

**ANNUAL REPORT  
OF THE COUNTY CLERK – REGISTER OF DEEDS  
FOR THE YEAR 2018  
respectfully submitted  
TO THE ALLEGAN COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS**



**Bob Genetski**  
County Clerk – Register of Deeds

**Jackie Porter**  
Chief Deputy Clerk

**Patricia Fales**  
Chief Deputy Register



Contents

To the Board of Commissioners	3
Office of the County Clerk:	
Elections Division	4-9
Vital Records Division	10-16
Circuit Court Records Division	17-20
Office of the Register of Deeds:	21-25
Upcoming and Ongoing Projects, Issues and Challenges	26



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

The County Courthouse

113 Chestnut Street

Allegan, MI 49010

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 28<sup>th</sup>, 2019

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

On Behalf of Chief Deputy Clerk Jackie Porter, Chief Deputy Register Patricia Fales, and the entire staff of the Offices of County Clerk and Register of Deeds, it is my pleasure to present to you the ANNUAL REPORT for the Year 2018. I present this document with apologies as it is significantly longer than previous Annual Reports. However, last year was a significant year of major change and innovation for both offices and all four divisions under my direction.

In the Elections Division – the Clerk and staff rolled out the first new voting equipment in over a decade for the 31 precincts within Allegan County. Training on the new systems was extensive and is ongoing. As well, voter turnout set records and kept the office up late managing big elections.

In the Circuit Court Records Division, the deputy clerks managed the docket for 3,675 cases (more than 1,100 from just four years ago) while ensuring that the 424 Allegan County residents serving on jury duty enjoyed a positive visit to the Courthouse.

The deputy clerks in the Vital Records Division were very busy as well. In 2018, they processed more marriage applications than our office has going back 21 years! And for the second time in two years, the Office helped a record number of Allegan County veterans file their papers of honorable discharge.

On the Register of Deeds side of the hallway, deputy registers processed 23,519 transactions (an average of over 445 a week!) during 2018. This Office also collected a record over \$5,111,000 in State Real Estate Transfer Tax – showing land values in the county are increasing.

Gentlemen, this report has many quantifiable facts and figures that you might find striking. Unfortunately, the best asset of both offices is impossible to find in any chart or graph and perhaps difficult to find in numbers. That asset is the dedicated and hardworking county employees in ROD and the Clerk's Office. What they give every day to THE PEOPLE OF ALLEGAN COUNTY simply cannot be quantified. I hope that as you delve into the numbers, you will think of and credit our fine team.

Sincerely,



Bob Genetski  
Allegan County Clerk –  
Register of Deeds

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Bob Genetski', written over a faint circular stamp or watermark.

## ELECTIONS

New technology and record setting voter turnout made 2018 one of the most memorable “off-year” election cycles in recent history as some Allegan County voters went to the polls three times between early May and November 6<sup>th</sup>. Many others voted for the first time ever or the first time in a while as roughly 4.3 million Michiganders voted in the Gubernatorial Election.

### 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 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 to cover 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 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 integrity 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.

For the year 2018, Election Coordination along with city and township clerks processed 8,518 voter registrations and address changes in Allegan County, as well as miscellaneous Absentee Ballot requests and items intended for other counties.

One of the biggest challenges for the Division is compliance with Election Code and ensuring a smooth voting process for those who submitted registrations at the legal deadline marking 30 days of legal residence prior to Election.

## 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 2018:

17.11% in the May 8<sup>th</sup> Special Election

28.52% in the August 7<sup>th</sup> State Primary Election

54.66% in the November 6<sup>th</sup> General Election

Turnout / Numbers of Voters:

2,683 for the May 8<sup>th</sup> Special Election (14 of jurisdictions)

25,504 for the August 7<sup>th</sup> State Primary Election- countywide

46,486 for the November 6<sup>th</sup> General Election (85,040 registered)

Number of Elections Managed:  
2018 – 3  
2017 – 3  
2016 – 4

\*up from .25 in 2017



## Campaign Files

Maintaining the many election files that well-serve Allegan County candidates, residents, and the public at large is a constant effort. 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 2018, the Clerk's Office accepted filings from candidates for: State Representative, Allegan County Prosecuting Attorney, County Commissioner, Circuit Court Judge, District Court Judge, and Probate Court Judge. Candidates also filed for terms on Village Council positions (Martin & Hopkins) and City Council or Commission (Wayland, Douglas, Saugatuck, Otsego, and Plainwell). Candidates filed at the Courthouse for school boards in Allegan, Fennville, Glenn, Hamilton, Hopkins, Martin, Otsego, Plainwell, Saugatuck and Wayland while managing ballots for the following school district boards that file outside of Allegan County: Bloomingdale, Caledonia, Delton-Kellogg, Gobles, Holland, Hudsonville, South Haven, Thornapple-Kellogg, and Zeeland. Candidates also filed for Park District Board and Library Board with our Office.

## Elections and the Public

### 2018 Elections

The County Clerk's Office oversaw one special election in May, a partisan primary in August, and one general election during 2018. Among those were also one referendum on a local township ordinance (Casco) and a recall election of four (Saugatuck) Township Board members. Managing these specialized elections are highly detailed and demand a lot of time and resources from the Office. As Clerk to the Board of Canvassers, we served the Board as they conducted two recounts – requested by Allegan County electors.

From January 1<sup>st</sup> through December 31<sup>st</sup> 2018, the active voter count for Allegan County increased from 83,551 to 84,668. This continues a long trend of increases in the list maintained by the Elections Division.

### The May Election

The May 8th Election was conducted in 14 jurisdictions throughout Allegan County. Voters living in four school districts (Fennville, Hudsonville, South Haven and Zeeland) voted on an operating millage. Voters in Saugatuck Public Schools cast ballots on a bond proposal and a sinking fund proposal on the same ballot. Hudsonville voters also saw a sinking fund proposal while electors living in the Holland Public School District voted on a millage proposal and renewal for the Holland Area Community Swimming Pool Authority. Turnout was very light. This was the first Election with the new Dominion Voting Systems tabulators and Voter Assist Terminals. A great team effort between the Election Division, Allegan County Information Systems as well as local township and city clerks helped implement the new systems.

(Elections Division 2018 Elections – Continued)

The August Election

In preparation for the August 7<sup>th</sup> State Partisan Primary Election, the Count Clerk’s Office (working with local clerks) conducted a massive training effort for election workers throughout the county. Over 78 people attended sessions to prepare in helping Allegan County voters operate the new voting systems while over 250 election inspectors engaged in our training to become certified precinct workers. Trainings were conducted at multiple locations during mornings, afternoons, evenings and weekends as



well to be more responsive to the needs of our local elections teams.

On their primary ballots, Allegan County voters chose candidates for offices from Governor of Michigan, U.S. Senate, U.S House on down through state & county offices and to township parks commissioner (in some jurisdictions have that as an elected partisan office). Voters could choose from casting a ballot in the Democratic

Party Primary, the Libertarian Party Primary, or the Republican Party Primary. Having three parties on the ballot created a much longer ballot and the need for extra instruction for voters not used to seeing Libertarians on a primary ballot.

Large turnout occurred in part because all major statewide office holders were termed out of office leaving no incumbents on the ballot.

In the Gubernatorial Primaries, Allegan County voters chose Gretchen Whitmer, Bill Scheutte, and Bill Gelineau. The results were as follows:



Democratic Candidates for Governor	Votes
<i>Gretchen Whitmer*</i>	4,639*
<i>Abdul El-Sayed</i>	2,431
<i>Shri Thadenar</i>	1,523

The 2018 primary made history in that the Libertarian Party (based on results from the previous Gubernatorial Election) qualified to have candidates appear on the ballot. So, Allegan County voters found a “third lane” of primary candidates they could choose from for statewide races like governor all the way down the ballot to the partial terms for township office and precinct delegate.

Libertarian Candidates for Governor	Votes
<i>Bill Gelineau*</i>	74*
<i>John J. Tatar</i>	42

(Elections Division 2018 Elections – Continued)

In another rarity, Allegan County voters had four democratic candidates to choose from for the 6<sup>th</sup> Congressional District seat.

Republican Candidates for Governor	Votes
<i>Bill Scheutte*</i>	7,713*
<i>Brian Calley</i>	3,954
<i>Jim Hines</i>	1,996
<i>Patrick Colbeck</i>	1,618

In addition to the partisan offices (state, federal and local) on the ballot, 33 proposals were filed with the county. Of those- three were county-wide proposals, two were for local library districts, and three were school proposals while the remaining 25 were from various townships and cities in Allegan County.

Among the local proposals of note – voters in Casco Township voted 517 to 407 to retain the local “Short Term Rental” Ordinance while voters in Leighton Township residents by a vote of 1069 to 717 approved the adoption of an ordinance to rezone property allowing for a private airstrip.

Challenges with the countywide rollout of the new election systems and high turnout (29.3%) led to a late night of compiling and reporting results.

The November Election

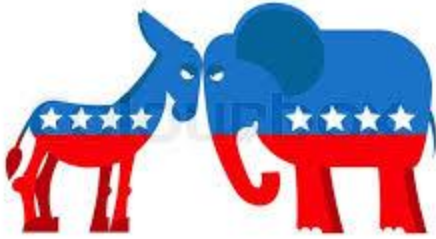
On November 6<sup>th</sup>, statewide roughly 4.3 million Michiganders engaged in the General Election to choose between partisan nominees and independent candidates for Governor, Attorney General, Secretary of State, U.S. Senate, State Board of Education, state university governing boards, U.S. House, State Senate, State House, Allegan County Prosecuting Attorney, County Commissioner, Circuit Court Judge (partial term), District Judge, Probate Judge, numerous township positions (for partial terms), village president and council positions (Hopkins and Martin), district library board and school board positions throughout Allegan County. Non-partisan candidates for the Michigan Supreme Court were elected as well.

Results of note to county offices: Roberts Kengis was elected to fill out a term as 48<sup>th</sup> Circuit Court Judge (after being appointed to fill a vacancy in March by the governor); Myrene Koch was elected to complete a term as Prosecuting Attorney (she had been appointed to fill a vacancy at the position by Chief Judge of the 48<sup>th</sup> Circuit Court); and Rick Cain was elected to the Allegan County Board of Commissioners for District 7 (a seat previously held by long time Commissioner Don Black who retired). And Saugatuck Township recalled four Township Board members leaving only Township Supervisor Chris Roerig from the previous board.

Voters in Allegan County chose the following candidates in certain statewide races:

*Governor (\* denotes winner in Allegan County)*

Candidate	Bill Scheutte*	Gretchen Whitmer	Bill Gelineau	Jennifer Kurland	Todd Schlegler	Kevin Butkovich
Party	Republican*	Democratic	Libertarian	Green Party	U.S Taxpayers	Natural Law
Votes	28, 648*	19,497	839	376	366	136



*U.S. Senate*

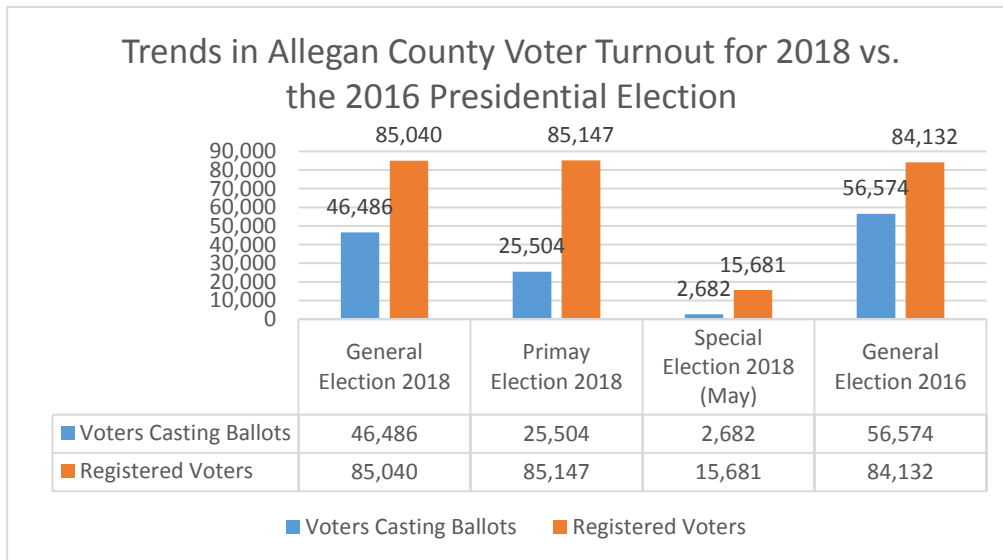
*(\* denotes winner in Allegan County)*

John James*	Republican*	29,834*
Debbie Stanbenow	Democratic	18,890
Marcia Squire	Green Party	478
George E. Huffman III	U.S. Taxpayers	340
John Howard Wilhelm	Natural Law Party	220

*Michigan Attorney General*

Tom Leonard*	Republican*	29,650*
Dana Nessel	Democratic	16,650
Lisa Lane Gioia	Libertarian	1,224
Chris Graveline	Independent	784
Gerald T. Van Sickle	U.S. Taxpayers	526

*Allegan County Voter Turnout in 2018*



*Voter turnout was very high in 2018 for a midterm election. The chart to the left measures 2018 turnout to the 2016 Presidential Election.*



(Elections Division /2018 Elections – Continued)

*State Ballot Proposals – Long Term Implications & New Costs*

If it took voters a little longer to navigate their ballots, that’s likely because of three lengthy state ballot initiatives. Though Proposal 1 (to legalize recreational marijuana) failed in Allegan County, all three passed at the state level. Proposals 2 & 3 created major changes to the state Constitution under the guise of “making voting more accessible”, which has never been an issue in Allegan County. This re-write of the state Constitution will create a significant unfunded mandate on counties and local governments that will be felt as early as May 2019 as local clerks (managing a special election) will need to be at the township, city, or village hall to distribute and receive absentee ballots for a minimum of 8 hours the weekend prior to Election Day – a cost that locals will need to absorb. In years past, the average number of voters who stop in to conduct election business on the Saturday before such an election has been ZERO. In some cases, local taxpayers will have to pay clerks overtime for this new mandate.



The County Clerk and elections staff are currently working very closely with local clerks and the Michigan Bureau of Elections to understand the implications of the proposals and to ensure the new laws are implemented properly for the May 2019 Elections. Both County and local elections workers are undergoing new training to ensure proper implementation of the new laws.

*State Proposal Results in Allegan County*

Proposal Number	Effect	Votes Against	Votes For
Proposal 1	Legalizes Marijuana (statute)	25,921	23,765
Proposal 2*	Creates new state committee to perform redistricting (Constitutional)*	22,005*	26,644*
Proposal 3*	Dictates straight ticket voting on ballots & same day registration (Constitutional)*	19,823*	28,515*

\*Hidden long term costs of proposals were not disclosed to voters in the proposals.

New Burdens for Taxpayers – “This [Proposal 2 & 3] re-write of the State Constitution created a significant unfunded mandate on counties and local governments that will be realized as early as May 2019 as local clerks will need to be present at their offices for 8 hours on the weekend prior to an election to distribute ballots and take AV ballot requests – a cost that will be borne by townships, village and city taxpayers. In years past, when the law was 4 hours on a Saturday, the average number of voters who stopped in to do election business at most Allegan County precincts was ZERO,” Allegan County Clerk Bob Genetski.

Proposal 3 also mandates that local clerks allow new voters to register to vote on ELECTION DAY. This will create longer lines and inconvenience at polling locations for those voters who took the time to register properly while locals shift assets and resources on Election Day.

# VITAL RECORDS

## Division Overview

The Vital Records Division assists Allegan County Residents with filing and obtaining birth certificates, marriage certificates, death certificates, and 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 certificates 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>

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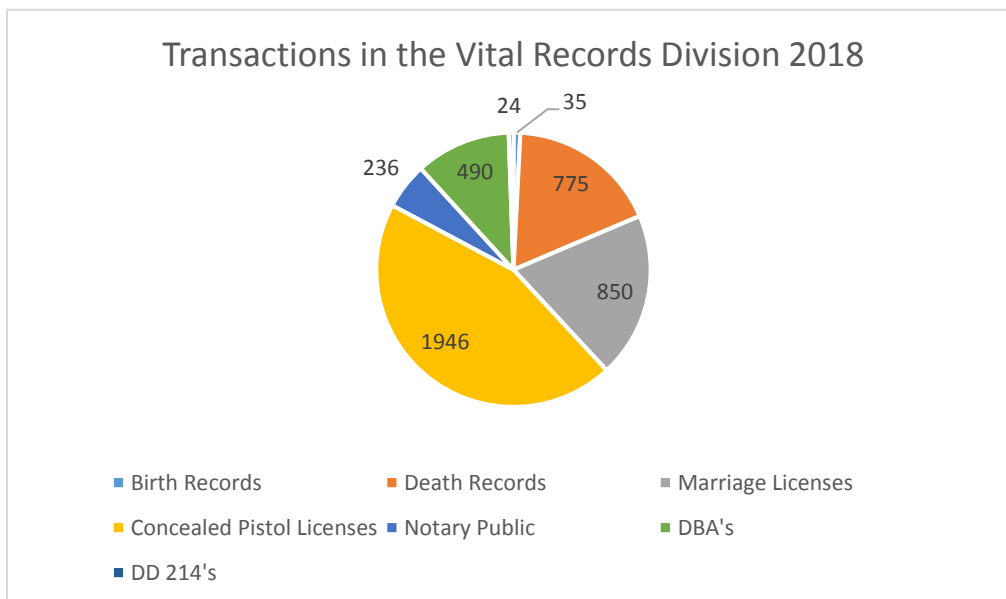
## Trends in Vital Records

The Deputy Clerks in the Vital Records Division helped customers with 4,356 transactions in 2018, up slightly from 2017 when there were 4,210. The highest recent number of transactions was 4,356 in 2016.

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

As in years past, the greatest number of orders filled in 2018 were applications for Concealed Pistol Licenses with 1,946 applicants. The least frequently accessed service the office provides was the filing of military discharge papers (DD 214's) as 24 were filed during 2018. There were 850 marriage licenses

requested (2<sup>nd</sup> highest number of transactions) while 775 death records were filed/requested. A lot of industrious Allegan County residents were engaged in small businesses in 2018 as there were 490 DBA's (Doing Business under an Assumed name) filed with the office. Applications filed to be a Notary Public came in at 236.



(Trends in 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.



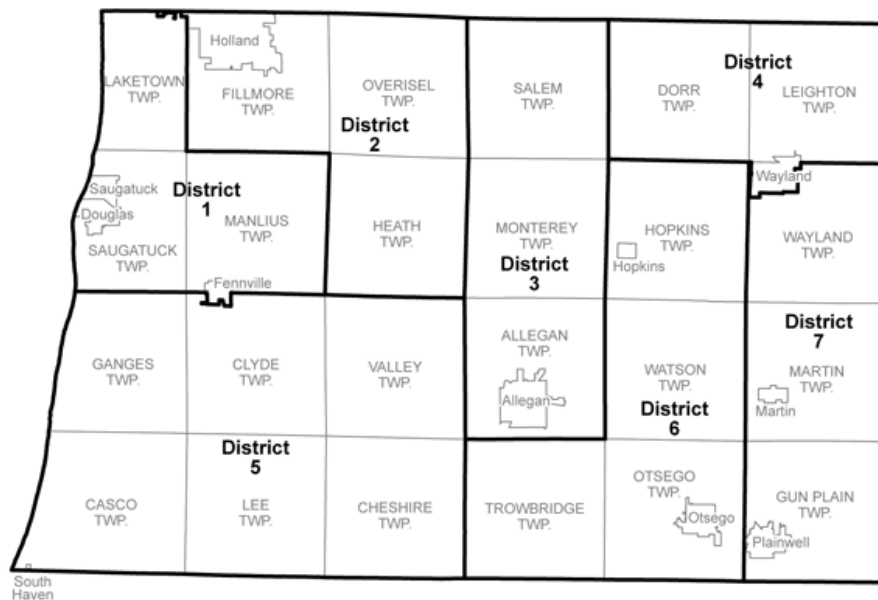
*Recent Trends in Home Births Recorded in Allegan County:*

Year	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
Births Recorded	12	27	25	30	29	35

In 2018, new parents in Allegan County recorded 35 home births – the highest number since the passing of the Affordable Care Act.

*Geography of home births:*

In the recent past, home births were fairly evenly distributed throughout the county. However, in 2018 the midwife was much busier in County Commission District #3 as 10 home births were recorded from there.



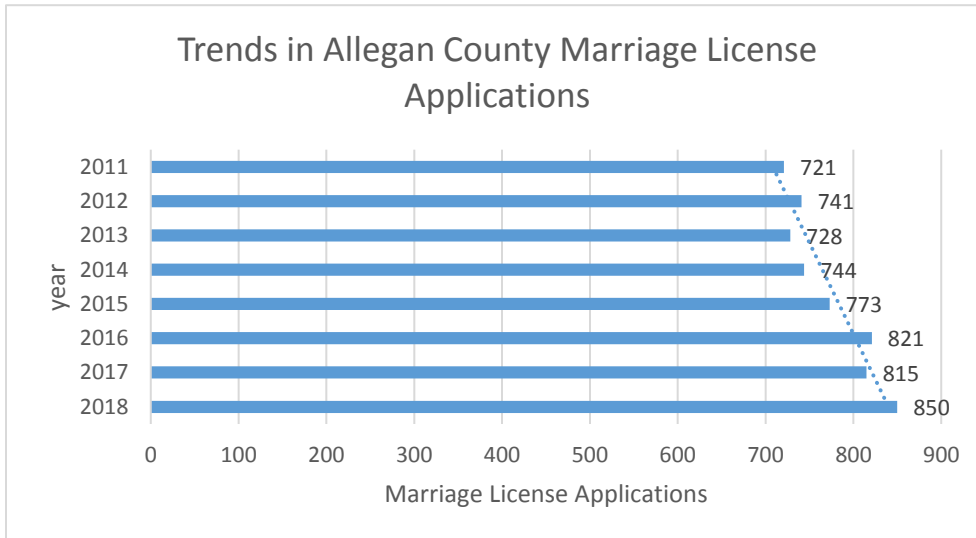
Live births broken down by district are as follows:

- District 1 (Kanpenga) - 4
- District 2 (Storey) - 4
- District 3 (Thiele) - 10
- District 4 (Deyoung) - 6
- District 5 (Jessup) - 3
- District 6 (Dugan) - 4
- District 7 (Black) - 4

Since 2013, the number of home births recorded in Allegan County has nearly tripled.

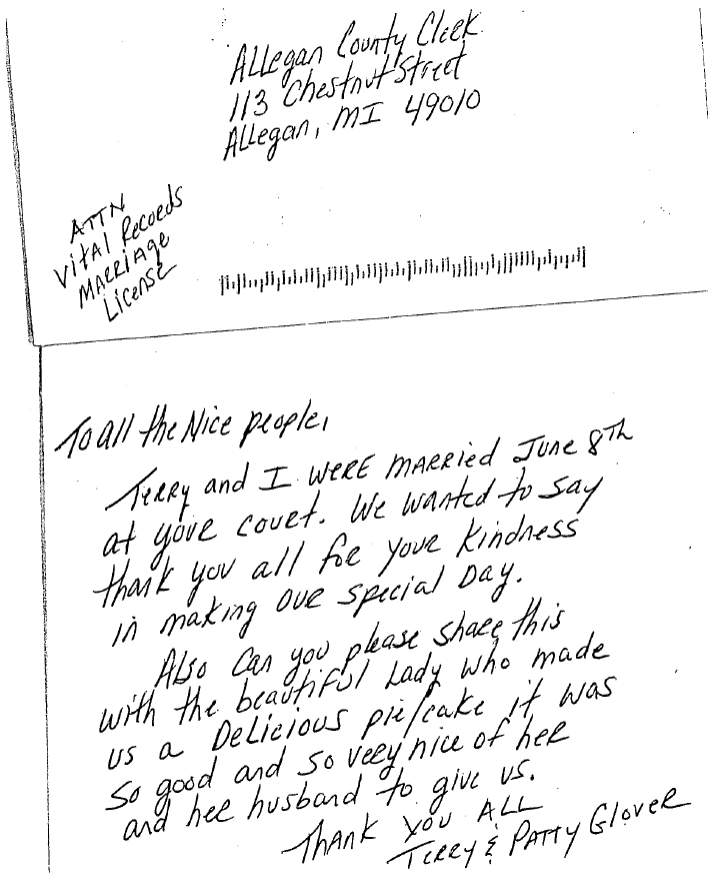
(Trends in the Vital Records Division – Continued)

Trends in Marriage License Applications: *Between 2011 and 2017, Marriage License Applications in Allegan County fluctuated between 721 and 815.*

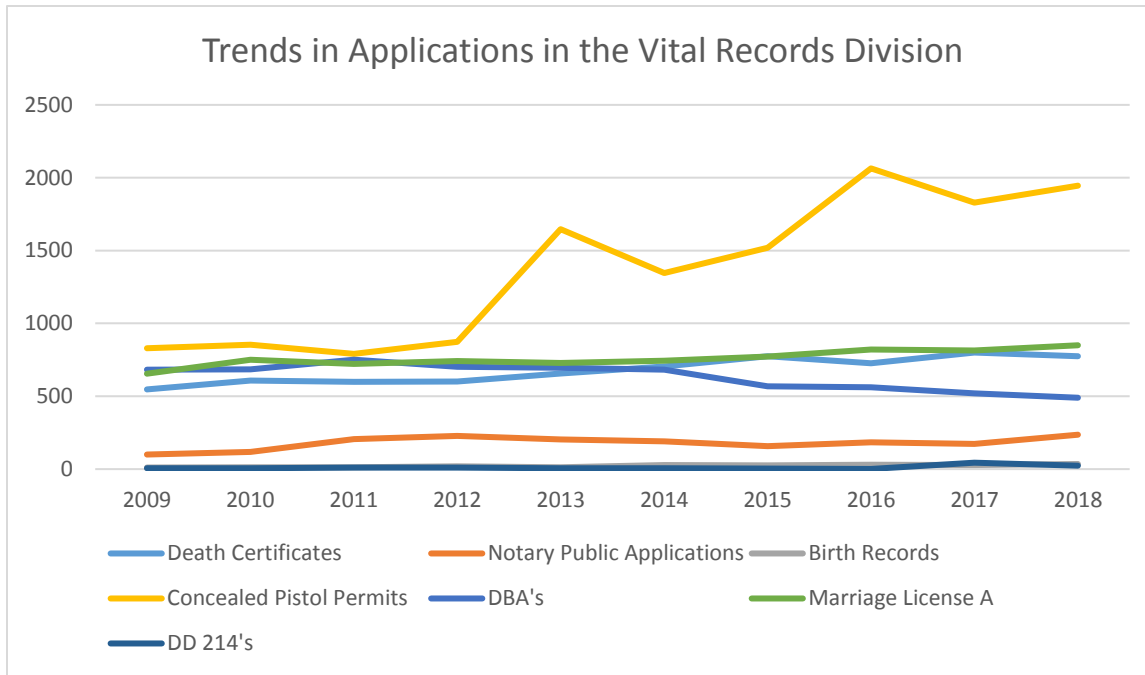


*In 2018, love was definitely in the air as 850 couples (the highest number in over 20 years) said, "I do!"*

Did you know?... the earliest recorded marriage license in the vault at the County Clerk’s Office is for a marriage in the “Michigan Territory.” The marriage of John W. Watson of Allegan to Betsy Ives of Allegan. The ceremony occurred on December 17<sup>th</sup>, 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 the Vital Records Division – Continued)



A nine year trend in Applications to the Vital Records Division of the Clerk’s Office shows the most dramatic changes in the number of CPL applications growing from 830 in 2009 to 1,946 in 2018. The high of CPL’s was 2,064 in 2016. Other major changes of note from in the last nine years: in 2009 home births recorded were 11, the high of 35 was hit in 2018 (though it barely shows up on the graph above). As well, the recent increases in military separation papers filed from 7 in 2009 to 44 and 24 over 2017

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”)

and 2018 are minimized in comparison to the bulk of the transactions. The downward trend in DBA’s continues from a high of 683 in 2009 to a new low of 490 in 2018. The decrease is mainly due to more and more small business owners choosing to create their business as a Limited Liability Corporations (LLC’s) which are filed with the State Department of Licensing and Regulatory Affairs instead of with the County.



(Trends in the Vital Records Division – Continued)

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.



*Bob Beam of Clyde Township, who served in Vietnam, at the ceremony to receive his Purple Heart medal.*

For this reason, the Office of County Clerk is working hard encouraging Allegan County veterans to file their papers of honorable discharge with our 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, a certified copy, 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.

For the second year in a row, the Clerk's Office has accepted a very strong number (24) of DD 214's from Allegan County Veterans.

*Trends in DD 214 filings*

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

*"In the last two years, we have processed more veterans' discharge papers than the previous nine years combined. Our campaign to help veterans connect more easily with benefits they have earned is working,"*

*Bob Genetski, Allegan County Clerk.*



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."



(Trends in the Vital Records Division – Continued)

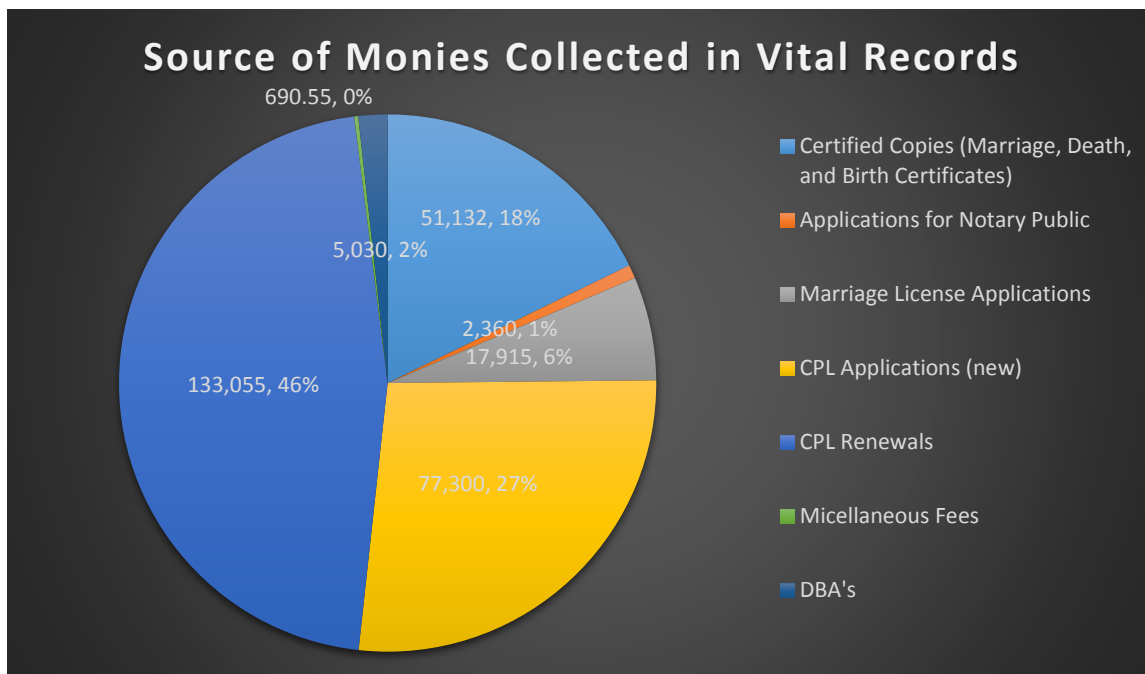
### \$\$\$ Where the Money Comes from and Goes... \$\$\$

The Vital Records Division took in \$287,482.55 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 Application – 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 \$287,482.55 collected from transactions in the Vital Records Division during 2018, the source and percentage of the total collected appear in the graph below.



The largest amount of money \$133,055 of 46% came in from renewals of Concealed Pistol Licenses. Initial CPL applications accounted for 27% or \$77,300 of the transactions while Certified Copies were 18% or \$51,132.00. Marriage License Applications brought in \$17,915 for 6% for the total.

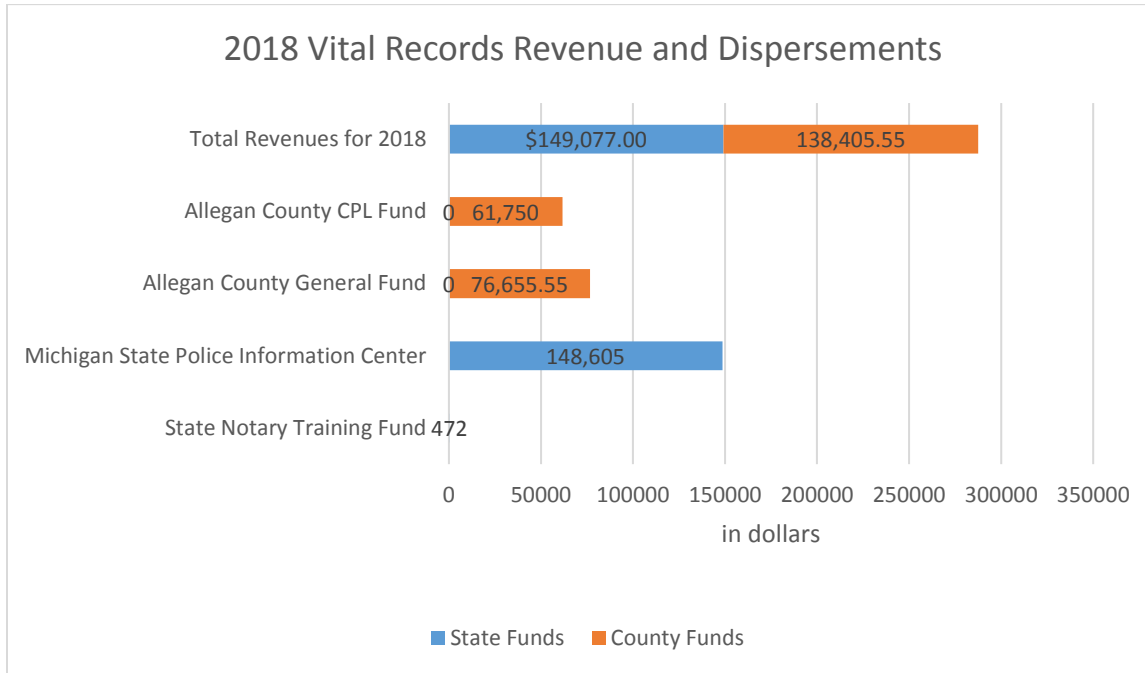
DBA's and Applications for Notary Public made up 2% and 1% of the money collected or \$5,030 and \$2,360.

Miscellaneous Fees account for less than 1% of the \$287,482.55 for 2018.

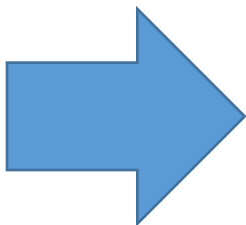
(Trends in the Vital Records Division – Continued)

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 (use to pay for 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:



On December 3<sup>rd</sup> of 2018, the State of Michigan began to offer CPL renewals online. CPL holders continue to receive their renewal notice by mail. 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.





## CIRCUIT COURT RECORDS

### Division Overview

The Circuit Court Records Division of the Clerk’s Office is the Fundamental access point to the 48<sup>th</sup> 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 and the Legal Assistance Center.



**IN 2018, THE CIRCUIT COURT RECORDS DIVISION PROCESSED 424 JURORS FOR CIRCUIT COURT JURY DUTY WHICH ENTAILS CHECKING IN, THE SELECTION PROCESS, AND ORCHESTRATING REIMBURSEMENTS FOR THEIR SERVICE (687 WERE PROCESSED IN 2017).**

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

Our services include processing documents necessary to initiate new cases filed with the 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.

### Accounting

The Clerk’s Office is responsible for receipting in all payments for the 48<sup>th</sup> 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.

#### *Restitution Payments Collections/Disbursements*

Type		2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
Adult	Beginning Balance:	\$27,465.90	\$16,964.20	\$17,990.13	\$10,394.26	\$2,337.46
	Collections:	\$164,579.00	\$113,272.40	\$124,020.00	\$245,026.56	\$186,124.09
	Total:	\$192,044.90	\$130,236.60	\$142,010.13	\$255,420.82	\$188,461.55
	Dispersed to Victims:	<b>\$185,433.49</b>	<b>\$116,469.11</b>	<b>\$131,856.73</b>	<b>\$253,083.30</b>	<b>\$185,945.82</b>
Juvenile	Beginning Balance:	\$55,764.02	\$49,607.55	\$43,119.45	\$7,922.64	\$7,729.07
	Collections:	\$20,912.12	\$18,217.69	\$17,507.67	\$15,029.98	\$24,125.67
	Total:	\$76,676.14	\$67,735.24	\$60,627.12	\$22,952.62	\$31,854.74
	Dispersed to victims:	<b>\$27,068.59</b>	<b>\$24,660.79</b>	<b>\$52,704.48</b>	<b>\$15,223.56</b>	<b>\$15,135.87</b>

### **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 it may take necessary actions to uphold 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. 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.

"Although no Clerk's office can provide legal advice, our Clerk's office is very user friendly, great for consumers and the court staff. We function very well as a team, helping establish permanence for many Allegan County kids each year," the Honorable Mike Buck – Chief Probate Judge

### **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**

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.

#### *Trends in Adoptions in Allegan County:*

<u>2018</u>	<u>2017</u>	<u>2016</u>	<u>2015</u>	<u>2014</u>	<u>2013</u>	<u>2012</u>	<u>2011</u>
36	45	46	68	55	84	121	105

## CIRCUIT COURT RECORDS DIVISION QUICK FACTS

Chief Deputy Clerk: Jackie Porter

FTE’s: 6

Circuit Court Caseloads for

2018 – 3,675

2017 – 3,395

2016 – 2,309

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

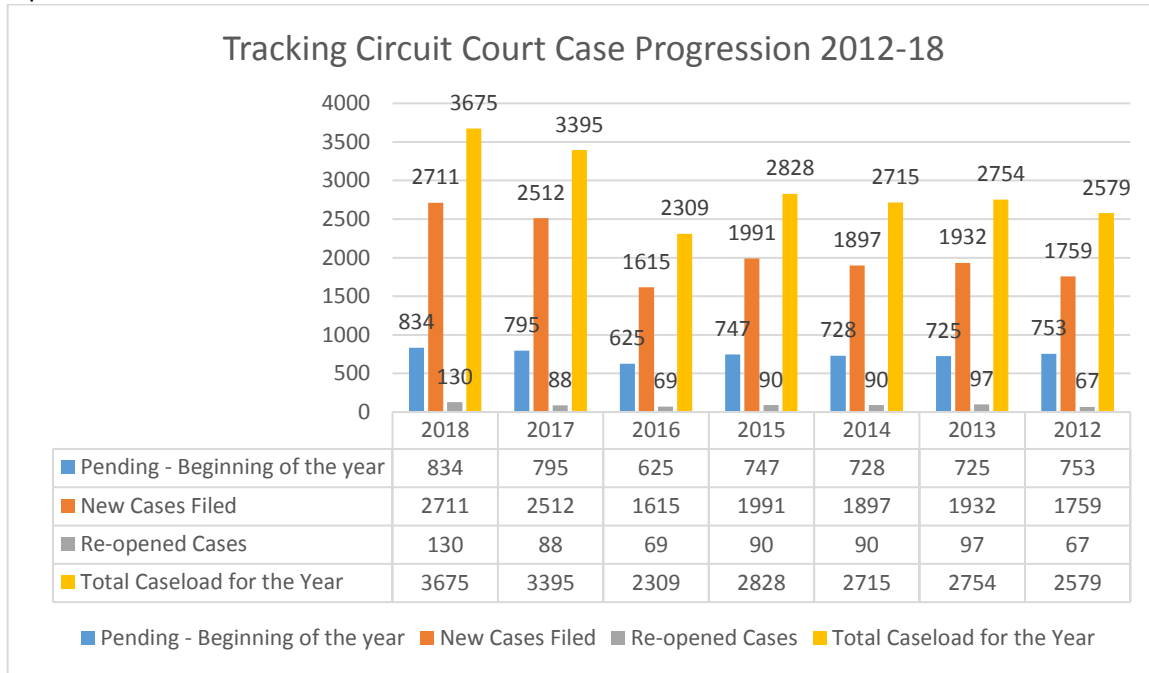
Restitution, Attorney Fees, Bonds, Victim Rights Fund, Fines, State Minimum, Filing Fees, Motion Fees, Jury Trial Fees, Garnishment & Subpoena Fees.

The Division serves as a pass through entity whereby restitution payments are collected and sent to victims of crimes. In 2018, \$210,249.76 dollars was collected by Circuit Court Records for dispersment.

The Division is also responsible for processing adoptions.

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.

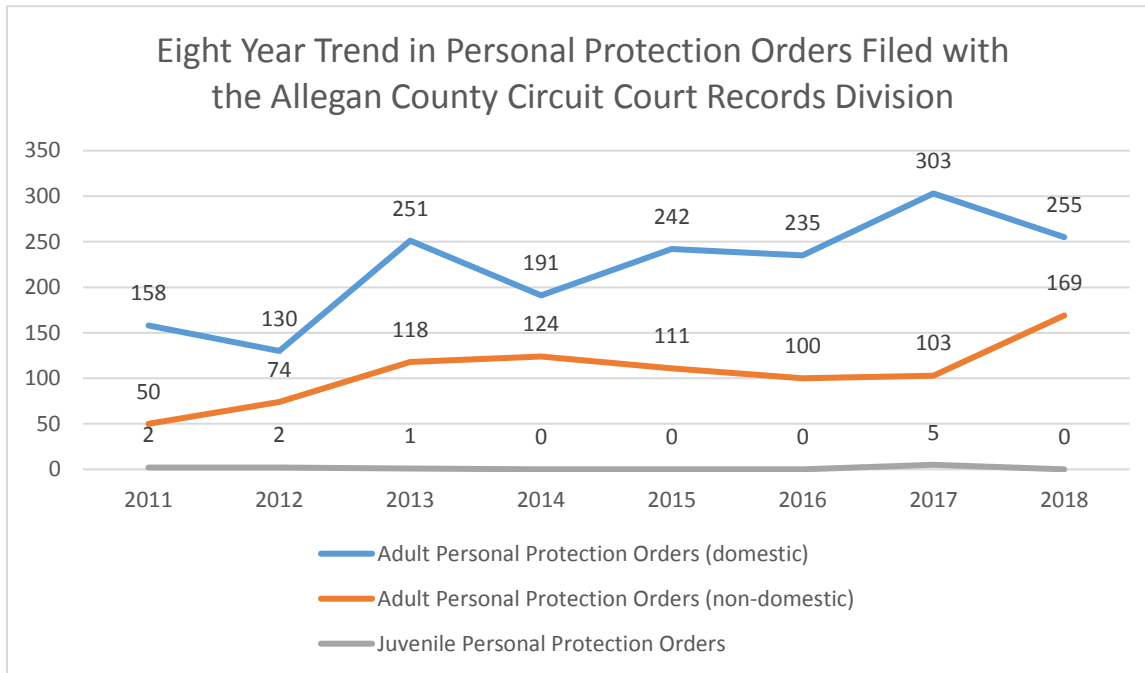


*“SINCE BECOMING JUDGE IN MARCH OF 2018, I HAVE BEEN VERY IMPRESSED WITH THE LEVEL OF COOPERATION THE COURT ENJOYS WITH [CLERK GENETSKI’S] OFFICE, AND WITH THE IMPRESSIVE EFFORT I’VE SEEN FROM THE INDIVIDUAL CLERKS. BEFORE TAKING THE BENCH, I DID NOT FULLY COMPREHEND THE NUMBER OF PLEADINGS, FILINGS AND DOCUMENTS THE CLERK’S OFFICE HAS TO PROCESS. THIS JOB HAS ONLY BECOME MORE DIFFICULT RECENTLY DUE TO AN INCREASED CASE LOAD IN THE CIRCUIT COURT. I AM ALSO THANKFUL FOR THEIR PATIENCE IN DEALING WITH A NEW JUDGE AND HELPING ME LEARN THE PROCESSES INVOLVED WITH OPERATING AN EFFICIENT AND EFFECTIVE COURT,” THE HONORABLE ROBERTS KENGIS, JUDGE 48<sup>TH</sup> CIRCUIT COURT*

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

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

(Circuit Court Records Division – Continued)



Personal Protection Orders in Allegan County are filed with the deputy clerks in the Circuit Court Records Division. Two of the three types of PPO's (juvenile and adult domestic) show a very positive downward trend in 2018 as juvenile dropped from a ten year high in 2017 of 5 down to 0 while adult domestic PPO's declined by 48 (from 303- an eight year high- to 255). Unfortunately, adult non-domestic PPO's increased by 66 having seen 169 filed in 2018 from 103 the year before. The 169 of 2018 is the eight year high, the low of 50 occurring in 2011. The low for Juvenile PPO's is 0 occurring in 2014, 2015, 2016 and 2018. The fewest Adult Domestic PPO's filed over the last seven years is 130 from 2012.



## Office of the Register of Deeds

### 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.

Throughout 2018, the Office was heavily engaged in researching, performing site visits, and piloting potential new land records systems with the goal of purchase (with County Board approval) and implementation during 2019. The RFP process took a lot of effort and input from the entire Division.

Register of Deeds Office Quick Facts –

Chief Deputy Register: Patty Fales

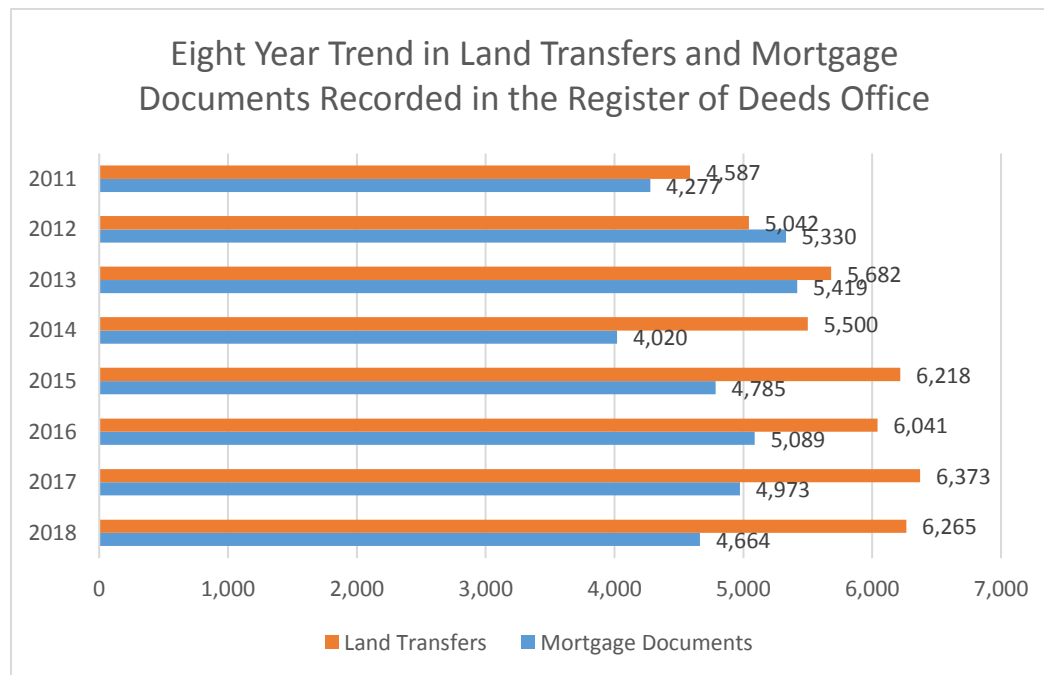
FTE's: Four (with a combined 85 years of experience in recording)

Money Collected for 2018 (including State Transfer Tax): \$6,673,025.70

Total Transactions in 2018: 23,159

Records available: From 1835 to present

### Document Recording:

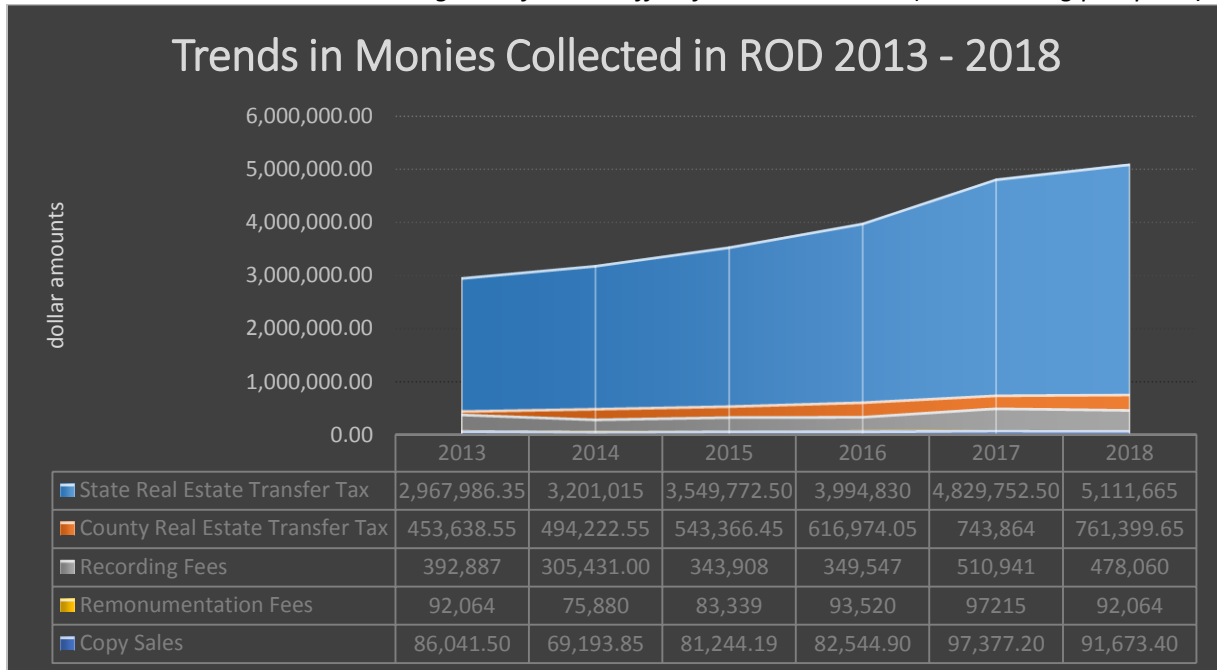


*Trends in Real Estate Documents Recorded:*  
For 2018, total documents recorded in ROD were 23,159. Over the last eight years, total real estate documents recorded in the Register of Deeds office range from a high of 28,422

in 2012 to a low of 23,073 (in 2014). Land transfers recorded hit a high of 6,373 just last year (2017) while the low number occurred in 2011 at 4,587. Meanwhile, the highest number of mortgage documents recorded from 2011 through 2018 was 5,419 in 2013. The low of 4,020 was hit in 2014.

(Register of Deeds Office – Continued)

*Trends in Monies Collected in the Register of Deeds Office from 2013 – 2018 (not including passports)*



During 2018, the Register of Deeds Office collected over \$5 million dollars in Real Estate Transfer Taxes (more than any of the previous five years). ROD also collected a six year high of \$761,399.65 County Real Estate Transfer Tax money. These numbers are despite the fact that recording fees were down from \$510,941 in 2017 to \$478,060 in 2018.

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 retained by the County.

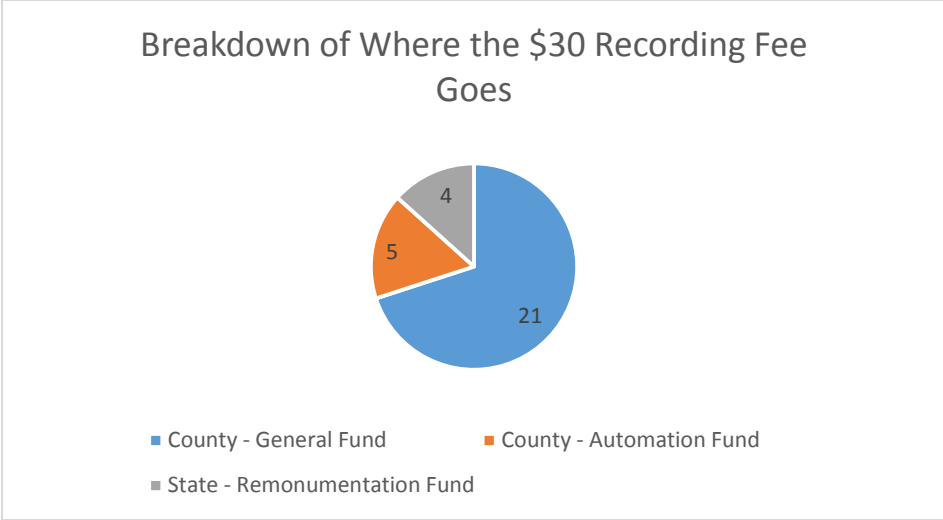
Recording Fees: collected on every document recorded (nearly two hundred different types of documents), most of which goes to the county with a small portion going to the state (see graph on the next page for the breakdown).

Remonumentation Fees: collected on each document recorded (as part of the recording fee) and sent to the state for the cost of surveying land corners.

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

A.C.R.O.D. STAFF,

I WOULD LIKE TO THANK YOU FOR YOUR OUTSTANDING SERVICE OVER THE PAST AND PREVIOUS YEARS. YOUR ASSISTANCE AND RESPONSIVENESS TO MY REQUESTS ARE ABOVE ALL OTHERS, MY COMMUNICATION WITH YOUR OFFICE (WHETHER THROUGH E-MAILS OR ON THE TELEPHONE) IS ALWAYS COURTEOUS, PROFESSIONAL AND ENJOYABLE AND I COMMEND YOU FOR YOUR EFFORTS! I



*BREAKDOWN of RECORDING FEES:* With each document recorded at the Register of Deeds, the Office collects \$30\*. The County General Fund receives \$21 (of the \$30), 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 on Oct 1<sup>st</sup>, 2016. Prior to that the fee was \$14 broken down to the same three source at \$5, \$5, and \$4.

*SIX YEAR TREND OF DEPOSITS MADE TO THE AUTOMATION FUND:*

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

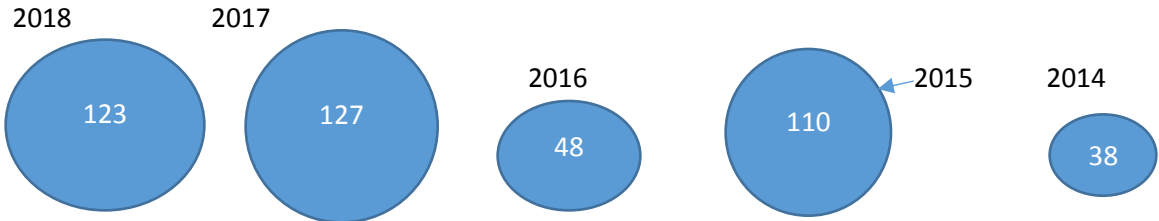


**Centennial Farms and the Register of Deeds Office:**

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.

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

*Trends in Farmland and Open Space Preservation Applications Recorded under PA 116:*



(Register of Deeds Office – Continued)

**PASSPORT SERVICES:**

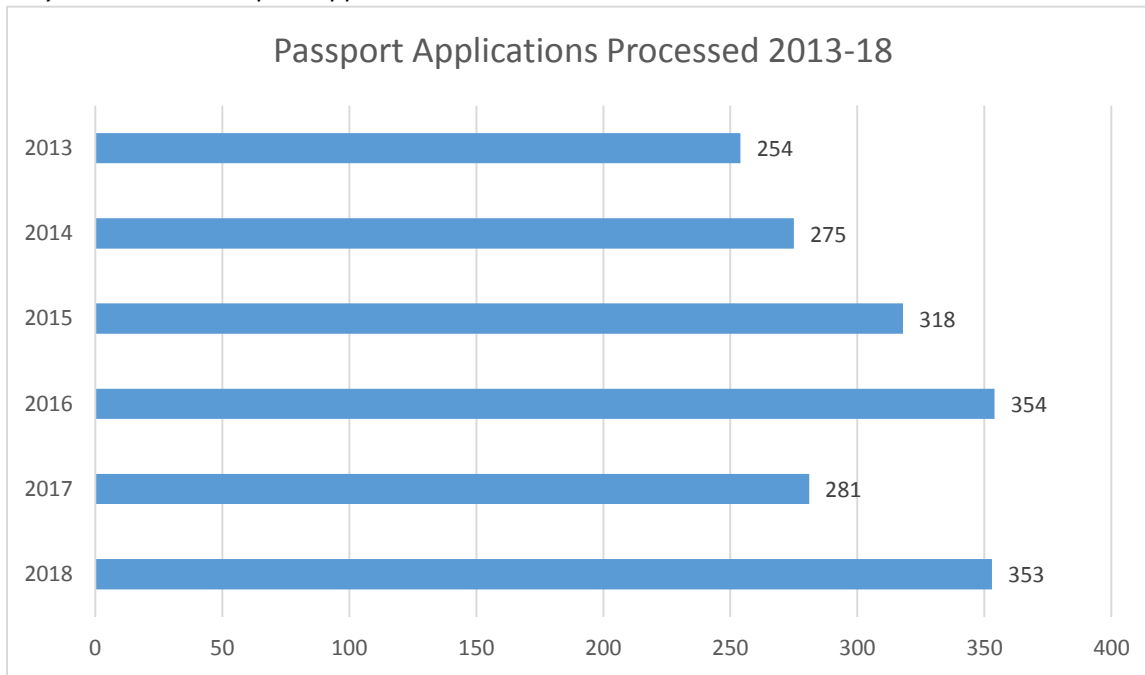
The Register of Deeds Division accepted 353 Passport Applications in 2018.

The fee a customer pays for obtaining a routine passport through our office changed from \$135 to \$145 due to a directive from the U.S. Department of State that went into effect on April 2<sup>nd</sup> of 2018. Of the new fee, \$110 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). NEW SERVICE as of 2018, 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.

*Six year trend in Passport Applications:*



*In 2018, deputy registers helped 353 visitors apply for Passports. This number is just one shy of the high of 354 (reached in 2016) reached since 2013. It also represents highest year over year increase from the last six years.*

*The low number of applications in the last six years was 254 attained in 2013.*



(Register of Deeds Office – Continued)

Revenues to the County from Passport Applications (at rates of \$25 from 2013 until April 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2018 & \$35 from April 2<sup>nd</sup> 2018 to present):

YEAR	Applications	Revenue to the County	Revenue at \$25/\$35
2018	353	\$11,375	\$2,450/\$8,925*
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

\*There were 98 applications processed from January through March 31<sup>st</sup> of 2018 at the \$25 fee rate. Then, after the federal government increased the rates effective April 2<sup>nd</sup>, 255 Passport Applications were processed at the \$35 rate.

NEW SERVICE – Passport Photos\*: Passport photos are done for \$10 for the purpose of new Passport applications only. The service was commenced in July 2018. Since then 71 photos were taken for a total of \$710. The camera, photo paper and accessories cost \$300.97. ROD would like to thank Allegan County Information Services for their help in implementing this service.



A U.S. Passport is valid documentation to obtain a REAL ID-compliant Driver's License. Beginning Oct 1, 2020, Michigan residents (and all travelers) will need to present a REAL ID-compliant document 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 State Department of State.

This service was formerly provided by the Vital Records Division of the Clerk's Office until 2013.

"Here is a picture of Sarah with her NEW passport. Thank you again!!"

"Hi Bob, I can never thank you enough for all of the help you have given us. I just want to let you know that today Sarah received her passport!!!! I think she is more excited than all of us and we're pretty darn excited. 12 years later and she has a passport, ironic you started helping us about two months ago and she has a passport within two months. Great job you're the best. You have no idea how grateful we are to you. Thank you again Mark and Sue"



## Ongoing projects and Outstanding Issues...

A New Records System... Staff in the Register of Deeds Office as well as the Clerk's Office (with the help of County Information Services) spent a great deal of time researching the best possible product for a new records system for ROD and Vital Records. A new system will improve the efficiency of our team on a daily basis, allow more services for our customers and provide more options for recordkeeping and data reporting. The Offices hope to implement a new system by mid- 2019. This project has been considered a priority by some in the county for 14 years.

Scanning of Court Records... During 2018, partnering with Allegan County Information Services, the Clerk's Office was able to clear more space at the Courthouse by scanning and file-binding 425,000 pages of court records, such that files are accessible electronically but no longer have to physically be stored in a Courthouse vault. This project has been in the works for 2 years. A second batch of files should be sent for scanning in March of 2019.

Training on Voting Machines... Our voting systems are still fairly new (with most clerks and elections staff countywide having only used them twice). Between this and a lot of turnover among local clerks and deputies, the Elections Division will be continuing training on the machines and uploading results to the County (with the help of County Information Systems) throughout 2019 as if it were a major election year. In addition, improvements to the Elections Website continue.

Indigent Defense... With the new Indigent Defense Office in the Courthouse, those of lesser means will have quality representation before our Courts. This is a very good thing and the right thing for our county, our nation, and our system. However, it will create a greater workload for the Circuit Records Division of the Office. Planning and preparing for what that will look like will occur early in 2019 and be ongoing.



*Court case files in one of the four vaults at the Courthouse used to store such files.*

