

OTTAWA COUNTY CLERK / REGISTER OF DEEDS ~ ANNUAL REPORT 2014

JUSTIN F. ROEBUCK, COUNTY CLERK/
REGISTER OF DEEDS

MESSAGE FROM CLERK/REGISTER OF DEEDS

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Dear Commissioners,

On behalf of the staff of the Ottawa County Clerk and Register of Deeds Office, I would like to present our 2014 Annual Report. As we look back on a remarkable year for our department, I am grateful for the opportunity to serve Ottawa County's citizens with such an extraordinary team of people. When I took office as Clerk/Register in June of 2014, I felt it important to distill our department's mission down to a simple focus: **to provide excellence in the preservation of our public records and superior customer service to the citizens of Ottawa County.** Contained in this report you'll find some of the ways we are continuing to strive toward that goal.

I am also truly thankful for the support that our office continues to receive from you, our Commissioners. We have a unique relationship with you as the department responsible for maintaining the permanent record of the Board of Commissioners. We become your "voice" in many ways and that is not a position I take lightly. Together with our County Administrative Team, you have given us the support we need to expand our use of technology, train our staff effectively, and to provide all Ottawa County residents with the exceptional service that they have come to rely on from their county government.

Once again, the latest EPIC/MRA Citizen Survey conducted by the County has rated the Clerk/Register's Office second along with the Health Department in citizen "contact with a county department". We are the face of county government to thousands every year, and my mission as your Clerk/Register is to make that face a friendly, accessible and trustworthy one. As Ottawa County continues to flourish economically and expand in population, the services of the Clerk/Register's Office will grow in demand. We strive to be forward thinking in our efforts both to preserve the public record and to provide the best service, and as we look forward to the year ahead, I am excited to share with you some of the ideas and innovations we are working to accomplish in 2015.

Sincerely,



Justin F. Roebuck
Ottawa County Clerk/Register of Deeds



MESSAGE FROM OUR CHIEF DEPUTIES

It seems like each and every year the Clerk/Register's Office gets busier and busier with new technology and activities and 2014 was true to that description.

In May, Daniel Krueger, retired as County Clerk after 26 years of service. He will truly be missed.

On a brighter note, Justin Roebuck was appointed to the position of County Clerk/ Register of Deeds in June. Justin is a great choice for

Clerk/Register and will continue to move the office forward with both the combination of the offices and looking at technology and improving customer service in all divisions of our office.

After many months of planning, I am happy to report jurors can now submit their Jury Qualification Questionnaire electronically. We were pleased that out of 5,000 questionnaires mailed, 35%

responded electronically. This was even higher than we anticipated. We continue to work on making this process as smooth and efficient as possible.

As always, I would like to thank our staff for all they do. Without them, we would not be able to implement new ideas and focus on quality service to our customers and the citizens of Ottawa County.

~Sherri Sayles, CMC/CCM

Change is hard because people overestimate the value of what they have and underestimate the value of what they may gain by giving that up.

2014 proved to be yet another fun filled year of change. With the retirement in June, of longtime Clerk Daniel Krueger, it brought on board another new leader for us to get to know. Justin Roebuck has been a great leader thus far and we eagerly look forward to serving with him into the future.

The staff continue to amaze with how well they have adjusted to all the change. Their willingness to help anywhere they are needed and their positive attitudes are so refreshing and encouraging and it speaks wonders for the office.

We continue to strive to be our best and give the best customer service possible. We are a true testament to the "Golden Rule".

As we look forward, the goal is to find unity among all the divisions. This will not only strengthen our team but also strengthen the services we are able to offer our constituents.

~Rachel Sanchez, Chief Deputy Register of Deeds~



In December 2014, the Clerk/Register of Deeds offices hosted the Fillmore Complex Annual Christmas Party. Through various department challenges and generous donations, the County was able to raise \$1604 for the Children's Advocacy Center. We were also able to collect donations of food, clothing, toiletries, and other useful goods that were split amongst three great organizations, Harbor Humane Society, Community Action House, and Holland Rescue Mission. Ottawa County Staff really care about their community!

VITAL RECORDS



Our Vital Records division is here to assist the Ottawa County citizens with birth records, marriage certificates, and death records. Certified copies can be obtained by fax, online requests, or visiting one of our four offices located throughout the county. We are the keeper of all vital documents ensuring the public has access to these records, as allowed by statute.

In addition the Vital Records division assists with the requests of marriage licenses, concealed pistol license applications (CPL's), home births, Notary applicants, business registrations (DBA's), as well as genealogy searches.

In 2014 the Vital Records division processed 6,707 birth certificates, 13,840 death certificates, and 659 certified copies of marriage licenses.

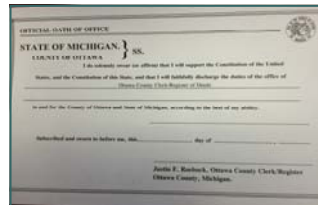


BUSINESS REGISTRATIONS (DBA)

We also control, administer, and oversee business registrations for all of Ottawa County. If a business opens in the County it must register with our office unless it is a corporation or a limited liability company. The Vital Records division assisted 1033 business owners in properly registering their businesses.

NOTARY PUBLIC

Almost all legal papers must be notarized. Therefore, Notaries Public are an important part of society and we administer an oath to each notary applicant, file, and manage the surety bonds.

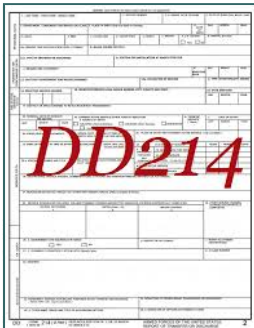


The Ottawa County Clerk's Office is the keeper of all Vital Records, including Birth, Death, & Marriage Records.

OATHS OF OFFICE

An Oath of Office is for those individuals who must be sworn in to their respective offices. Oaths of Office are prepared and filed in our office.

MILITARY DISCHARGE PAPERS (DD214)



We also file military discharge papers, DD 214, for veterans as a complementary gesture. Where as, should they ever need a copy they can obtain a certified one through our office.

CLERK'S CERTIFICATES

We offer Clerk's Certificates for important papers traveling outside of Michigan. This is a statement acknowledging that the Notary Public who witnessed the signature is a current and a duly commissioned Notary. We distributed 28 certificates in 2014.

Vital Records continue....

CONCEALED WEAPONS PERMITS

Concealed weapons applications are accepted, managed, processed, and eventually stored here. A concealed weapons permit is only granted after an extensive background check is performed and the applicant has met all of the necessary requirements. The Vital Records division is also responsible for monitoring all CPL applicants in Ottawa county to assure no criminal incidences occur during the validation period of the CPL. If an issue arises, the Ottawa County Licensing Board must be contacted in order to comply with the mandated CPL suspension statutes.

In 2014, a total of 2,399 CPL's were processed, 1,203 new and 1196 renewals. This is compared to 2013 where 2,925 were processed with 2,035 being new and 890 renewals.



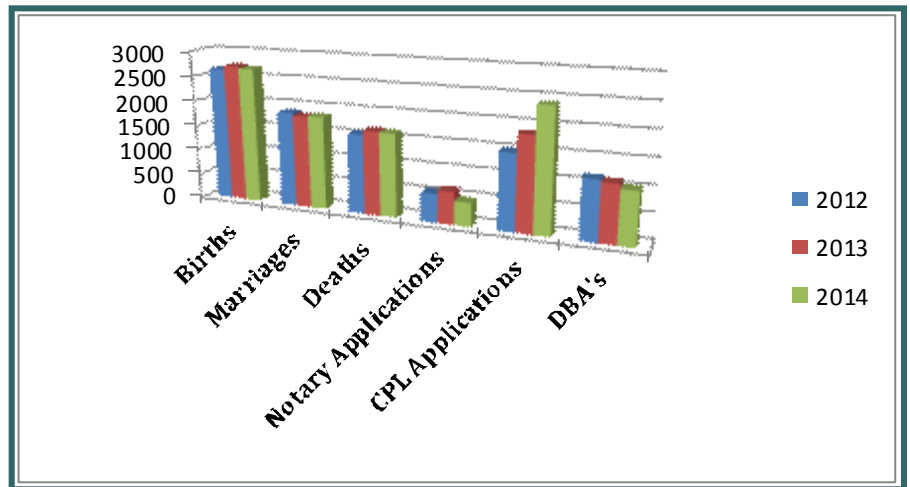
HOME BIRTHS

Over the past few years Ottawa County has seen a significant increase in parents opting for home birth or mid-wife deliveries. After the arrival of the child, the parents must visit our office to file the proper paperwork to obtain their child's Birth Certificate. The Vital Records division has processed 58 home birth registrations in 2014, which is a 142% increase since 2009.

The Vital Records Division has seen a 61% increase in the number of CPL applicants between 2012 and 2014.

STATISTICS FOR VITAL RECORDS

	<u>2012</u>	<u>2013</u>	<u>2014</u>
New Births	2,633	2,710	2,673
Marriages	1,875	1,823	1,840
Deaths	1,562	1,648	1,642
Notary Applications	568	639	470
CPL Apps (formerly CCW)	1,491	1,845	2,399
DBA's	1,160	1,121	1,033



ELECTIONS

In the County Clerk's role as chief election official for the County, the Elections Division of the office is relied upon for the administration of the elections process at the county level in a variety of ways. Responsibilities include the programming and printing of all ballots, maintenance and testing of all elections equipment, and the training of nearly all of Ottawa County's 1,000 election workers. The Elections Division also works closely with state and local candidates who file in our office, and maintains the Campaign Finance records of a number of those candidates county wide. We are in constant communication

with Ottawa County's 23 local city and township clerks to ensure the accuracy and efficiency of the elections process.

The Elections Division is also responsible to stay informed with any key legislative or administrative changes at the State and Federal level with regard to elections, and for disseminating this information to all local clerks and election officials. In 2014, the Michigan Bureau of Elections started its efforts to replace aging voting equipment. Our division is excited about the prospect of working with the State to improve the voting process for the citizens of Ottawa County.

The Elections Division of the Ottawa County Clerk's office oversaw two County-wide elections, trained over 900 election workers and had transitions in key staff roles. Despite this, the Elections Division also made improvements in several areas, including improved communication with Campaign Finance Committees and improvements in reporting election results.



CAMPAIGN FINANCE

All candidates, political action committees and ballot question committees at the county and local level are required to report the income and expenditures of their campaign by filing campaign finance reporting with the office of the County Clerk. These documents are kept on file

with the Elections Division, and help to maintain the accuracy, integrity and openness of the elections process. As a result of legislative changes beginning in 2013, campaign finance regulations changed to require a number of committees to file quarterly statements

rather than just an annual statement or pre and post-election statements. Elections Staff has continued to work with a number of our committees to educate them on the new requirements, and the Elections Division processed over 100 separate campaign finance filings in 2014.

Elections are a vital part of our democratic process and we are committed to maintaining the highest standard of accurate, open and fair elections for the citizens of Ottawa County.

OTTAWA COUNTY VOTERS

As of the end of 2014, Ottawa County had a total of 187,766 registered voters and the Elections Division processed 7,737 total new voter registration records. These registrations include name and address changes passed to our office from Michigan Secretary of State Branch Offices, as well as mail-in registrations that are sent directly to the county.

**Register
to VOTE**

2014 Elections

Over 140,000 ballots were cast in Ottawa County in 2014. Over 90,000 of those ballots were cast during the November General Election alone. For the November Election, our voter turnout rate was 48%, significantly higher than the State's average of 41.6%. Ottawa County is the 8th largest County in Michigan, and ranked 7th in the total number of votes cast in the November Election.



Elections continue.....

TECHNOLOGY IMPROVEMENTS



VOTING IS PATRIOTIC

2014 was a great year for technology in the Elections Division. In addition to continuing to improve our Campaign Finance Online Reporting, we also made improvements to the elections website, offering valuable information for candidates and voters. We improved the Election Night Reporting webpage and expanded the use of our

“Election Results Alert System”, which allows candidates or other interested parties to sign up online to receive text message or email alerts when election results have been updated and are available on the website.

The Elections Division has a great partnership with the Ottawa County GIS Division. Through their development of the Election Night Reporting site, we’ve expanded to a mobile-friendly

platform, reaching more voters with election results than ever. We have also expanded our use of reporting tools like Google Analytics and Facebook Insights. Our website hosted over 5,000 unique visitors on Election Night, and our Facebook page reached over 500 users on Election Day.

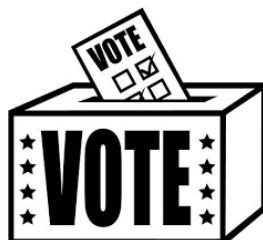
ELECTIONS COMMISSION

The Ottawa County Election Commission is comprised of three members: the Judge of the Probate Court, the County Clerk and the County Treasurer. The Commission is responsible for certifying candidates for each school and county election, and approving ballots for all county wide elections held within Ottawa County. They have the discretion to determine the consolidation of precincts in local and school elections. The Election Commission met a total of three times in 2014 to approve ballots for the May, August and November elections.

Let us never forget that government is ourselves and not an alien power over us. The ultimate rulers of our democracy are not a President and senators and congressmen and government officials, but the voters of this country. ~Franklin D Roosevelt~

POST ELECTION AUDIT PROCESS

Post-election audits are conducted at random following each election. Ottawa County served as a pilot project in the beginning of 2013, assisting the Michigan Bureau of Elections with drafting an audit plan and checklist for implementation of the new law. The Elections Division conducted audits of 10 separate precincts following the November General Election. Our local jurisdictions were found to be fully compliant on 95% of the items that were measured. Any item that did not meet State guidelines will be added to future trainings for local clerks and election workers.



BOARD OF COUNTY CANVASSERS

The Canvassing Board consists of four appointed members, two from each of the two major political parties. Each member is appointed by the Board of Commissioners from three nominations which are provided by the county political parties. The members serve four year terms, which are staggered, meaning two terms expire every odd numbered year.

The County Canvassing Board meets after each election to certify

and canvass the results of the election. All election results are considered unofficial until the Canvassing Board has completed certifying all election returns and results. The Canvassing Board conducts all recounts within the county.

The Ottawa County Board of Canvassers met three times in 2014 to certify the May, August and November elections.

CIRCUIT COURT RECORDS

The Circuit Court Records Division of the Clerk’s Office is responsible for maintaining all civil, criminal and Family Division records pertaining to court events which occur within the jurisdiction of the 20th Judicial Circuit Court. This involves processing documents necessary to initiate new cases filed with the Court, receiving, reviewing and processing all documents pertaining to pending matters before the Court, pulling court records for scheduled hearings and clerking in the courtroom. Our staff also assists the public,

attorneys and other County Departments by providing various legal forms, providing access to public court records and answering questions regarding the status of pending matters via telephone, email and the public service counter.



To the right is a general list of the types of cases filed with and maintained by Circuit Court Records:

Civil: Civil Appeals, Administrative Reviews and Extraordinary Writs
General Civil Matters involving Real Estate, Contracts and Tort

Criminal: Capital Felonies
Non-Capital Felonies
Criminal Appeals

Domestic: Divorce
Custody
Non-Support
Paternity
Personal Protection Orders
Uniform Reciprocal Enforcement of Support Act
Uniform Interstate Family Support Act
*Adoption
*Name Changes
*Abuse and Neglect
*Juvenile
*Emancipation

ACCOUNTING

The Circuit Court Records Division is responsible for maintaining all civil, criminal, and family division records.

The Clerk’s Office receipts for all payments made and bonds posted in conjunction with any civil or domestic relations case pending before the Circuit Court. This includes collection of all fees mandated by court rule or statute applicable to the filing of court documents or maintenance of court actions such as filing fees, jury fees and motion fees.

In addition, the Clerk’s Office receipts for bonds and receives payments on criminal files for restitution, fines and costs. Circuit Court Records works closely with the Circuit Court Collections Officer and the Probation Department in order to maximize collection efforts and to insure proper application of payments received on criminal files.



	<u>2010</u>	<u>2011</u>	<u>2012</u>	<u>2013</u>	<u>2014</u>
Restitution	\$453,947	\$402,466	\$574,137	\$450,277	\$507,449
Attorney Fee	\$210,737	\$240,546	\$156,610	\$174,112	\$159,603
Bonds	\$879,473	\$956,312	\$349,279	\$277,206	\$396,733
Victim Rights	\$45,512	\$71,124	\$77,647	\$85,384	\$89,821
Fines	\$110,911	\$104,510	\$461,746	\$541,045	\$491,521
Community Service	\$8,590	\$7,694	\$6,418	\$6,210	\$7,798
State Minimum	\$55,570	\$60,605	\$59,823	\$61,579	\$53,477

Circuit Court Records continue.....

STATISTICS FOR CIRCUIT COURT RECORDS

	<u>2012</u>	<u>2013</u>	<u>2014</u>
Criminal Cases	928	884	922
Criminal Appeals	5	1	5
Civil Cases	443	363	411
Business Court Cases		32	69
Civil Appeals	51	59	65
Divorce Cases	1,080	1,063	1,049
Divorces Granted	985	977	872
Cases to Appellate & Supreme Courts	24	22	26
Paternity	145	168	130
Support	275	278	211
Personal Protection Orders	747	594	567
Others Domestic Relations	36	62	67
UIFSA	20	16	11
Adoptions	120	139	112
Neglect & Abuse	78	94	110

ADDITIONAL COLLECTIONS

	<u>2013</u>	<u>2014</u>
Filing Fees	\$232,228	\$238,576
Order Fees	\$84,020	\$125,382
Motion Fees	\$48,700	\$45,690
Jury Trial Fees	\$10,200	\$9,435
Garnishments	\$8,025	\$7,020

FRIEND OF THE COURT

Circuit Court Records provides many services to the Friend of the Court office, including providing attested copies of orders in cases involving issues of parenting time, custody or support, facilitating the issuance and processing of Bench Warrants and providing assistance in the courtroom during proceedings.



ANNUAL REPORT

All cases filed with the Court must be reported to the State Court Administrator's Office annually. Several portions of this report are prepared and submitted by the Circuit Court Records Division of the Clerk's Office. This report contains important statistical information regarding caseload data such as the number of new cases filed each year. This report also tracks the age of each case in order to monitor the number of days that the Court spends on each case from the date of filing to the date of final disposition. This information is used by the State Court Administrative Office to assist in the preparation of the Michigan Supreme Court Annual Report as well as for other important reporting purposes.



REPORTING TO STATE AGENCIES

Circuit Court Records prepares a Judgment of Sentence for each individual convicted of a felony, high court misdemeanor or probation violation and is responsible for reporting these issues to the appropriate governmental agencies such as Michigan Secretary of State, Michigan State Police, and Michigan Department of Corrections. The Clerk's Office must also send a state abstract to the Secretary of State for all cases involving a motor vehicle. In addition, Circuit Court Records prepares and submits the Record of Divorce or Annulment to the Michigan Department of Community Health in conjunction with divorce cases filed with the Court.

All cases filed with the Court must be reported to the State and in certain cases they must be reported to other governmental agencies.

JURY

The Clerk's office also administers and maintains the jury by working in conjunction with the Jury Board to process jury questionnaires, process requests for excusal from jury service, process payroll for jury services and provide correspondence to jurors verifying jury service. The Clerk's Office also plays an integral role in the juror selection process by summoning the jury to court when a jury trial is scheduled and assisting with the selection, swearing in and sequestration of the jury during a trial.

REGISTER OF DEEDS

Our Division records all documents pertaining to real property including Deeds, Mortgages, Liens, Power of Attorneys, Federal, State, and MESC tax liens, Master Deeds, Plats, and Certificates of Trusts.

To do this, staff must be familiar with over 100 document types and with the different state statutes that relate to each one.

Once the documents are recorded, staff extend excellent customer service to our public,

Attorneys, Real Estate Agents, Multiple Listing Services, Title Agencies, and Banks, among others who use our public record to verify ownership, track chain of title, and obtain constructive notice.

Our public record is paramount to buying and selling property within Ottawa County. The demand for access to these records has led us to offering them 365 days a year electronically.

To further assist our public, the

real estate industry and other local, state and federal departments, we have a robust webpage on miOttawa.org. On our webpage you can find Recording Statistics, Foreclosure Prevention information, eRecording information, a Historical Plat/Subdivision Search, Passport Information, along with other helpful information and links.

DOCUMENTS AND FUNDS

In 2014, we recorded **46,410** documents. Of these, **13,332** were electronically recorded accounting for **29%** of our recordings. This also translates to **201,966** pages.

We received in:

\$691,712 in recording fee

\$125,242 in copy sales

\$1,336,282 in county real estate transfer tax

We sent to the State of Michigan:

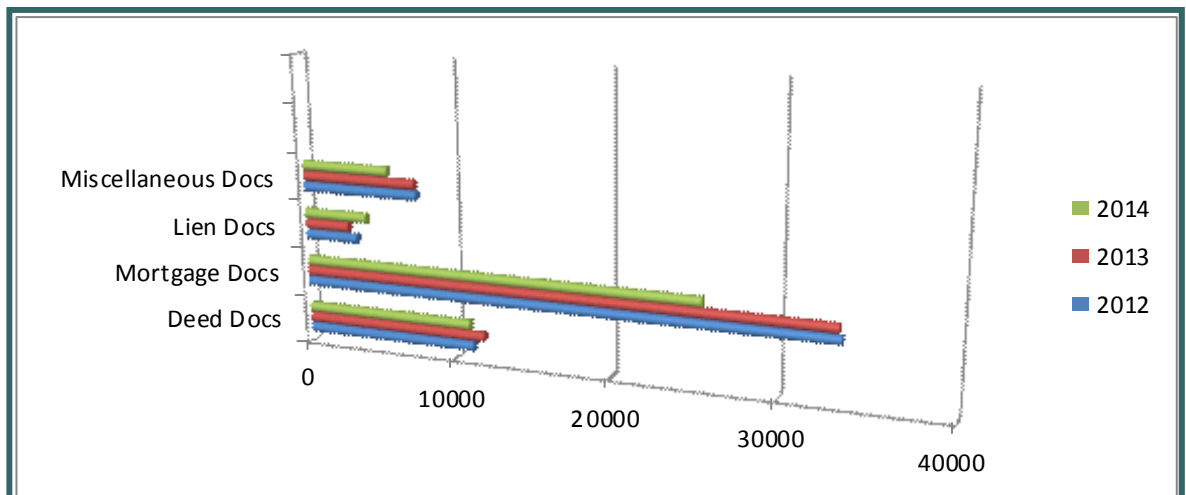
\$8,893,942.50 in state real estate transfer tax

\$147,828.90 in remonumentation fees



The Register of Deeds Division puts into public record and makes transparent all Ottawa County land related documents to safeguard ownership and monetary obligations.

2012-2014 Statistics



Register of Deeds continue.....

INFORMATIONAL PRESENTATIONS

In 2014, we started a series of informational power point presentations that, in 2015, we hope to get completed and on our website explaining what combined offices do, Property Fraud Alert, what a Register of Deeds office does, and how to actually record a

document.

With these presentations we are hoping to make the constituents of Ottawa county, and also the people who do business with us, a little more comfortable with the process of working with our office. A little knowledge goes a long way!

Corners

When the state of Michigan was first surveyed in the 1800's, markers were established to label each corner of a section. These are known as corners. All property descriptions are based on said corners, even today.

Because these corners are extremely old, over time the boundaries and markers may have been destroyed and have become ambiguous. The practice of Remonumentation has been adopted whereby land surveyors install a permanent, labeled monument in the ground creating boundaries in perpetuity.

Corners and Remon Corners were all imaged and uploaded to our software system in 2014. This will allow us to get them indexed on our computer system and make them much easier for customers to view.

We also plan on imaging all of our surveys that are now on microfilm so they can be indexed and made more easily accessible.

PROPERTY FRAUD ALERT

INTEGRATION



In 2014, our office partnered with the IT department to implement OnBase Unity workview for plat board and our condominium list. This will allow **other** office to access our information more easily and allow the plat board to better track a plat through the entire process. Work on this project began in November and we are eager to begin using it in early 2015.

The Ottawa County Register of Deeds office has achieved top ten status in the State of Michigan for its innovative approach to office operations.

PASSPORTS

Passports empower citizens to travel outside of the borders of our country. We process and transmit to the passport agency, applications and fees for passports. There are many strict guidelines and rules that must be followed when accepting these applications. For 2014, the three locations accepting passports took in a total of 2,506 applications.



PLAT BOARD

The Plat Board is a statutory committee consisting of the County Clerk/Register of Deeds, County Treasurer, & the Chair of the Board of Commissioners. The Board's responsibility is to review all preliminary plats to determine the viability of the subdivision name and to review all plats to determine the accuracy of the description in relation to the corresponding plat. In 2014, the Board met 17 times, approving 14 preliminary plats, and approved 7 final plats.

OUR GOAL: To provide excellence in the preservation of our public records and superior customer service to the citizens of Ottawa County.



LOCATIONS/HOURS

Health Services Building 12251 James Street Holland, MI 49424 Monday through Friday 8:00 a.m. to 11:30 a.m. & 12:30 p.m. to 5 p.m. (616) 494-5566	Hudsonville District Court 3100 Port Sheldon Road Hudsonville, MI 49426 Tuesdays, 8 a.m. to 12 p.m. (616) 662-6085
Fillmore Complex 12220 Fillmore, Room 130 & 146 West Olive, MI 49460 Monday through Friday 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. (616) 994-4531 Vital Records (616) 994-4510 Register of Deeds	Ottawa County Building 414 Washington Avenue, Room 320 Grand Haven, MI 49417 Vital Records: Monday through Friday 8:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m. & 1:00 p.m. to 5:00 p.m. (616) 846-8310 Circuit Court Records: Monday through Friday 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. (616) 846-8315 Public Service Center: Room 115 Monday through Friday 8:00 a.m. to 11:30 a.m. & 12:30 p.m. to 5:00 p.m.
Family Division Only: 12120 Fillmore Street West Olive, MI 49460 Monday through Friday 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. (616) 738-4108	

CLERK OF THE BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS

The County Clerk/Register serves as the Secretary to the Board of Commissioners, and the keeper of all official Board records. Though we do not print or distribute the agendas, we are required to attend and post all Board and Committee meetings. We also handle correspondence for the Commissioners. The permanent Board minutes are kept on record in our office and are available, either through hardcover book or Cd, for public perusal.

COUNTY DIRECTORY

The Clerk's office is responsible for updating the County Directory. There is a great deal of staff hours that go into collecting information and gathering data for this directory. The directory is available on-line, under the County Clerk's portion of the website and under "Quick Links" on the homepage.

POSTING VACANCIES

The Clerk/Register oversees vacancies on any board, commission or advisory committee for the County. These postings are available on-line at "MiOttawa.org". A new database was designed in 2010 which allows for an on-line application process along with maintaining and archiving of past and present committee information. The system was developed to modernize and streamline the application process. Letters are now generated automatically to inform applicants of our receipt of their application as well as notify them of appointment when approved by the Board of Commissioners.