

ANNUAL REPORT FOR 2020
FROM THE
ALLEGAN COUNTY CLERK AND REGISTER OF DEEDS
BOB GENETSKI
respectfully submitted
to the **ALLEGAN COUNTY BOARD OF**
COMMISSIONERS



In a year of many challenges, the poppy field in Fennville brought the blessings of joy and comfort to people from Allegan County and many visitors as well.

Photo by Jen Shanahan of Fennville

March 11th, 2021

Chairman Storey & Honorable Commissioners Cain, Deyoung, Dugan, Jessup, Kapenga and Thiele-

It is a pleasure to present to you the *2020 Annual Report for the Offices of the Register of Deeds and County Clerk* – for a year that we can all agree tested Allegan County government and its citizens in many ways never seen before.



The challenges presented by COVID 19 and the response to the virus had profound effects on both offices under my direction. In the Clerk’s Office, the Elections Division navigated the tremendous effort of administering four very different elections- one of those a presidential contest in a swing state, during a pandemic, an election which would see the highest voter participation ever in Allegan County. The Circuit Court Records Division, working with the Judges of the 48th Circuit Court, had the unprecedented challenge of supporting jury trails (when allowed by the Supreme Court Administrator’s Office) with “social distancing” and hand sanitizer being the order of the day. Even though the Courthouse was completely closed to the public for a few weeks, the Vital Records Division saw the highest number of vital documents recorded in that office in over 20 years (875 more transactions than during 2019). In the Register of Deeds Office, documents recorded increased by nearly 5,000 in 2020 from the previous year while the Register collected more than \$7.7 million dollars in transfer taxes and fees. Both numbers are all time highs.

Commissioners, while the offices were quite busy providing record service to the people of Allegan County in 2020, what I am most proud of is that both offices remained available and accessible to the people who needed our services the entire year- in person whenever possible - by phone, email, U.S. Mail, and even meeting customers in the parking lot when the building was closed to the public. My staff offered phenomenal customer service despite COVID 19 fears. As you study the daunting numbers in this report, please keep in mind the hardworking deputy clerks and registers that were on the front lines of serving the County all year long.

Sincerely,

A close-up photograph of a handwritten signature in black ink on a light-colored surface. The signature is cursive and appears to read 'Bob Genetski'.

Bob Genetski
Allegan County Clerk – Register

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The Offices of the Allegan County Clerk and Register of Deeds are open from 8 A.M. to 5 P.M. on weekdays. Both are located at:

The Allegan County Courthouse
113 Chestnut Street
Allegan, MI 49010

Deputy Clerks and Registers 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 the Register of Deeds

County Clerk Bob Genetski is available at (269) 673-0291



Office of the County Clerk

ELECTIONS

For Michigan election workers, the 2020 Presidential Election was the World Series and the Super Bowl rolled into one as the Great Lakes State was considered a battle ground state & a swing state in the race for the White House all while hosting a high profile U.S. Senate race. County elections staff, working with local clerks, trained more election inspectors than ever before while clerks processed a record high number of ballots all in the midst of the COVID 19 outbreak.

Elections 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 maintaining election records. The Elections Coordinator 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 work 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. To ensure the integrity of voter rolls for Allegan County residents, the Election Coordinator facilitates entry of newly registered voters, address updates, and removal of electors who have moved, who request to be removed from rolls or who have passed away.

Elections Division

At a glance:

Chief Deputy Clerk: Jackie Porter

FTE's: 1

Coordinating Elections for:

45 "In-County" Precincts

10 "In-County" School Districts

% of Voter turnout in 2020:

26.55% in the March 10th Presidential Primary

24.11% in the May 5th Special Election (10 jurisdictions)

32.76% in the August 4th State Primary

71.72% in the November 3rd Presidential Election

Turnout in Raw Number of Voters:

23,554 for the March 10th Primary

4,424 for the May 5th Special Election

29,452 for the August 4th Primary

67,489 for the November 3rd General Election

(Continued – Elections Division Overview)

The coordinator also communicates with other states to remove voters who move across state lines from the files. Maintaining the integrity of the QVF is essential to protecting the security of the vote.

Campaign Finance

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



Clerk Bob Genetski swearing in the Honorable Robin Phelps, Ganges Township Clerk. Phelps was elected to her first full term in November 2020.

During 2020, the Clerk’s Office oversaw and accepted campaign filings from 308 candidates and 4 ballot initiative groups while accepting candidate filings from dozens of “write in” candidates for city council, township office and school board.

ELECTIONS AND THE PUBLIC

2020 Elections

The Elections Division and clerks throughout Allegan County rose to meet some huge challenges in 2020. Local clerks successfully administered four elections with “social distancing” due to COVID 19 concerns while wearing personal protective equipment, and dealing with unsolicited absentee ballot applications all while helping more people vote absentee than ever before and while the media regularly reported misinformation to the public regarding early voting and ballot drop boxes.

While various issues led to confusion among many voters- numerous senior election inspectors- the backbone of running quality elections south of Ottogan Street and north of Baseline Road, told clerks they would not be working in 2020 due to fear of COVID 19. This forced nearly every township and city to recruit new poll workers. Clerks in the cities of Saugatuck and Holland had to relocate longtime voting locations to keep voters a distance of six feet apart while other clerks had to alter where their poll lines had always been so that crowds were not standing too close to each other when voting.



ELECTIONS

Voting changes, COVID-19 change Michigan election for clerks



by: ANNA LIZ NICHOLS, The Associated Press/ Report for America
Posted: Jul 12, 2020 / 08:02 PM EDT / Updated: Jul 12, 2020 / 08:02 PM EDT

LANSING, Mich. (AP) – Michigan county

(Continued – Elections and the Public)

The fact that the 2020 Elections ran as smoothly as they did is a true testament to local clerks from Laketown Township to Gun Plain from Leighton Township to Casco and all cities and townships in between as well as the County Elections Division.



Dorr Township Clerk Debbie Sewers in the hazmat suit provided by the State for work during the COVID 19 elections.

March 10th - the Presidential Primary

The March Presidential Primary took place at the onset of the COVID 19 worries. County wide 23,554 voters cast ballots or 26.55% of the electorate. While the Republican and Democratic Presidential Primaries were the big draw on the ballot, voters had a few local issues to decide as well.

Allegan County administered school proposals for Glenn School District, a portion of the Van Buren County ISD, as well as the Dorr Library, the City of Allegan (which had 2), Monterey Township, and a bond issue for Saugatuck Public Schools that had been on the ballot twice before- but proved successful on its third attempt.

Allegan County Democrats supported Joe Biden over Bernie Sanders while Republicans overwhelmingly re-nominated Donald Trump who won 9,136 votes out of the 9,774 votes cast in that race.

Perhaps the biggest issue with managing the March election was the number of people who needed new ballots after candidates dropped out on the Democratic side. In one jurisdiction, one man needed to return his old ballot and request a new one five times.

Candidate	Total Votes
Joe Biden	7,572
Bernie Sanders	4,839
Mike Bloomberg	520
Pete Buttigieg	259
Elizabeth Warren	195
Amy Klobuchar	111
Tulsi Gabbard	109
Uncommitted & 8 others	187

(Continued – Elections and the Public)

The May 5th Special Election

Local schools adjust plans for May election



UNCERTAINTY – the biggest challenge in administering the May election was uncertainty. With fears of COVID 19 running high, rumors abounded at one point that Michigan would have an “all mail in” election with no polling locations open. Lansing went as far as to allow school districts and local governments who had proposals on May ballots to pull those proposals even though ballots had already been printed. Locally, Hamilton and Zeeland schools both pulled their bond issues off the May ballot amid the uncertainty (which also was affecting state budget and

unemployment projections).

Though only 10 jurisdictions participated, there were 4,424 voters (24.11%) who engaged in the election.

Caledonia Public Schools had a bond issue on the ballot as well as their operating millage. The proposal for Hopkins Public Schools Sinking fund passed 862 votes to 758. A bond proposal for Otsego Public Schools passed by 533 votes.

The August 4th Primary Election

The State Primary Election on August 4th was one of the longest ballots in recent memory. The length of the ballot combined with the warm weather to create some issues with the tabulators, but the worries of COVID 19 and unprecedented absentee ballots were the biggest concerns.

A significant 29,452 Allegan County voters or 32.76% showed up to cast ballots.



Clerk Bob Genetski with Scott Corbin, Director of the Allegan County Emergency Operations Center at Otsego City Hall. Corbin and his team supported local clerks with Personal Protective Equipment and by building Plexiglas windows to protect election inspectors from COVID.

(Continued – Elections and the Public)

Democratic Primary		Republican Primary	
U.S. Congress 6 th District		U.S. Congress 6 th District	
Jen Richardson	4,627	Fred Upton	12,003
Jon Hoadley	3,309	Elena Oelke	5,810
State Representative 72 nd District		State Representative 80 th District	
Lily Cheng-Shulting	752	Mary Whiteford	11,501
Cade Wilson	497	Nevin P. Cooper-Keel	2,653

Some of the contested primary races were spirited, and some had very close results on both sides of the aisle.

Voters were in a very cautious mood on school and local proposals as the AAESA Operating Millage passed by less than 800 votes (out of 16,893 cast). Hamilton voters defeated a school bonding proposal by 1,150.

Hopkins Township Voters shot down a Road Improvement Proposal by 56 votes.

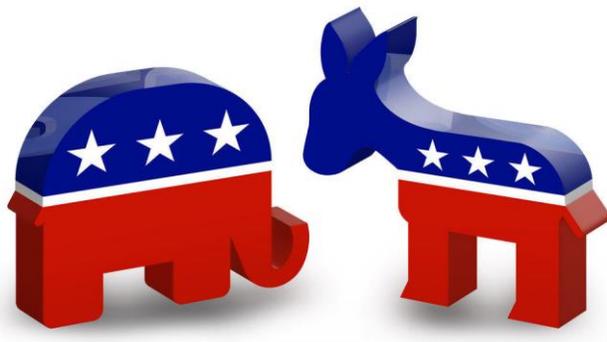
At the same time, many of the millage and proposal ideas that passed had smaller majorities than usual. The Operating Millage for Wayland Union Public Schools passed by only 10 votes.

Of note, voters in the Village of Hopkins approved a new Village Charter Revision Proposal 104-29.

Issues with tabulators meant that some results were not available until early the next day. The Elections Division did not leave for home from the Allegan County Courthouse until roughly 5:30 A.M.

Republican Primary for Allegan County Prosecuting Attorney	
Myrene Koch	8,864
Michael Villar	8,847

The GOP Primary for Prosecuting Attorney decided by a 17 vote margin, but the Wayland Union School District Operating Millage was closer – passing by only 10 votes.



The November 3rd Election

Preparations for the 2020 Presidential Election began almost immediately after the primary. Expectations of record turnout, huge absentee ballot numbers and COVID 19 protocols challenged the Elections Division and local clerks to prepare for everything. As such, the

County Clerk’s Office went from supporting 5 Absentee Voter Counting Boards in November 2019 to 22 for the Presidential Election – this means training more election workers and more programming at the Courthouse.

Despite all of the preparation, Election Day still offered the unpredictable.

(Continued – Elections and the Public)

Police had to be called to handle disturbances at Valley Township Hall, Cheshire Township Hall and Leighton Township Hall where at least one individual was taken to the Allegan County Jail. The local clerk's efforts to remove an activist from the front of a precinct landed the incident (and the clerk) all over YOUTUBE and FACEBOOK leading to hundreds of nasty phone calls to the clerk and the township.



Voters - socially distanced - wait in line on the footbridge leading to Plainwell City Hall on November 3rd.



A medical emergency at Otsego City Hall created a challenge when the individual refused to leave without voting despite passing out. Upon passing out a second time, EMT's insisted on rushing her to the hospital while the individual protested... loudly in the precinct. Because the woman showed symptoms of COVID 19, the entire precinct had to be shut down and voting stopped (which triggers a call to Lansing) while the local clerk and her elections team disinfected everything at the location.

Voter turnout was unprecedented throughout the county. Of the 94,103 registered voters, 71.72% (or 67,489) cast ballots on November 3.

Between social distancing and turnout, some jurisdictions had lines of voters all day long – Dorr and Manlius Townships had lines of voters out the precinct door for as much as two hours after 8 P.M. when the polls closed.

Accommodating issues from the highest voter turnout (in raw numbers) ever meant that some results would not arrive at the County Clerk's Office until roughly 7:30 AM – just a few hours before the Board of Canvassers convened. This meant the staff at the County was at the Office and on the clock from 6 A.M. on November 3rd until 5 P.M. on November 4th. Despite the many challenges of the day, the Election Division's efforts were recognized by WHTC radio AM 1450 in Holland for putting results online a lot earlier than some other counties. Allegan County voters chose Republican candidates in every race – federal, state, county and in contested township races. Residents gave Donald Trump 41,392 votes over Joe Biden's 24,449. The GOP nominee for U.S. Senate John James bested Democrat Gary Peters 42,362 to 22,939.

Voter Turnout in Allegan County for the November 2020 race set a record.

Percentage of Voter Turnout	Election Year
71.72%	2020
71.6%	2004
70%	2008
67%	2016
66.9%	2012
65.7%	2000
61%	1996

(Continued – Elections and the Public)



The top vote earner in Allegan County races was County Clerk-Register of Deeds Bob Genetski with 49,176 votes.

CONTESTED NON-PARTISAN RACES: In the race for State Supreme Court, voters chose the incumbent justice and Mary Kelly with 25,594 and 20,395 votes respectively. Voters in the City of Holland chose Juanita F. Bocanegra for the 58th District Court seat by just over three hundred

votes. Races for city council, village council as well as school board seats and board members for Lake Michigan College and Grand Rapids Community College were decided as well as numerous proposals.

THANK YOU! The County Clerk's Office owes a great debt of gratitude to the Allegan County Department of Information Services for their outstanding support every Election Night. Patti Wartella & Deb Jones of County IS have been an important part of the elections team. Deb has done great work to ensure our election results can be posted to the county website and has very much improved the look and accessibility of our posted results. Patti is in the office late into Election Night ensuring that elections results can be transmitted to the County, properly accumulated and posted to the website. The Elections Division is grateful for their service.



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>

VITAL RECORDS DIVISION / QUICK FACTS

Chief Deputy Clerk – Jackie Porter FTE's – 2

Earliest Records on File:

September 1st, 1835 County Organized
(within the "Michigan Territory")

December 17th, 1835 First Marriage License

June 25th, 1836 Circuit Court Records

October 4th, 1836 Board of Supervisors Proceedings

January 24th, 1867 First Birth Recorded

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

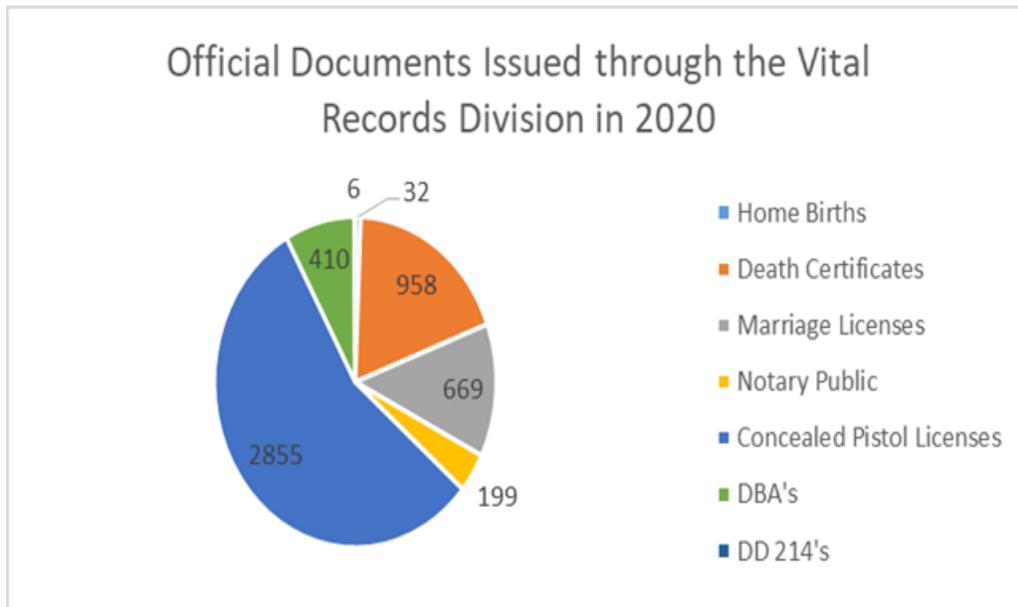
Despite the challenges of COVID 19 and the Courthouse even being closed to the public for a few weeks, the hard working deputy clerks recorded 5,129 vital documents in 2020 – a gain of 875 over the 2019 number. Concerns over the virus led to obvious declines in marriage licenses and DBA's, but the overall number was buoyed by a surge in Concealed Pistol Licenses as well as increases in death certificates and in home births.

The Vital Records Division processed 2,855 CPL's on the year, the most ever at 113 Chestnut Street. The other increases were in death certificates and home births that saw 140 more and 10 more respectively than in 2019.

Every other product recorded in the Office declined in 2020. Marriage licenses dropped by 106 from 2019. Year over year, there were 10 fewer military papers of Honorable Discharge recorded. Notary Public applications dropped by 63 while business license applications for people doing business under an assumed name were down by 98 in 2020 from the previous year.

Year	Number of Transactions
2016	4,389
2017	4,210
2018	4,356
2019	4,254
2020	5,129

(Continued – Vital Records)

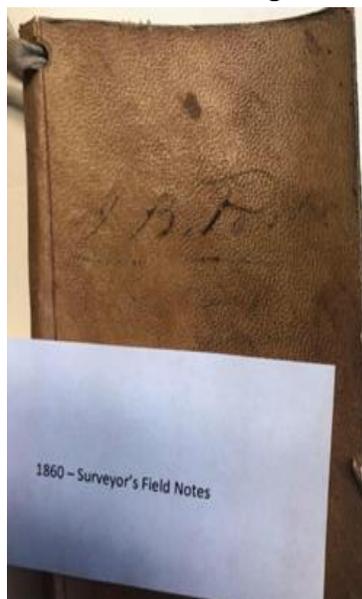


As has been the case since 2009, Concealed Pistol Licenses accounted for more than any other transactions in the Clerk's Office during 2020. County residents paid for 2,855 CPL's –over 1,000

more than in 2019 and nearly 56% of all transactions for 2020. Death Certificates accounted for the 2nd highest number of records generated at 958. There were 669 Marriage Licenses recorded coming in 3rd on the list, so COVID 19 concerns did not dampen everyone's love life. DBA's were the fourth most used service as there were 410 filed by county residents in 2020. With 199 applications for Notary Public, that product came in 5th among the seven. Home births at 32 and DD 214's with 6 recorded were the fewest records created in 2020 – a trend going back to 2008.

Did you know that Allegan County has many original records dating back to the 1800's?

The pictures below are of the Field Notes of the Allegan County Surveyor's work from 1860.



(Continued – Vital Records)

Trends in Live Home Births

Since 2009, there are no longer any “birthing hospitals” in Allegan County. So, except in the case of emergencies, the only birth certificates initiated in the County Clerk’s Office are those for “live home births”. Due to a recent change in the law, fewer and fewer of the little cherubs come to the Courthouse with their parents for physical verification. In most cases now, the midwife performs the verification and files directly with the state. When the birth record is generated, one copy is recorded with the County and the other is on file with the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services – State Office of Vital Records.

Year	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
Births Recorded	19	12	27	25	30	29	35	22	32

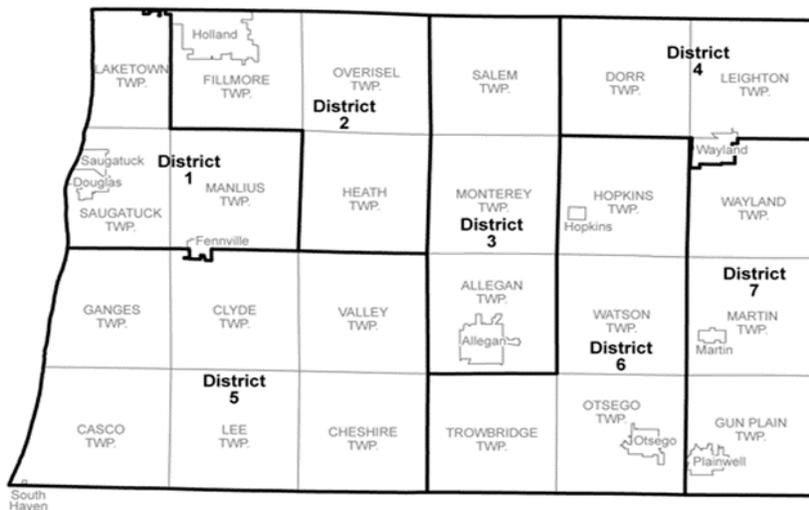
Trends in home births: The number

of home births in Allegan County increased from 22 in 2019 to 32 in 2020. That means last year the County had the 2nd highest number of home births it has had in the last ten years.

Geography of Home Births in Allegan County: When the number of home births is broken down by the seven County Commission Districts, the midwife was the busiest in Commissioner Dugan’s District 6 where 8 home births occurred. Districts 2 & 3 home to Commissioners Thiele and Storey logged the second highest number at 7 each.

Live births broken down by County Commission District:

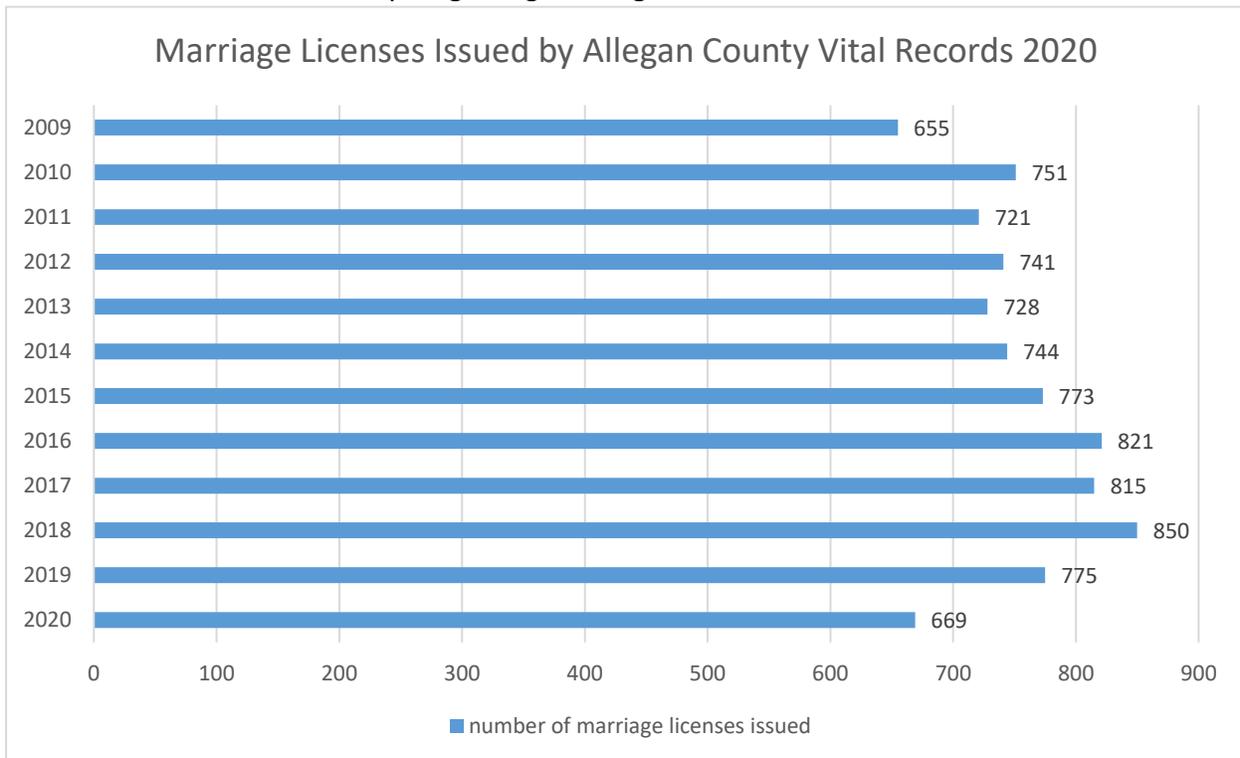
- District 1 (Kapenga) – 4
- District 2 (Storey) -- 7
- District 3 (Thiele) -- 7
- District 4 (DeYoung) – 1
- District 5 (Jessup) - 2
- District 6 (Dugan) - 8
- District 7 (Cain) - 3



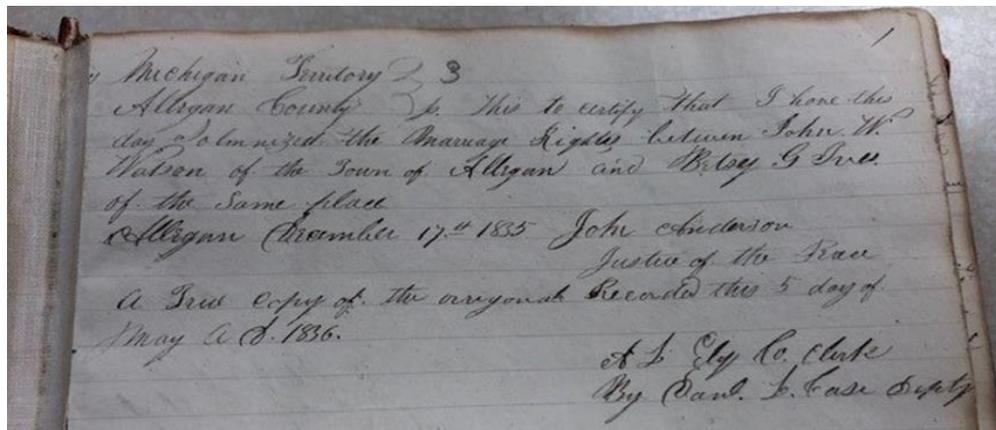
(Continued – Vital Records)

Trends in Marriage License Applications

For the second year in a row, the number of Allegan County residents seeking to join in marriage declined dropping to 669 from 775 in 2019. These declines come after the 20 year high of 850 marriage licenses applied for was hit in 2018. The 669 of 2020 represent the second lowest number of couples getting marriage since 2009's number of 655.

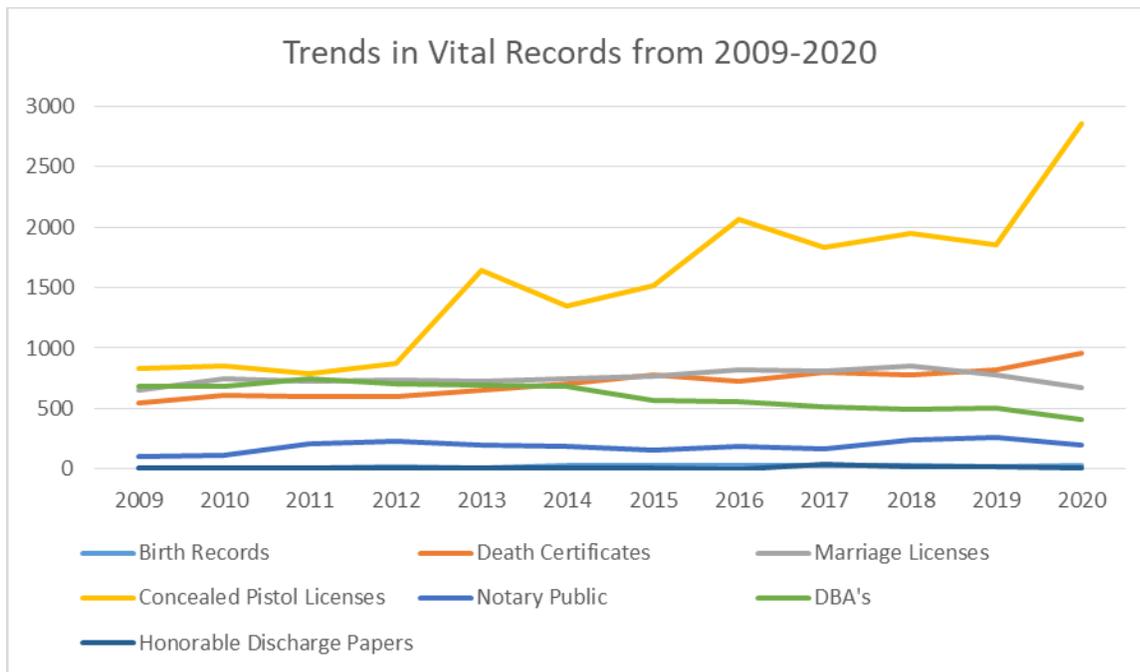


Did you know??? The earliest recorded marriage license in the vault at the County Clerk's Office is for a marriage in the in the "Michigan Territory." The marriage of John W. Watson of Allegan to Betsy Ives of Allegan occurred on December 17th, 1835 and was solemnized by Justice of the Peace John Anderson. The certificate was recorded in May 1836 with County Clerk A. L. Ely.



(Continued – Vital Records)

Trends in Vital Records Transactions



A twelve year history of requests through the Vital Records Division shows that only the number Concealed Pistol License applications varies greatly over the years. From 2009 through 2020, CPL applications increased by 2,025 (830 in 2009 to 2,855 in 2020). Notary Public Applications fluctuated during that same period with a low of 100 in 2009 to a high of 262 recorded in 2019. Home Births in Allegan County ranged from as few as 11 in 2009 to a high of 35 in 2018, coming in at 32 in 2020. There were 958 death certificates recorded in 2020 – a 12 year high. The number of deaths recorded follows the county’s population increases as there were only 547 logged in 2009 – the twelve year low.

After a year over year increase from 2018 to 2019 in applications for DBA’s (or business licenses for doing business under an assumed name) such applications declined by nearly 100 in 2020, dropping from 508 in 2019 to 410 – not surprising given the COVID 19 concerns.

The number of Veterans’ Discharge Papers (DD 214’s) filed with the Office dropped through the floor in 2020. This was to be expected. The average age of a veteran who comes into the Courthouse to file such paperwork is typically between 60 and 80 years of age and COVID 19 deterred a lot of customers from doing business in person. After processing a 20 year high of 44 in 2017, only 16 DD 214’s were registered with the Clerk in 2019, and the number dropped down to six in 2020.

(Continued – Vital Records)

holland
sentinels.com

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 Filing 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.



It was an honor to thank David Low of Wayland for his service to our country during W.W. II.

These papers are extremely important for veterans as they 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 the County Clerk is encouraging all 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, none of the information

(even whether or not the document is one file) on the DD 214 available to the public.

A ten year history of DD 214 filings.

Year	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
Number Filed	11	10	5	7	4	1	44	24	16	6

(Continued – Vital Records)

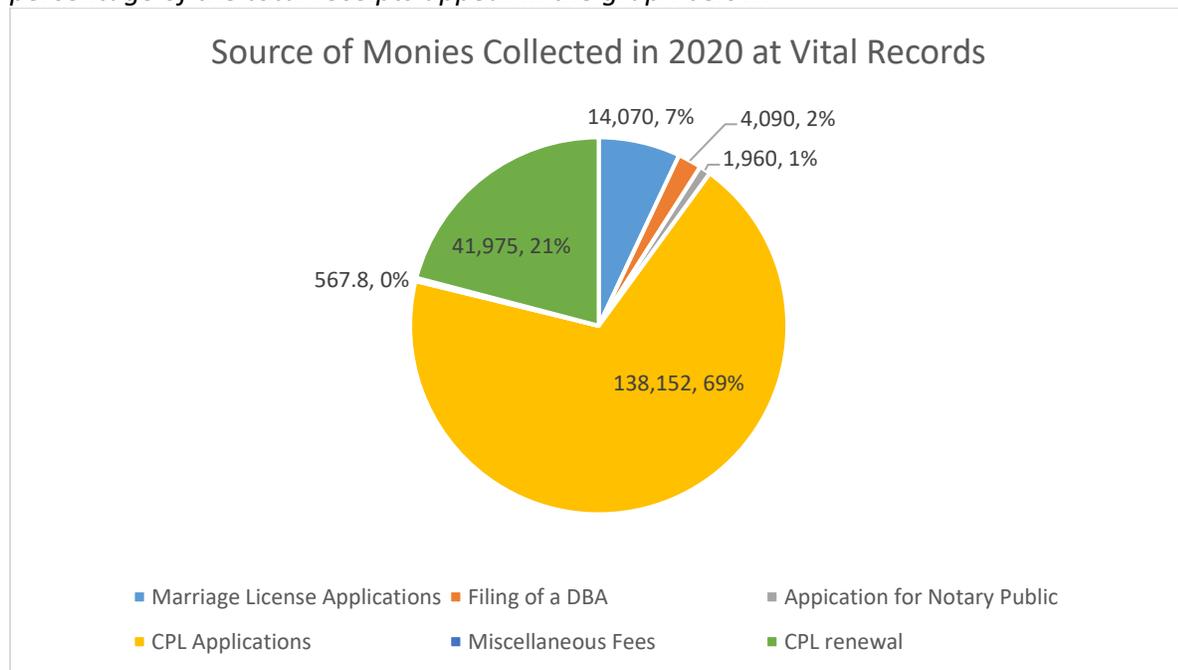
\$\$\$ Where the Money Comes from and Goes... \$\$\$

The Vital Records Division took in \$200,814.80 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 \$200,814.80 collected in the Vital Records Division during 2020, the source and percentage of the total receipts appear in the graph below.

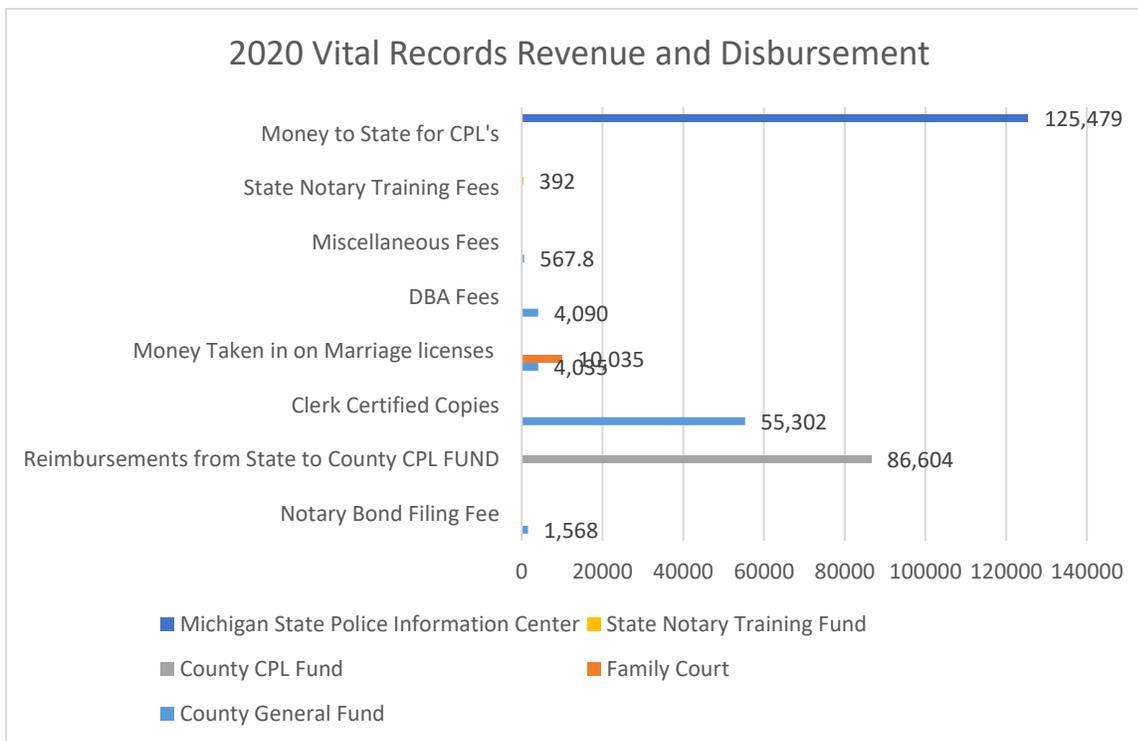


In 2020, new CPL applications were the number one product making up 69% percent of the revenue at \$138,152. Renewals for CPL's took in the second most money accruing \$41,975 and representing 21% of receipts. Marriage license applications took in \$14,070 or 7% (of the total) while DBA's brought in \$4,090 at 2% of the total monies. Applications for Notary Public were 1% of last year's total at \$1,960, and miscellaneous fees earned closer to 0 percent at \$576.80.

(Continued – Vital Records Division)

Fees collected in the Vital Records Division are deposited into different accounts - three 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 rest goes to the County General Fund. Marriage License Fees are split with \$5 of the \$20 going to the County General Fund and \$15 gets sent to Family Court for marriage counseling.

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



The Office took in \$200,814.80 on sales for the year 2020- most of it ended up with the Michigan State Police, in the County CPL Fund, Family Court and the General Fund with only \$392 going to the State Notary Training Fund.

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. The letter informs them of how they may renew online at 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 48th Circuit Court for all parties in a civil, criminal or Family Court matters. 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 service 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.

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.



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 the state may take necessary actions to uphold and protect the citizens of Michigan.

CIRCUIT COURT RECORDS DIVISION QUICK FACTS

Chief Deputy Clerk: Jackie Porter

FTE’s: 6 (6.5 approved)

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, nonprofit, and private sector accounts involving:

Restitution, attorney fees, bonds, Victims’ Rights Fund, fines, state minimum costs, filing fees, motion fees, jury trial fees, garnishment & subpoena fees. **In 2020, the Circuit Court Clerk’s office collected approximately 1.2 million dollars.**

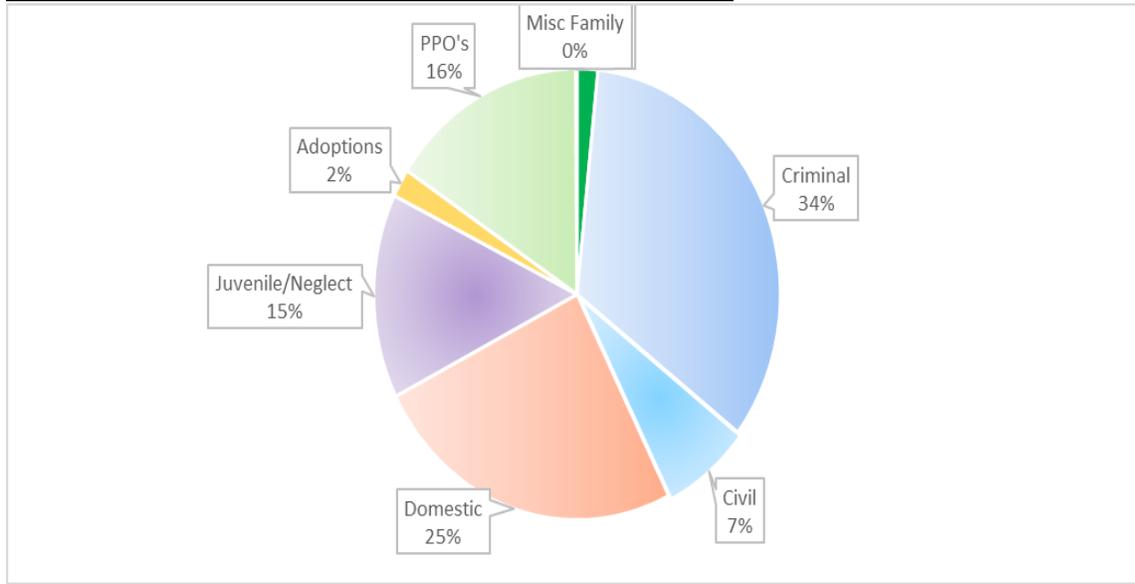
The Division serves as a pass through entity whereby restitution payments are collected and sent to victims of crimes

The Division is also responsible for processing adoptions.

Individual deputy clerks from this office serve as clerks in hearings of the 48th Circuit Court.

(Continued – Circuit Court Records)

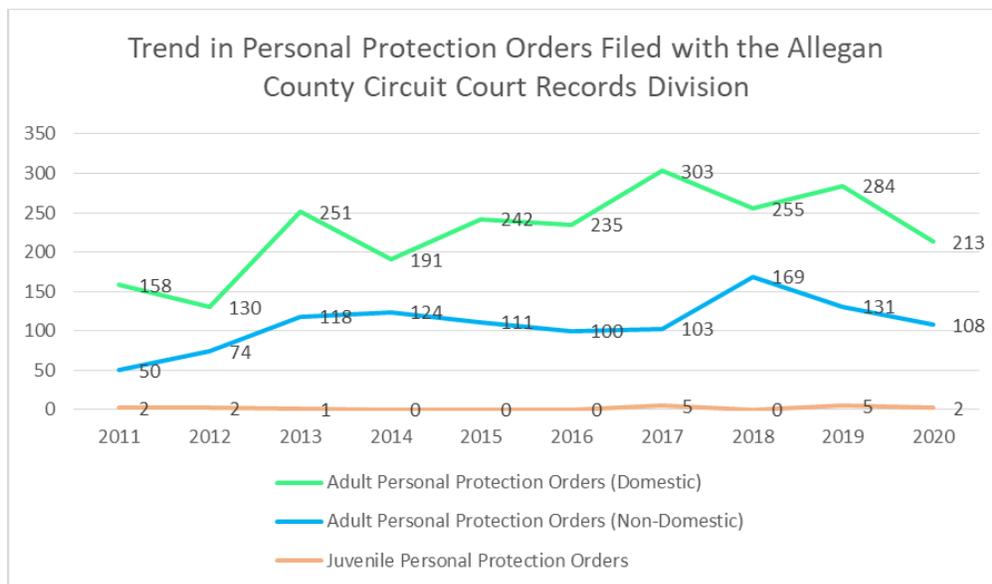
Overview of New Cases Filed in the Circuit Court in 2020



Appeal: 34 Criminal: 698 Civil: 146 Domestic 515
 Juvenile/Neglect 303 Adoptions: 42 PPO's 323 Misc. Family 2

Personal Protection Orders

Personal Protection Orders in Allegan County are filed with the deputy clerks in the Circuit Court Records Division. The number of Adult PPO's (domestic) decreased in 2020 to 213, down



from 284 in 2019. Non-domestic PPO's also dropped from 131 to 108 in 2020. Juvenile PPO's declined to only 2 from 5 the year before.

(Continued – Circuit Court Records)

Adoptions

Trends in Adoptions over the last 10 years.

Year	2020	2019	2018	2017	2016	2015	2014	2013	2012	2011
Adoptions	42	74	36	45	46	68	55	84	121	105



Due to concerns of COVID 19, perhaps the most popular event at the Courthouse, Judge Buck's "National Adoption Day" ceremony needed to be moved online. In years past, the public & media would be invited into the Courtroom for the rare, public once a year event.

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 each year anywhere in Allegan County.

Adoptions in Allegan County were down by 32 in 2020. The nine year high is 121 children adopted attained in 2012.

Year	2020	2019	2018	2017	2016	2015	2014	2013	2012	2011
Juvenile/Neglect Cases	303	349	387	474	502	667	530	732	762	1,011

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

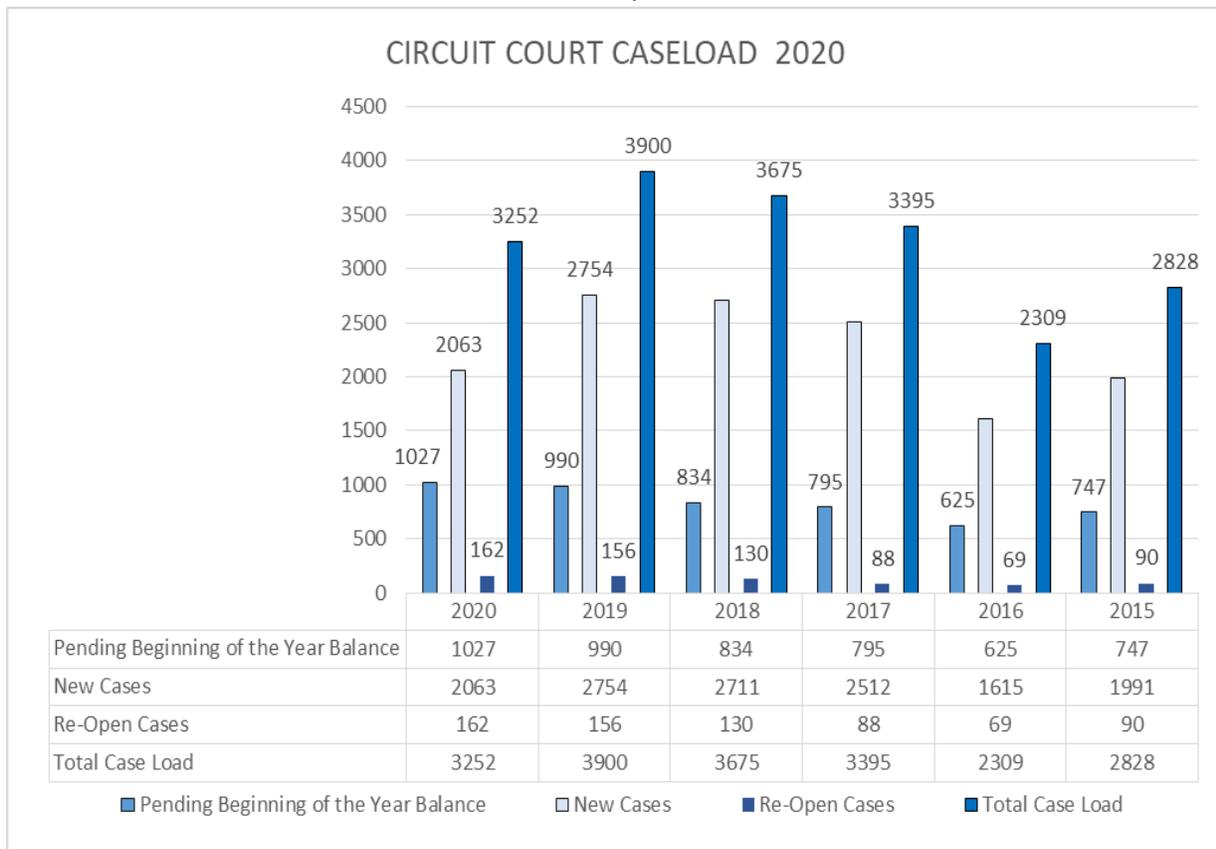
(Continued – Circuit Court Records)

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.

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.



“As with most departments, the clerk’s office has had to adjust a ‘new normal’ in 2020, learn new procedures, and come up with innovative ways to do things to keep the court docket moving as much as possible. Despite these challenges the level of service to the Court and the public has remained high, and the level of cooperation between the Court and Clerk’s Office is excellent.” -The Honorable Roberts Kengis, Judge of the 48th Circuit Court

(Continued – Circuit Court Records)

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 2020, the Circuit Court Records Division received \$236,431.88* in collections for Adult Cases and disbursed \$237,369.06** to crime victims. At the same time, collections from Juveniles was \$14,848.05 while \$22,387.44 was remitted by the office to crime victims.

* This is the second highest amount collected in the last five years.

** This being the second highest amount disbursed in the last five years.

Adult	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
Beginning Balance:	\$16,964.20	\$17,990.13	\$10,394.26	\$2,337.46	\$29,515.73	\$51,277.27
Collections:	\$113,272.40	\$124,020.00	\$245,026.56	\$186,124.09	\$210,500.72	\$236,431.88
Total:	\$130,236.60	\$142,010.13	\$255,420.82	\$188,461.55	\$240,016.45	\$241,559.15
Disbursed to Victims:	\$116,469.11	\$131,856.73	\$253,083.30	\$185,945.82	\$188,739.18	\$237,369.06

Juvenile	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
Beginning Balance:	\$49,607.55	\$43,119.45	\$7,922.64	\$7,729.07	\$16,718.87	\$7,539.39
Collections:	\$18,217.69	\$17,507.67	\$15,029.98	\$24,125.67	\$15,474.47	\$14,848.05
Total:	\$67,735.24	\$60,627.12	\$22,952.62	\$31,854.74	\$32,193.43	\$22,387.44
Disbursed to Victims:	\$24,660.79	\$52,704.48	\$15,233.56	\$15,135.87	\$24,654.96	\$15,168.71

The Circuit Court Records Division processed 355 jurors for the 9 jury trials held in the 48th Circuit Court in 2020. This duty entails checking in jurors, the selection process, and orchestrating reimbursements for jurors’ service. The Supreme Court Order issued on June 26, 2020 paused all jury trails. A subsequent Administrative Order allowed in-person trials in jurisdictions where certain public health criteria were met relative to COVID 19 cases. Allegan County was able to hold two jury trials under such parameters before MDHHS decided that the conditions posed a public health risk.



Other Duties and Responsibilities of the County Clerk

The County Clerk serves (along with the County Treasurer and in Allegan County's case the Chairman of the Board of Commissioners) on the County Plat Board.



The Plat Board met once in 2020. The socially distanced members voted to approve plans for a Leighton Township development.

The Clerk also serves as a member of the County Election Commission along with the Probate Judge and Treasurer. The Election Commission was rather busy in 2020.

As well, the Clerk serves as Secretary to the Board of Canvassers.

Finally, the County Clerk serves as Clerk to the Allegan County Board of Commissioners.



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 Office of the Register of Deeds records all documents pertaining to real property including deeds, mortgages, liens, powers of attorney, 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.

The year 2020 was record breaking in the Register’s Office. The number of documents recorded soared from the previous year, and the office collected over \$7 million dollars in taxes and fees.

Register of Deeds Office Quick Facts:

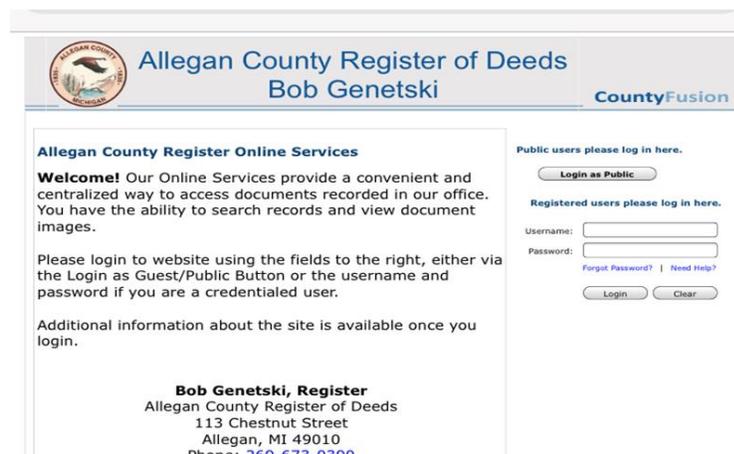
Chief Deputy Register: Patty Fales

FTE’s: 4 (with a combined 99 years of experience in recording)

Money collected during 2020 (including State Transfer Tax): \$7,729,959.65*

Total documents recorded in 2020: 27,878 (4,951 more than in 2019)

Records available: from 1835 to present



The webpage shown here is the new online searchable database where customers can search for and purchase copies of deeds from their homes.

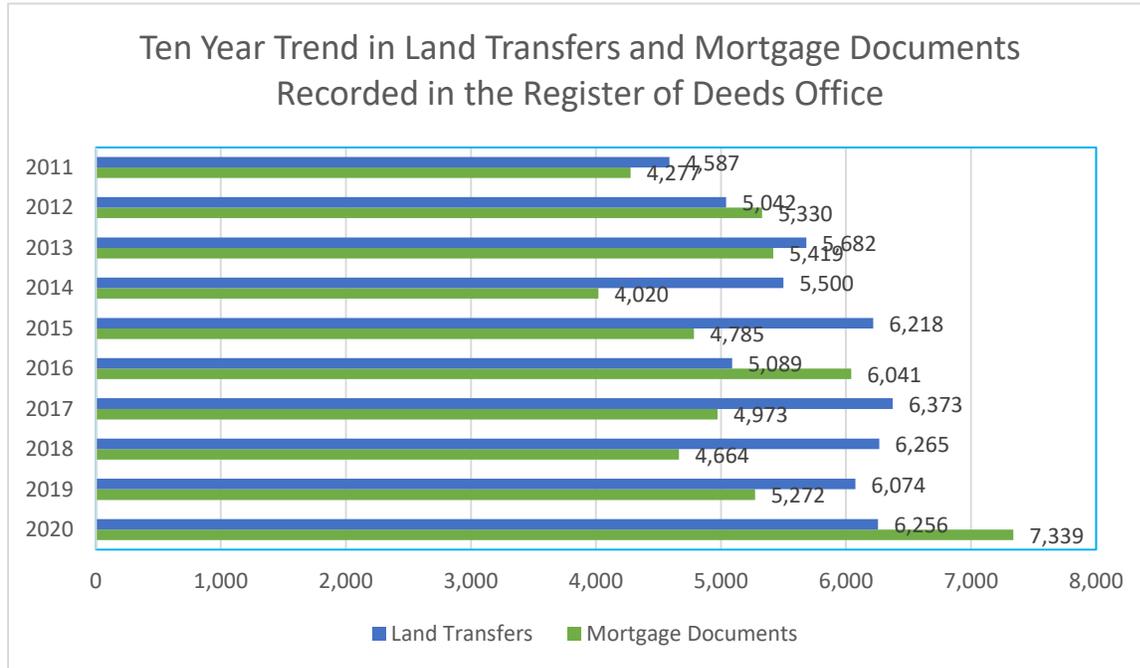
It was the first full year of the County’s new record system which increased efficiency and effectiveness in the office.

The new technology includes the long awaited service of an online searchable database for land records that allows customers to search on the Internet and purchase copies on record 24 hours a day from any location with internet service.

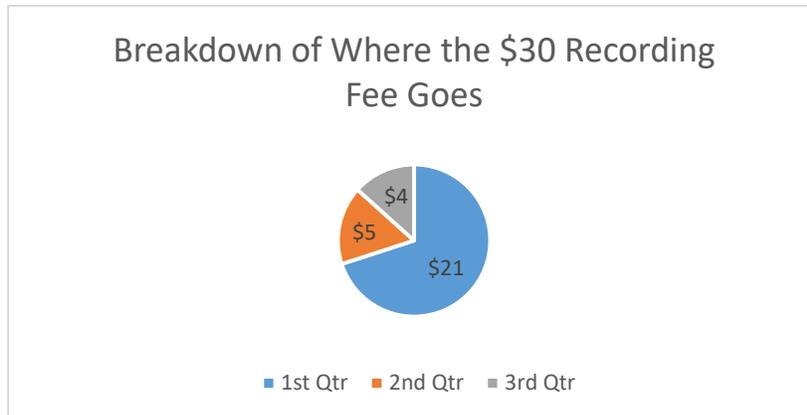
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Document Recording

The total number of documents recorded in 2020 was 27,878 – an increase of 4,951 over the 22,927 recorded in 2019.



Trends in Documents Recorded: The two most often recorded documents at ROD are Land Transfers and Mortgage Documents, and the two drive the overall number of recordings. In 2020, customers recorded 7,339 mortgage documents (up from 5,272 the year before). Land Transfers for the same period were up to 6,256 from 2019’s 6,074. Over the last ten years, 2019 saw the lowest number of total recordings at 22,927. The ten year high occurred during 2020 (27,878 documents recorded) besting the previous high of 27,146 from 2012.

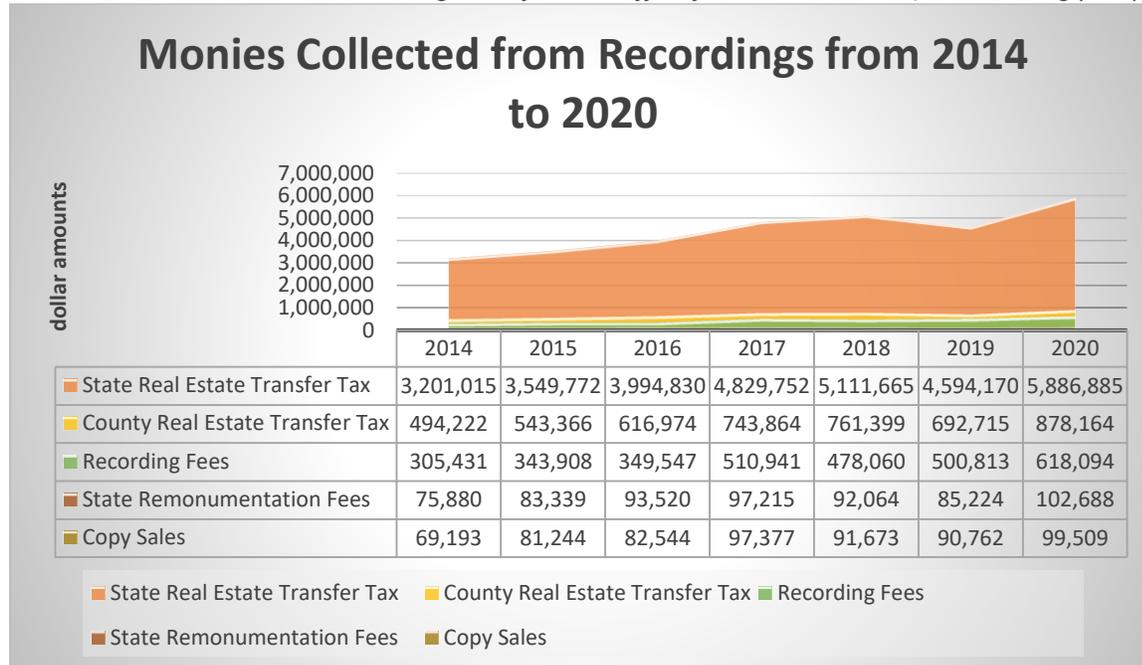


With each document recorded at the Register of Deeds, the Office collects \$30. Of that amount, the County General Fund receives \$21 while \$5 of that goes to the County Automation Fund (for upgrading technology in the Office). The remaining \$4 goes to the State Remonunmentation Fund.

The recording fee was set by the Legislature (implemented in 2016) at \$30. Prior to that, the fee was \$14.

(Continued – Register of Deeds)

Trends in Monies Collected in the Register of Deeds Office from 2014 – 2020 (not including passports)



The chart above shows a breakdown of total monies collected in ROD from 2014 through 2020. The total amount taken in for the year 2020 was **\$7,729,895.70**. Receipts from transfer taxes, fees, and sales all increased from 2019 to 2020. Real Estate Transfer Tax (State) collected climbed from \$4,594,170 to \$5,886,885 (a \$1,292,715 jump). County Transfer Tax receipts were \$878,164, an increase of \$185,449 over the previous year’s \$692,715. The Register of Deeds Office believes that **all of the 2020 receipts are all-time records for Allegan County**.

Definitions:

State Real Estate Transfer Tax: collected on all deeds recorded and sent to the State of Michigan – **1.5% of this is sent to the County General Fund** as an administrative fee (**\$88,303.28 for 2020**).

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

Recordings Fees: collected on every document recorded (of the nearly 200 hundred different types of documents) most of which goes to the County with a small portion going to the state (see the pie graph on the previous page for a 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. The monies are collected as part of the \$30 recording fee with the County General Fund receiving 1.5% as an administrative fee.

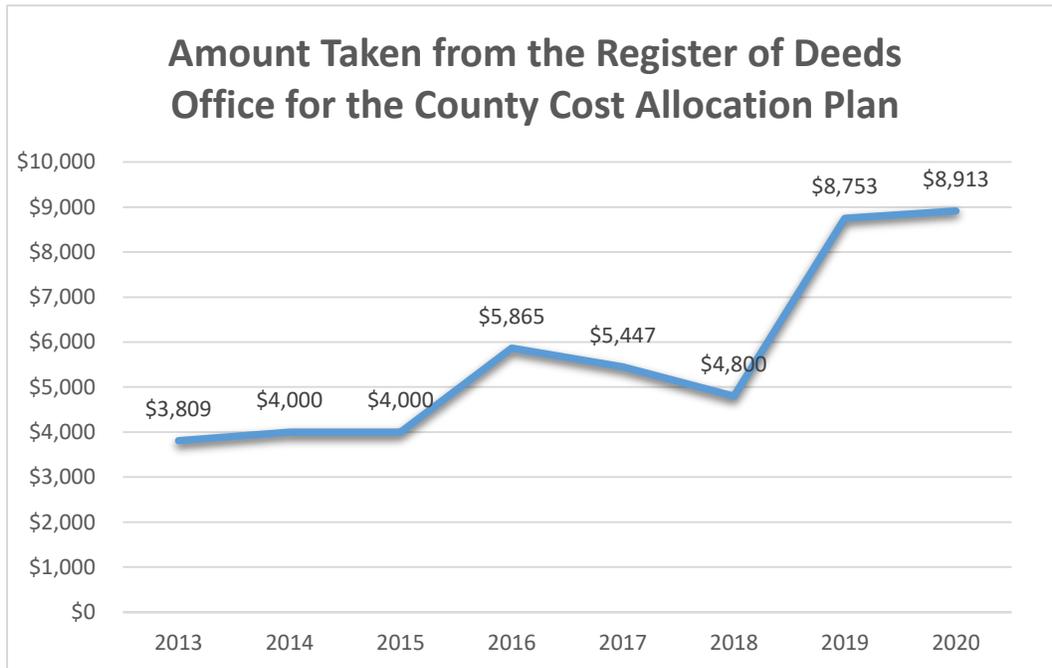
Copy Sales: collected on each document - \$1 per page and \$.20 per image (bulk sale to two title companies). This money goes to the County General Fund.

(Continued – Register of Deeds)

Seven Year Trend of Deposits Made to the Register of Deeds Automation Fund:

Year	2020	2019	2018	2017	2016	2015	2014
Amount Deposited	\$139,390	\$114,450	\$115,050	\$121,255	\$118,321	\$115,082	\$108,507

SEVEN YEAR TREND IN MONIES DEDCUTED FROM THE AUTOMATION FUND & SENT TO THE COUNTY COST ALLOCATION PLAN: Since 2013, \$41,063 has been take from the Automation



Fund for the County Cost Allocation Plan to pay for rent, door security, and overhead at the Courthouse building.

Did you know? That when you look up the Allegan County Register of Deeds Office on *Google Reviews*, you will find that our commitment to customer service earns five stars?

Google reviews

Jon Lanning
31 reviews · 1 photo

★★★★★ a month ago

Very nice people! She even helped me out by mailing something to a township instead of my home.

👍 1

Register of Deeds

5.0 ★★★★★ (1)

County government office in Allegan, Michigan

OVERVIEW

REVIEWS

PHOTOS

Google review summary



(Continued – Register of Deeds)

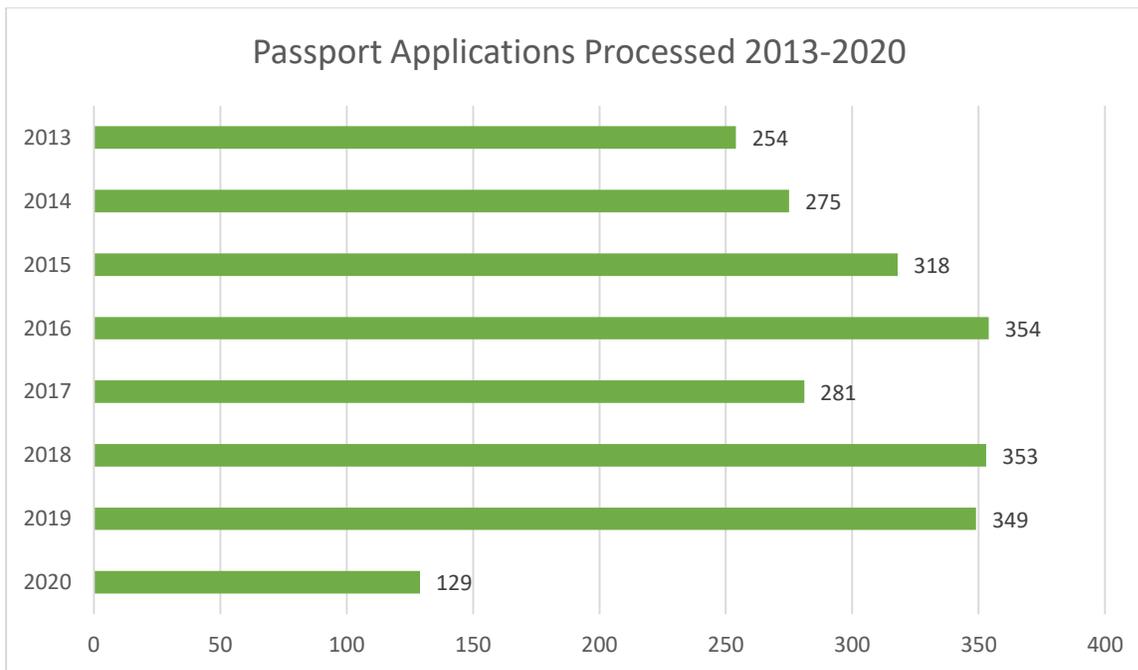
Passport Services



The Register of Deeds Office helped customers from Allegan County (and beyond) to obtain their United States Passports by accepting 129 Passport Applications in 2020.

The fee a customer pays 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.



COVID 19's effect on travel led to a significant but predictable decline in passport applications – a year over year drop of 63%. The office could not accept applications during April, May and June as the Detroit Passport Agency was shut down during those months. The 129 applications processed in 2020 is the lowest number since the Register of Deeds took over the duty from the Vital Records Office in 2013. The eight year high was hit in 2016 at 354.

(Continued – Register of Deeds)

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

Year	Applications	Revenue to the County	Revenue at \$35/\$25*
2020	129	\$4,515	\$4,515
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 took in \$650 from the 65 passport photos taken in 2020. This amount is down from \$1,690 in 2019 and the \$710 from 2018 when the service was initially offered midway through the year.



Travelers who have procrastinated making appointments to obtain driver's licenses or 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.

With Covid 19 shutting down Secretary of State branch offices for most of the year- the Oct 1, 2020 deadline to obtain a REAL ID compliant Driver's License has been delayed until Oct 1, 2021. After that date, under federal law travelers will need to present a REAL ID compliant identification card to board an airplane within the United States or to enter federal facilities.

The new requirement is one more reason to visit the Register of Deeds Office because a U.S. Passport is considered valid documentation to obtain the REAL ID.

Each deputy in the Office is annually certified as a Passport Acceptance Agent by the United States Department of State. The Office offers Passport services from 8:00 A.M. until 4:30 P.M. Monday through Friday.

Unlike our



(Continued – Register of Deeds)



Centennial Farms and the Register of Deeds

Along with being 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.

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 trends in applications recorded at the Register of Deeds Office under PA 116 are list by year below:

Year/ Number of Applications Recorded

- 2020 / 49
- 2019 / 103
- 2018 / 127*
- 2017 / 48
- 2016 / 48
- 2015 / 110
- 2014 / 38^

*= 7 year high

^=7 year low



Bob Genetski detasseling corn with an Allegan County crew.

Ongoing projects, outstandings Issues, and concerns for the future...

Reapportionment: The lines for County Commission Districts will be redrawn in 2021 for the 2022 Election. The process know as “reapportionment” will be based on the new U.S. Census numbers. By law, the County Clerk chairs the first meeting of the Reapportionment Committee until a chair is chosen. He will be diligently researching the reapportionment process.



The Cost of Elections: The cost of running elections is growing exponatially. Everything from programming for elections to shipping



ballots is going up. The Clerk’s Office fought back in 2020 by borrowing a van (and a driver) from the County Facilities Department and sending Clerk Genetski (wearing old clothes) to pick up November’s ballots & precinct kits from Tecumseh, Michigan. Whether this is a long-term solution or not, remains to be seen. However, the increasing costs are a big concern.



Two trips to Tecumseh for election supplies save Allegan County taxpayers several thousand dollars.

Allegan County Veterans’ ID Cards: After COVID 19 delayed the rollout last year, the Clerk’s Office expects to offer these by April 2021.

Property Fraud Alerts: The Office hopes to offer free “property fraud alerts”. This is an online service that will allow Allegan County residents the ability to have their name monitored within the Register of Deeds Office in order to track possible fraudulent activity.



Good morning Taylor,
Thank you so much! You have been amazing throughout this whole process. I cannot thank you enough! Please let your supervisor(s) know that you are the most helpful, informative and genuinely concerned person I have EVER had the pleasure to work with in ANY Register of Deeds Office nationwide. I do not mean to say other people have not been helpful or kind, but you have gone above and beyond. Being new to Michigan underwriting I know I had WAY too many questions, but you answered, courteously and informatively, every time. I have been in the business since 2001 and have spoken with a lot of people over that time. You truly were among the most professional, and knowledgeable, I have worked with.
In this crazy time for the entire world with

Thank you so much! By far the best and most efficient help from any Clerk's office I've worked with. And I do these elections a few times a year!

Thank you so much. We may purchase another list as the votes come in to determine who has returned absentee ballots. Are you the appropriate contact for that as well?

-Kaleena

Kaleena Gonzalez
Regional Business Development Manager
The Christman Company

