans the skills of a clerk when she or he has to sit in the office for 8 hours on a Saturday or Sunday before a school election when not one voter comes through the door for a ballot. These shortsighted changes in election law are leading to a lot of quality clerks statewide retiring – a loss of tremendous institutional knowledge while **the special interest groups continue to pander to and create election laws for the lowest common denominator while forcing the average taxpayer to fund them**.

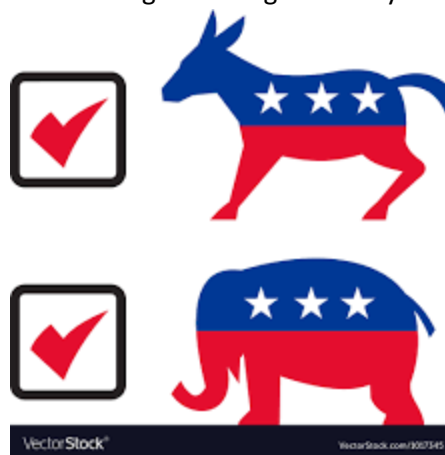


## Ongoing projects and Outstanding Issues...

*Military Veterans ID & Discount Card...* Enjoying a much improved relationship with the new records vendor (for the Register of Deeds Office and the Vital Records Division), the team at the Clerk's Office expects to roll out Military Veterans ID & Discount Cards for all veterans who live in the county and have registered their DD 214's with the Office. The hope is to begin offering this service before the 4<sup>th</sup> of July.

*Training Election Inspectors for the 2020 Election...* Thus far, the Clerk's Office has conducted 9 different sessions at all hours of the day and night and even on weekend mornings to accommodate the very busy schedules of our local clerks, their deputies and the Election Inspectors throughout Allegan County. A lot of the trainings are preparing locals to use Absentee Voter Counting Boards for the first time due to an expected increase in AV voting as a result of Proposal 3 of 2018.

With four election dates in 2020, a lot of recruiting of new talent for election workers is taking place north and south of the Kalamazoo River so that cities and townships throughout Allegan County can expect efficient and accurate elections.



*Staffing Issues on the Circuit Court Records Side...* With Circuit Court caseloads increasing by 1,591 in just four years as well as the increased amount of traffic to the Circuit Court Records window, the staff of the Circuit Court Records Office is stretched to its limits. The talented and hardworking deputy clerks do their very best to meet all of the demands on them, but the addition of the Public Defender's Office and more business coming from the Allegan County Legal Assistance Center creates a lot of time consuming customer service challenges that take the deputies away from other tasks. Consider the fact that the number of jurors the office serviced in 2019 nearly doubled from the year before while the number of adoption files processed more than doubled, and the County needs to make a decision on whether to add another deputy clerk or to endorse slower rates of service from this Division.



06/18/2019, 2:47 PM

Hey Bob,

I'm just in the register of deeds right now. Seems like I'm in here at least once a week these days. And i just wanted to let you know how courteous and diligent everyone in this office is.

From: Tuesday, 6/18/2019  
Sent: 2:47 PM  
To: Bob Genetski  
Subject: Letter of Appreciation

Irena and I are thankful for you help in expediting our marriage. You are the Captain of a very fine crew with a 'can do' attitude that is seldom seen in government. For that we both are grateful.

Sincerely

Hi Bob,  
God Bless you  
DEACON RUSS

