



# CLERK | REGISTER OF DEEDS



Annual Report  
2016

# OTTAWA COUNTY

**Justin F. Roebuck**

County Clerk | Register of Deeds

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Chief Deputy Register of Deeds



**Justin F. Roebuck**  
**County Clerk/Register of Deeds**

## MESSAGE FROM THE CLERK/REGISTER

To our Ottawa County Board of Commissioners and Residents:

Alongside our excellent team, it is my pleasure to share with you the successes of the past year in our 2016 Annual Report for the County Clerk and Register of Deeds Office. I encourage you to spend a few moments reviewing this document, not only for the statistical data provided, but also as a glimpse into the daily work of our team and the difference they make as public servants.

Our consistent mission is **to provide excellence in the preservation of our public records and superior customer service to the citizens of Ottawa County**. Our Board of Commissioners helps us to achieve this goal on a daily basis by providing resources we need to be an effective, efficient and responsive department of county government.

The Clerk/Register's Office performs a wide variety of necessary functions that touch many aspects of life for our residents. Getting married, buying a home, adopting a child, starting a small business or dealing with the death of a loved one are just a few life events that require an interaction with our office. My hope and my challenge to each of our team members is that people will walk away from those interactions knowing that their county government is working for and caring for them.

It is truly my honor to serve as your County Clerk and Register of Deeds. Many thanks to our Board of Commissioners, for your support and shared commitment to the core values that allow us to serve our residents well. I am also grateful for the entire team of dedicated Ottawa County employees that our office interacts with on a daily basis. From our Administrative Team, to our IT and facilities professionals, to the many other departments and elected offices that help us to function, we recognize that so much of what we do would not be possible without their commitment and hard work.

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Justin F. Roebuck  
Ottawa County Clerk &  
Register of Deeds



## Rachell Genesky

### Outstanding Customer Service Award Winner

The call came to the Ottawa County Clerk’s Office an hour before closing time. A local family was traveling through Canada to reach New York for Father’s Day and realized they had left the U.S. without bringing their 11-year-old son’s birth certificate along. Without this document, they would be unable to bring him back home. Hundreds of miles away, they reached Rachell Genesky in a panic, trying to figure out what to do. Rachell, an employee in the Ottawa County Clerk’s Office, went to extreme lengths while adhering to legal guidelines she needed to follow and earned the county’s Outstanding Customer Service award as a result. A government-use-only email version of the boy’s birth certificate was in a border control agent’s hands, waiting for the family, when they made it back to the border. “The praise the family gave to Rachell was heartfelt and abundant. They were so grateful to her for all of her patience, effort and professionalism,” a co-worker wrote in nominating Rachell for the award. “(The family) couldn’t believe a government employee would go to such lengths to assist them the way she did.”

## Clerk/Register Employee All-Stars



Although Terry Sands spends most of his time in our Grand Haven Register of Deeds Office, he can be seen covering other locations and taking on additional tasks frequently. Terry’s willingness to jump in and assist whenever and wherever needed is just one attribute that makes him an All Star. Our office frequently receives comments from our residents on Terry’s genuine customer service and willingness to go the extra mile for them. Don’t be surprised to see Terry step around the other side of the counter to engage with a customer or assist them with a particularly challenging issue. He is a valuable asset to our team!



Becky Nieboer is the perfect example of someone passionate about their work. Her focus is on the Family Division of our Circuit Court Records, which handles some of the most challenging work in our office. Whether dealing with a name change, adoption, or an abuse and neglect case, Becky handles her work with professionalism and deep knowledge of her subject matter. She consistently goes above and beyond for our customers, whether they are members of the public, or the attorneys and adoption agencies that she works with on a regular basis. She also serves as the Chair of our Communications Team – a group of team members from each division that focuses on better ways of communicating our message both internally and to our residents. Becky’s leadership and dedication are just a few examples of why we are grateful to have her here!

## By The Numbers: 2016 Elections

**4** - Elections in Ottawa County

**10,506** - Voter registrations processed in 2016, up from 4,821 in 2015

**287,228** - Ballots cast in Ottawa County throughout the year

**144,902** - Number of ballots cast in the November general election

**73%** - Ottawa County voter turnout rate in November (highest turnout rate since 2008)

**125,000** - Ballots counted during a hand recount of the presidential race in November



Volunteers and Ottawa County staff work together during a hand recount of votes cast in the November 2016 presidential race.

### Historic Recount of the 2016 Presidential Race

In late November of 2016, the Green Party candidate for president, Jill Stein, filed for a recount of the results of the presidential race in Michigan, Wisconsin and Pennsylvania. The Elections Division was responsible for organizing a hand recount of all votes in the presidential race in Ottawa County. A team of more than 80 local clerks, election workers and volunteers gathered for two days in early December and worked tirelessly to hand-count

more than 130,000 ballots before the recount was ended through legal action. Though the effort ended early, the recount offered Ottawa County an opportunity to show the world an up-close view of our elections process. We proved we have a fair, accurate system that we can have confidence in. Moreover, we were able to accomplish this task without cost to Ottawa County residents, with the Stein campaign's recount fees covering the cost of all expenses.

Not only was this effort a lot of work for local election officials, it also involved the collaboration of many Ottawa County departments who moved meetings that had been scheduled for months in order to free up space in the building for the recount to occur.

## Honor Rewards

Veterans living in Ottawa County are being recognized for their service through a discount program now offered by the Clerk/Register of Deeds office. The program allows the Clerk/Register's office to not only thank veterans for their service to our country, but also offer a service that will benefit them.

In April 2016, Ottawa County signed on to be part of the Honor Rewards program designed by Fidlar Technologies. Veterans fill out an informational questionnaire either online or in person at any of our office locations. They then receive their Honor Rewards photo ID card once they have filed their DD-214 form with the county. They can take their ID card to

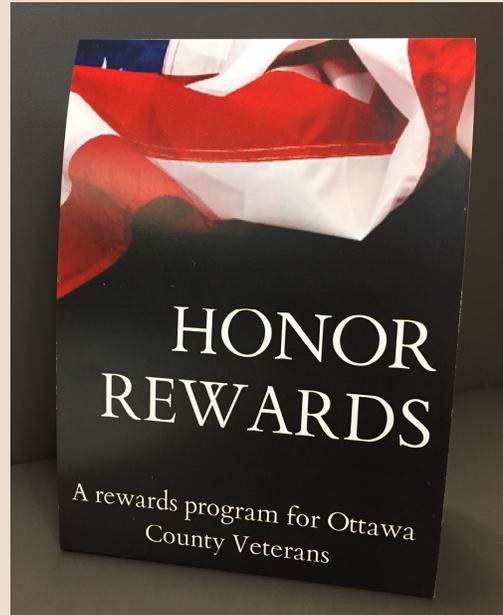
any one of nearly 100 Ottawa

County businesses that have signed on to be part of the program and receive discounts on food or services.

The program is a win-win for everyone involved. Businesses have an additional marketing opportunity, and veterans benefit through the discounts offered. Clerk Register's office staff met with veterans at area Applebee's restaurants on Veteran's Day and enrolled more than 50 new Honor Rewards cardholders. "It was one of the coolest things

I've ever been able to do," said Jody Hansen, Clerk/Register Supervisor, of the opportunity to meet the veterans, shake their hands, and thank them for their service. "They were so thankful ... they are so appreciative of the businesses that provide these discounts." The Clerk/Register's office had nearly

70 veterans signed up for the Honor/Rewards program by December 2016. The goal for 2017 is 250 total cardholders.



HONOR REWARDS

"I am glad to see this ID available to vets and the ease of getting certified DD-214s when needed... The staff was awesome. I went to their office and inquired about the program, it was explained how I should proceed. When I encountered [a] problem getting the application in, they also made the attempt and observed the problem and then assured me that the application would be entered and then took care of it. The experience was pleasant and we got a few good laughs in."

-Ottawa County Veteran

## DIVISION OVERVIEW

The Clerk/  
Register is

the chief election official in Ottawa County. While local jurisdictions run much of the day-to-day operations of elections, the Elections Division is responsible for the proper administration of elections, the proper accumulation of countywide results, and the maintenance of election records in perpetuity.

Ottawa County is unique in Michigan, as one of only two counties in the state that owns all of the election equipment in the county. Most election equipment is owned and maintained at the local level. Providing this service at the county level provides excellent customer service for our local jurisdictions and saves a great deal of taxpayer dollars.

Other responsibilities of the Elections Division 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



The Clerk/Register's Office registered several new voters following naturalization ceremonies at the Loutit District Library.

“Thank you for safeguarding the right to vote and for protecting every vote. You all conducted yourselves with integrity and professionalism.”

-Ottawa County  
Voter

closely with state and local candidates who file in our office, and maintains the Campaign Finance records of a number of those candidates countywide. We pride ourselves on providing excellent customer service for all of our candidates by working proactively to notify all of our campaign finance filers of deadlines in a timely fashion.

The Elections Division is also responsible for staying informed on any key legislative changes that may affect local clerks and election officials. We work with the Michigan Association of County Clerks Legislative Committee to advocate for new legislation that will improve the administration of the voting process.

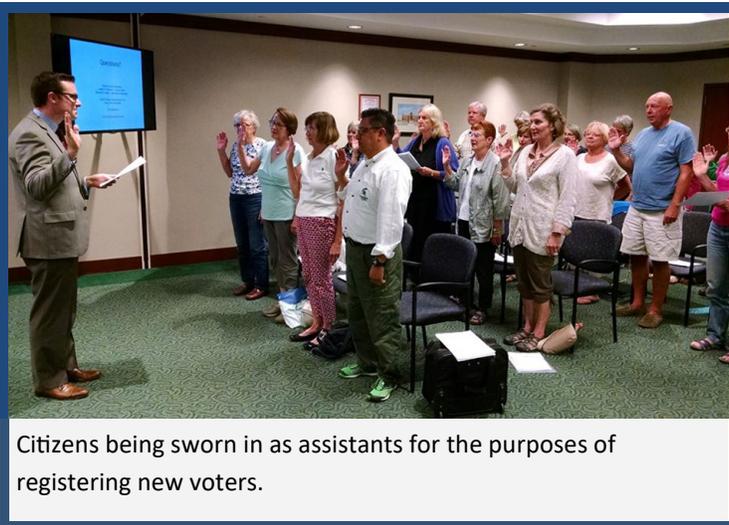


Staff from GVSU, Ottawa County, and the Michigan Secretary of State on the GVSU campus for voter registration day 2016.

### Ottawa County Voters

Ottawa County is the eighth largest county in Michigan and has approximately 190,000 registered voters. The Elections Division processed 10,506 voter registration records in 2016, more than double the 4,821 voter registration records processed in 2015. The greatest number of registrations were received in February (for the March presidential primary) and in October (for the November general election). Our office processed nearly 4,000 voter records during the first two weeks of October alone.

The Elections Division conducted voter registration drives at Allendale, Grand Haven, Holland, West Ottawa and Zeeland high schools. We also registered new voters following several naturalization ceremonies at Loutit District Library in Grand Haven.



“THANK YOU to (all of you) for an EXCELLENT job during the November election process. We in Ottawa County have the BEST County Clerk team around! We are definitely blessed!”

- Local Township Clerk

### Campaign Finance—Candidate Filings

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 reports with the office of the County Clerk. Our office processed 243 campaign finance documents in 2016, up from 119 documents in 2015.

The Elections Division processed nearly 400 candidate filings in 2016, including more than 200 Precinct Delegate candidates for the August Primary Election.

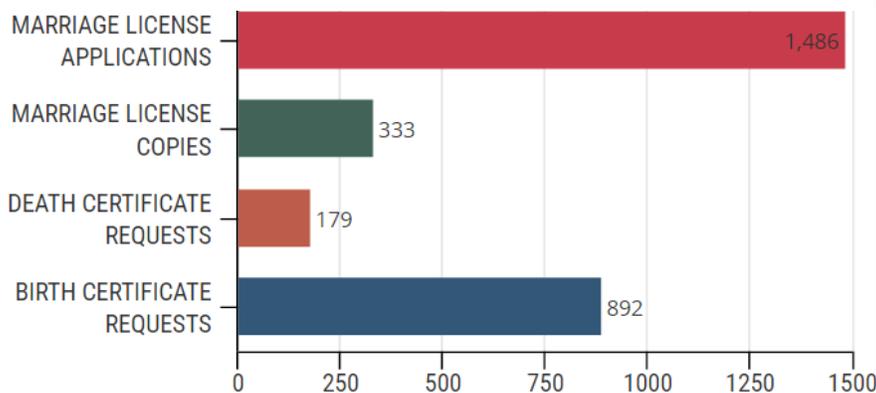
### Election Worker Trainings

Another responsibility of the Elections Division is providing training for nearly 1,000 election workers from across the county. We completely revamped our training program for the summer of 2016 and coordinated with several local clerks to provide more comprehensive and hands-on training for election workers. Together with the county’s Emergency Management office, we also developed a set of standard emergency procedures for our precinct chairpersons throughout the county.

## DIVISION OVERVIEW

The Vital Records Division assists Ottawa County citizens with filing and obtaining birth certificates, marriage license applications, marriage certificates, death certificates, and genealogy research. Certified copies can be obtained by visiting one of our four offices located throughout the county, by mail, or through our online request system.

2016 Online Vital Records Requests



Our online request system continues to be an efficient and well-used tool to assist customers in obtaining records quickly. In 2016, a total of 2,918 transactions were completed online, an increase of more than 500 requests since the prior year.

In addition, the Vital Records Division assists with applications for concealed pistol license applications (CPLs), the recording of home births, notary applications, and business registrations (DBAs).

In 2016, the Vital Records Division processed requests for certified copies of 5,618 birth certificates; 13,134 death certificates; and 608 marriage licenses.

### Business Registrations (DBAs)

The Vital Records Division also administers and oversees business registrations for all of Ottawa County. If a business opens in the county, the owner may register with our office, unless they are seeking to have a corporation or limited liability company. The Vital Records Division assisted 955 business owners in properly registering their businesses in 2016.

### Notary Public

Almost all legal papers must be notarized so Notary Publics are an important part of society. We administer an oath to each notary applicant and file and manage their surety bonds.

### Military Discharge Papers (DD214)

Our office files military discharge papers, DD214's, for veterans as a complementary gesture. Should they ever need a copy, they can obtain a certified one through our office. Veterans must file their DD214 with us when enrolling in the Honor Rewards program.

"I just want to thank you for your kindness and generosity in helping out the veterans of this great country."

-Ottawa County Customer

### 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.

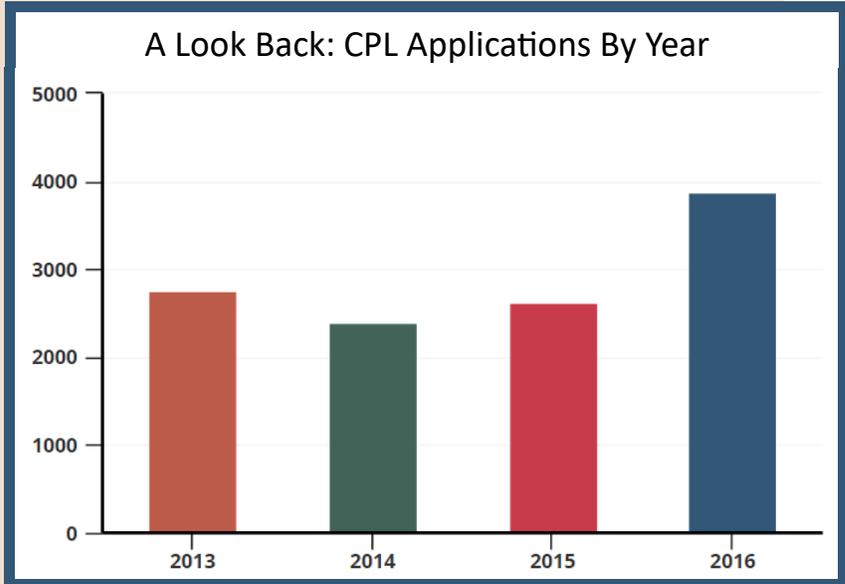
**Concealed Weapons Permits (CPL)**

Concealed weapons applications are accepted at all four office locations and are processed and stored at the Fillmore office. Under legislative changes implemented in 2015, local gun boards have been eliminated and background checks are conducted at the state level by the Michigan State Police. The County Clerk is responsible for the receipt of all CPL applications and the issuance of all licenses. This system has dramatically improved customer wait times to obtain a CPL.

With customer service in mind, this new system has a faster turn around time (30 days/renewal, 45 days/new). Applicants no longer need to pay for a passport quality photo because the system allows our office to use the driver's license photo taken by the Secretary of State.

A CPL is granted after each new applicant has completed an 8-hour Pistol Safety Training Course and successfully passed a background check.

In 2016, a total of 3882 CPLs were processed. This is up 61% from 2,399 in 2014 and 40% from 2,762 in 2015.



**Top Baby Girl Names in 2016**

1. Olivia	6. Mia
2. Emma	7. Amelia
3. Evelyn	8. Charlotte
4. Ava	9. Madison
5. Avery	10. Harper

**Top Baby Boy Names in 2016**

1. Elijah	6. Lucas
2. Samuel	7. Owen
3. Mason	8. Lincoln
4. Benjamin	9. Liam
5. Hudson	10. Jacob

**Home Births**

In 2016, the number of home births continued to increase as more parents opted for mid-wife deliveries. After a baby's birth, the parents must visit our office to file the proper paperwork to obtain that child's birth certificate. The Vital Records Division processed 48 home birth registrations in 2016.

## DIVISION OVERVIEW

The Circuit Court Records Division of the Clerk/Register's office is the fundamental access point to the 20<sup>th</sup> Circuit Court for all parties in a Civil, Criminal or Family Relations Court matter. It is here where customers have their first interaction with the court system. We strive to make these transactions as seamless and pleasant as possible by providing various legal forms, access to public court records, and answering questions regarding legal procedures.

Our services include 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 behind-the-scenes efforts to ensure accurate and timely records help create superior customer service for the citizens of Ottawa County.

"Your staff's excellent eye for details and knowledge of procedure serves the public well and provides excellent customer service ... On a personal note, I note the dedication, care and concern to "do the right thing" exhibited by all members of your staff."

- Ottawa County Circuit Court Judge

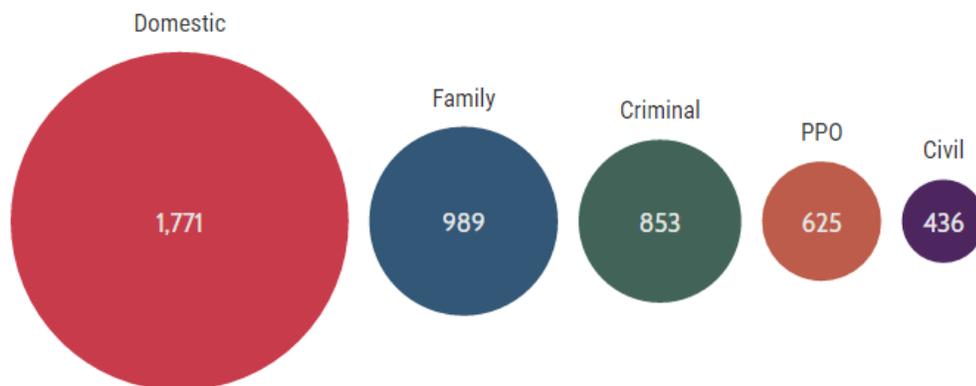
Restitution	\$439,675
Attorney Fees	\$293,356
Bonds	\$384,867
Victim Rights	\$87,955
Fines	\$483,941
Community Service	\$6,458
State Minimum	\$58,019
Filing Fees	\$220,929
Order Fees	\$560,853
Motion Fees	\$44,470
Jury Trial Fees	\$9,414
Garnishments	\$5,245

### Accounting

The Clerk's office is responsible for receipting in all payments for the 20<sup>th</sup> Circuit Court. This includes all mandated state statute fees and court ordered fines, costs and restitution. Collaboratively, with the Circuit Court Collections Officers and the Probation Department, the Clerk's Office generally receipts in over \$1,500,000 a year for all criminal court cases.

Ottawa County citizens can access the court in person at one of our three locations in Grand Haven, West Olive and Hudsonville, or by going online to e-file court documents and fees.

### 2016 Circuit Court Cases Filed



The Circuit Court Records Division handled 4,677 cases and created 61,091 documents in 2016. There were also 21 cases bound over to the Court of Appeals or Michigan Supreme Court.

## Annual Report to the State Court

The Michigan State Court Administrator's Office annually requests 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.

## New Jury Management System

In 2016, the Clerk's Office worked with the courts to implement a new jury management system aimed at making the experience of serving as seamless and informative as possible. We worked closely with Jury Systems Incorporated to develop our jury management system and shift our practices. Ottawa County is now a one-step court. We summons and send the qualification questionnaires at the same time, six weeks prior to a citizen's service. In 2016 we summoned 400 jurors. From those qualified to serve, the Clerk's office processes requests for excusals, handles the payroll, and provides correspondence to jurors verifying their jury service for the 20th Circuit Court.

## Permanency Indicator Report

Since 2015, the Circuit Court Records Division has prepared and submitted the Permanency Indicator Report to the State Court Administrator's Office. This analysis captures the progress of each abuse and neglect case where a child has been removed from the home by the Department of Health and Human Services. These reports are examined to develop quicker methods to facilitate what is in the best interests for the child. The Clerk's office plays an integral role in scheduling and producing orders that adhere to the performance measures set by the State Court Administrator's Office.

## 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 the Michigan Secretary of State, Michigan State Police, and 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.

"This is such a sweet family—they cried this morning when we told them the hearing was completed... They are going to be absolutely thrilled! This is such a fun time of year to tell people they can take "their" babies home!!"

-Ottawa County Adoption Agency

## Friend of the Court

The Circuit Court Records Division works closely with the Friend of the Court office on all parenting time, custody and support matters before the Court. In addition, this office helps facilitate and issue all bench warrants, provides assistance in the courtroom during proceedings, provides certified copies of all orders, and assists the public in answering any procedural questions.

## 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.

Our staff must be familiar with more than 100 different types of documents and their unique statutes for recording. Our staff works closely with attorneys, real estate agents, banks, title agencies and the public. We strive to provide excellent customer service through effective communication and pleasant interaction with our varied clientele, all the while aiming to ensure their needs are met in a timely manner.

Our public record is used to verify ownership, track chain of title, and obtain constructive notice. It is paramount to the buying and selling of property. The demand for access to these records has led us to offer them electronically. In an effort to increase customer convenience and satisfaction, they are available on our new Deeds Search tab found on our website. We have a user-friendly webpage that is designed with helpful links and icons. It allows for

online searches, electronic recording of documents, ordering copies of recorded documents, property information, as well as recording statistics and foreclosure prevention information.

Looking at 2017, we are really excited to be able to move into our new space with the Vitals Division and finally be together as one team. This will come with challenges but we are all ready to overcome them and work toward being a fully cross-trained Clerk/Register of Deeds Office.

"He was so kind and helpful to us during a very stressful time."

-Ottawa County Customer

"Mary Beth was a wealth of information, was always polite and sounded like she had a smile on her face. She made me feel like a valued customer."

-Ottawa County Customer

### Passports

The Register of Deeds Division accepted 3,168 Passport applications in 2016 for a total revenue of \$79,200.00. Our Holland office processes the majority of these applications.



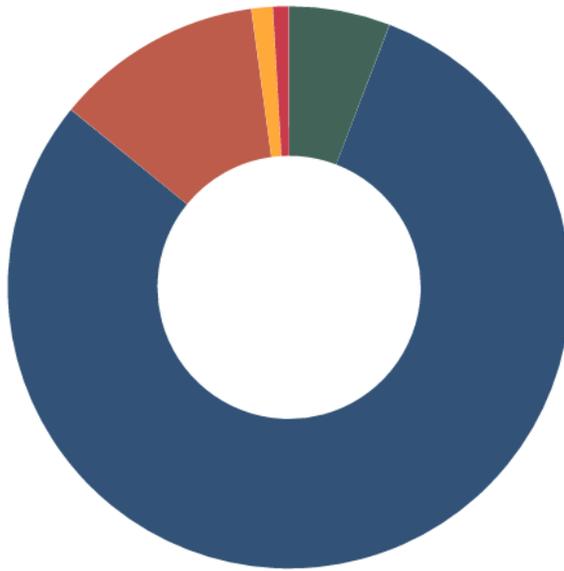
### Free Online Search

In September of 2015, we launched a free online search of our index to all documents. This program resulted in the purchase of 8,083 documents (24,342 pages) in 2016, generating a revenue of \$24,342 for the County's General Fund.

### Plat Board

The Plat Board reviews preliminary subdivision plans presented by engineers and approves final plats to be submitted to the State for their acceptance.

Money Collected In 2016



Recording Fees   State Transfer Tax   County Transfer Tax   Remonumentation  
Copy Sales

State Transfer Tax	\$12,238,753
County Transfer Tax	\$1,828,561
Recording Fees	\$889,903
Remonumentation	\$186,925
Copy Sales	\$139,643

The Deeds Division saw a strong year in 2016 with changes in statutory recording fees that generated about \$85,000 for the general fund within the first three months of implementation. State law increased the recording fees from \$14 for the first page and \$3 for each additional page to a flat \$30 fee per document, as of Oct. 1, 2016.

**DOCUMENTS AND FUNDS**

In 2016, we recorded **49,805** documents. Of these, **19,430** were electronically recorded accounting for **39%** of our recordings. This translates to **231,978** pages.

**Additional Responsibilities of the Clerk/Register’s Office**

**Clerk of the Board of Commissioners**

The 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. The permanent Board minutes are kept on record in our office and are available for public perusal. In 2016, we filed 340 Board approved contracts and processed 32 Board Resolutions. We also handle correspondence for the Commissioners.

**County Directory**

The Clerk/Register’s office is responsible for updating the County Directory. The directory is a tool aimed at helping the public navigate Ottawa County’s numerous departments and services. A great deal of staff hours go into collecting information and gathering data for this directory. The directory is available on-line at the bottom of the “MiOttawa.org” homepage.

**Posting Vacancies**

The Clerk/Register’s office oversees vacancies on any board, commission or advisory committee for the County. These postings and applications are available online at “MiOttawa.org”.



[miOttawa.org/ClerkROD](http://miOttawa.org/ClerkROD)

CountyClerk@[miOttawa.org](http://miOttawa.org)



COUNTY OF OTTAWA