

# OTTAWA COUNTY CLERK / REGISTER OF DEEDS

DANIEL C. KRUEGER, COUNTY CLERK / REGISTER OF DEEDS

## HIGHLIGHTS FROM 2013

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The year 2013 was a very active year for our offices. It was the first year we have combined the functions and staff of the County Clerk and the Register of Deeds under one elected official. As one might imagine, there is a plethora of things that have to be done, changed and revised in combining the offices. It continues to be a major effort on the part of staff members and mine as well.

I would be remiss if I did not thank all of my staff for their efforts and time. We are not only combining offices, but we are combining staff and functions as well. Staff of both offices have stepped up and, even though the office functions are totally different, have worked hard

to make sure all areas are covered. Staff is learning, as I am, the functions, directions, and duties of each of the offices and we have cross trained staff where we can and where it is appropriate.

Sherri Sayles and Kathy Haiker have done an outstanding job in scheduling training sessions and teaching the functions of each of the offices. We have made some changes in the way we do things with regard to passports and covering for meetings that has been advantageous in the learning process as well.

As if that were not a major task in itself, we started and finished some major programs in each of the divisions of the now County Clerk/

Register of Deeds office. The continued objective is to serve the people of this county as best we can by sharing duties and responsibilities where appropriate and having a vision of where we are to go. This is evident to all as we have posted on the walls of each of our offices "We Live the Golden Rule".

There are more major initiatives in the process now and we will continue to review our processes to enhance our service and increase our efficiencies as 2014 promises to be an even more challenging year than the last.

~Daniel C Krueger, Clerk/Register of Deeds~

## ADDITIONAL HIGHLIGHTS FROM 2013

We hit the ground running in 2013. The Register of Deeds officially became a Division of the Clerk/ Register of Deeds office.

Staff completed their first full year as Passport Agents for the National Passport Agency. One staff learned Vital Records and covers other Vital Records offices as needed. One staff from Vital Records has learned to index our documents, which has been a great help. This cross training is an ongoing project.

Our staff are top notch.

They have remained positive and upbeat with the changes in the office. This attitude has come from the top and can be attributed to Dan's leadership throughout the combination.

We are looking forward to continued collaboration among our divisions, to providing excellent customer service and to what tomorrow brings.

~Kathy Haiker, Chief Deputy Register of Deeds~

2013 proved to be an exciting and challenging year in the Clerk/ Register's Office. This was the first year the two offices were combined. Our biggest challenge was to figure out how to make us the best Clerk/Register's Office in the state.

Much time was spent cross-training staff, employees job shadowing from one division to another, working on communication between the divisions with the "Combination Connection" (our department newsletter), and quarterly All-Staff Meetings.

The staff have done an outstanding job working

together, communicating and helping to achieve our goal.

I'm also happy to report Circuit Court Records, with the help of Vital Records, collected and receipted over \$1 million dollars in Criminal Fines/Costs and Restitution again this year.

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 Chief Deputy Clerk~

**VITAL RECORDS**

We are available to the public so they may have access to birth, marriage, and death records, to name the preponderance of records available. The procedures listed below require great attention to detail, precision, and knowledge of the legislative initiatives and pending statutes.

The majority of certified copies requested from our office consist of birth, marriage, and death records. In 2013, the Clerk's Office processed 5,984 birth, 13,563 death and 626 marriage certified copies.

There are many genealogists who use our office to search through birth, death, and marriage records hoping to find records relative to their family.

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.

Almost all legal papers must be notarized. Therefore, Notary Publics are an important part of society and we administer this service, file, and manage the surety bonds.

We also file 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.

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 duly commissioned Notary. We distributed 34 certificates in 2013.

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. In 2013, a total of 2,925

CPL's were processed, 2,035 new and 890 renewals. This is compared to 2012 where 1,491 were processed with 1,221 being new and 270 renewals.

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.

We also file and disperse appeals to the Sanitary Appeals Board. These are filed when an individual wants to request a hearing with the Sanitary Appeals Board.

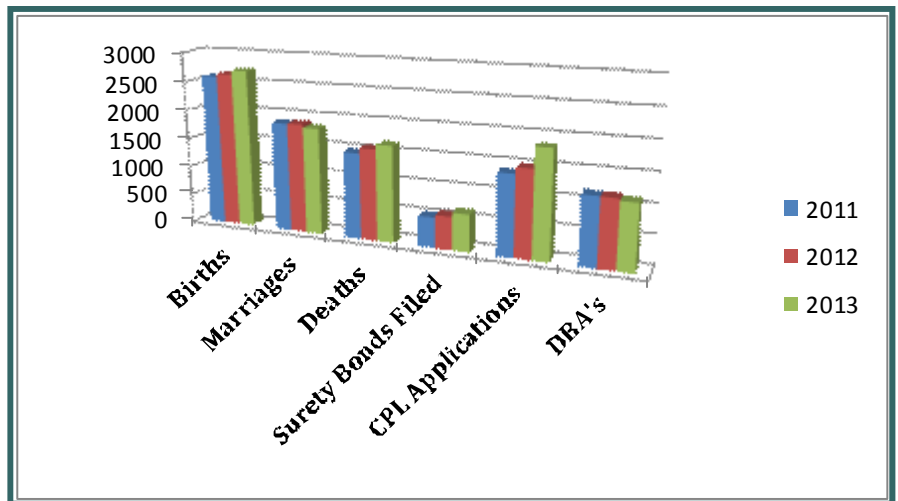
Traffic Control Orders are received from the Road Commission or Department of Transportation. Orders are for traffic signs at specific locations. We filed 6 orders in 2013.



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

**STATISTICS FOR VITAL RECORDS**

	<u>2011</u>	<u>2012</u>	<u>2013</u>
New Births	2,584	2,633	2,710
Marriages	1,865	1,875	1,823
Deaths	1,471	1,562	1,648
Surety Bonds Filed	523	568	639
CPL Apps (formerly CCW)	1,381	1,491	1,845
DBA's	1,165	1,160	1,121



## 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 con-

stant 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. The 2012-2013 legislative cycle was a very active one, with over 140 statutes created or amended with regard to election law over the past two years. With many of those changes taking effect in 2013, our staff has

taken on additional training and worked to make sure that all legislative changes have been effectively implemented.

The Elections Division of the Ottawa County Clerk's office oversaw the May and November elections in 2013, representing a lighter than normal year in terms of election dates and turnout. However, this gave us the opportunity to work on a number of projects to improve our process within the office, such as the Campaign Finance Online system, improvements to our Election Night reporting website and the development of the elections internship program.



## OTTAWA COUNTY VOTERS

As of the end of 2013, Ottawa County had a total of 187,043 registered voters and the Elections Division processed over 11,000 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.



## POST ELECTION AUDIT PROCESS

Another legislative change we encountered in 2013 was the requirement for post-election audits to be conducted at random following every 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 30 separate precincts in 2013, and will continue to be responsible for all future audits after each election.

**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.**

## CAMPAIGN FINANCE

All candidates, political action committees and ballot question committees at the county level or below 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 worked with a number of our committees to educate them on the new requirements, and processed over 100 separate campaign finance filings in 2013.

We worked hard in 2013 on the testing and development of our new Campaign Finance Online process, which has now officially been rolled out. Ottawa County is currently one of only two counties in the state to offer a completely online process for candidates to file campaign finance reports. This will not only be a significant convenience to our candidates, but will also help to eliminate errors in the filing process by putting in a number of helpful checks in place.

Elections continue.....



**SERVING OUR CITIZENS THROUGH BETTER TECHNOLOGY**

2013 was a great year for technology in the Elections Division. In addition to the roll out of Campaign Finance Online, we continued improvements to the elections website, offering valuable information for candidates and voters. We also expanded upon the new Election Night Reporting webpage with improvements including the beta test 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 work with GIS frequently in providing voter and election related mapping assistance to candidates and others interested in mapping the elections process. With the help of GIS, we also assisted a few of our local jurisdictions in 2013 with the process of re-drawing their precinct boundary lines to be more cost effective and eliminate voter confusion 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 is also responsible for holding clarity hearings in relation to recall petitions within Ottawa County. Another legislative change taking effect in 2013 modified our recall process, placing additional requirements on the Commission in their deliberation on recall petitions. The Election Commission met a total of four times in 2013, including meetings to discuss and revise our policy on recall procedure.

Nobody will ever deprive the American people of the right to vote except the American people themselves and the only way they could do this is by not voting. ~Franklin D Roosevelt~

**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 twice in 2013 to certify the May and November elections.



**OUTREACH AND INVOLVEMENT**

Among the goals of the Elections Division in 2013 was to “Expand our presence in the community, and ensure that Ottawa County remains a leader in the field of election administration”. We continued our emphasis on voter registration by conducting 5 voter registration events, including at West Ottawa and Holland High Schools, various community venues in partnership with the League of Women Voters and at a Naturalization Ceremony for over 200 new West Michigan citizens. The Elections Division also conducted training sessions in partnership with the League of Women Voters to help better educate their members and the community at large on the elections and voter registration process.

**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 20<sup>th</sup> 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  
\*Parental Waiver

\*These records are maintained by the Family Division of the 20<sup>th</sup> Circuit Court located in West Olive, Michigan,

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

**ACCOUNTING**

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>2009</u>	<u>2010</u>	<u>2011</u>	<u>2012</u>	<u>2013</u>
Restitution	\$454,598	\$453,947	\$402,466	\$574,137	\$450,277
Attorney Fee	\$191,850	\$210,737	\$240,546	\$156,610	\$174,112
Bonds	\$326,562	\$879,473	\$956,312	\$349,279	\$277,206
Victim Rights	\$44,883	\$45,512	\$71,124	\$77,647	\$85,384
Fines	\$12,630	\$110,911	\$104,510	\$461,746	\$541,045
Community Service	\$9,936	\$8,590	\$7,694	\$6,418	\$6,210
State Minimum	\$53,935	\$55,570	\$60,605	\$59,823	\$61,579

Circuit Court Records continue.....

**STATISTICS FOR CIRCUIT COURT RECORDS**

	<u>2011</u>	<u>2012</u>	<u>2013</u>
Criminal Cases	918	928	884
Criminal Appeals	7	5	1
Civil Cases	423	443	363
Business Court Cases			32
Civil Appeals	44	51	59
Divorce Cases	1,101	1,080	1,063
Divorces Granted	866	985	977
Cases to Appellate & Supreme Courts	23	24	22
Paternity	130	145	168
Support	239	275	278
Personal Protection Orders	808	747	594
Others Domestic Relations	36	36	62
UIFSA	18	20	16
Adoptions	142	120	139
Neglect & Abuse	83	78	94

**ADDITIONAL COLLECTIONS**

	<u>2012</u>	<u>2013</u>
Filing Fees	\$232,465	\$232,228
Order Fees	\$80,840	\$84,020
Motion Fees	\$49,005	\$48,700
Jury Trial Fees	\$11,645	\$10,200
Garnishments	\$9,135	\$8,025

**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 MESD 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](http://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.

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

## DOCUMENTS AND FUNDS

In 2013, we recorded **55,720** documents. Of these, **16,092** were electronically recorded accounting for **29%** of our recordings compared to only **25%** in 2012. This also translates to **255,894** pages.

We received in:

\$884,524 in recording fee

\$184,205 in copy sales

\$1,165,702 in county real estate transfer tax

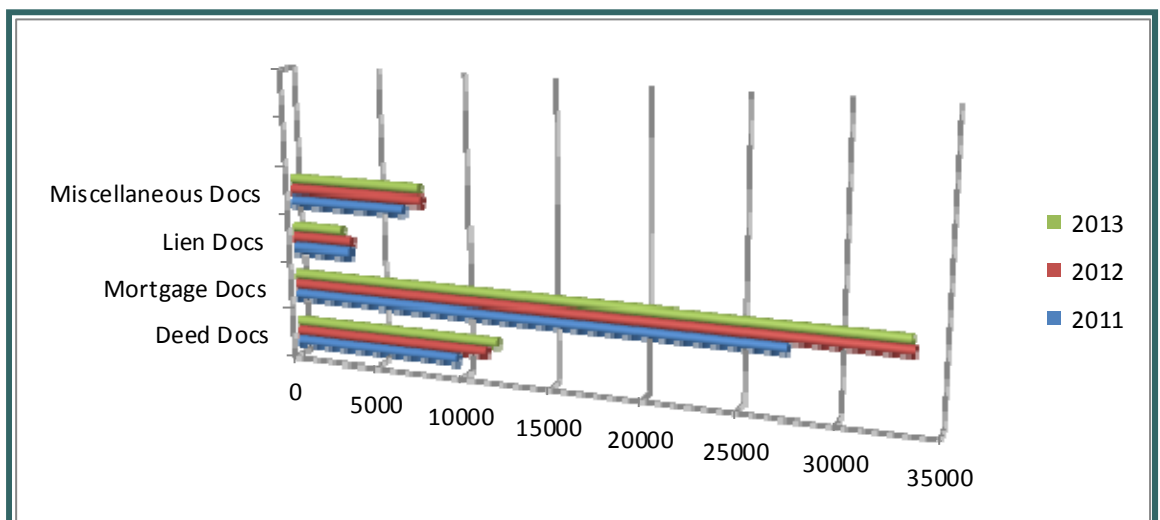


We sent to the State of Michigan:

\$7,640,404 in state real estate transfer tax

\$207,343 in remonumentation fees

### 2011-2013 Statistics



Register of Deeds continue.....

**OPERA AUDIT**

Ottawa County Register of Deeds Division document index data was subjected to a battery of tests in November 2013. The Official Public Record Audit (OPERA) tests are designed to look for data inconsistencies and anomalies. Where practical, documents with questions that can be resolved by viewing the image and editing the index were put into a queue to be processed through our

land software audit function. Other anomalies were noted. By reviewing the reports and re-auditing the documents, the Ottawa County Register of Deeds Division will be able to say, with confidence, that they are THE source for the official public record!



**DEEDS INDEED**

The deeds and land patents for Ottawa County go back to the early 1800's. Our office has been steadily working on imaging and indexing these documents. We were able to complete this project in 2013.

In 2013, we also imaged all the Oil and Gas leases as well as the Corners and Remonumentation Corners. We will begin indexing these in 2014 as soon as we are done auditing all the deed images and indexes to assure they are correct.

**ARCHIVED ORIGINAL SURVEY**



In 2013, the Planning and Performance Improvement Department gave our office custody of the original surveys for Ottawa County. Over the summer we contracted with retired surveyor, Don Schiele, to code each survey with a Town and Range identifier. We then hired a local imaging company to image and index all pages. This process is complete and we are working with WebTecs to link all of this to our webpage.

**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 2013, the three locations accepting passports took in a total of 2,210 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 2013, the Board met 6 times, approving 8 preliminary plats, and approved 6 final plats.



Our goal remains to provide a greater level of service each year to reflect the pride we have in our County and the sincerity we have in serving 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

**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

**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

**Hudsonville District Court**  
3100 Port Sheldon Road  
Hudsonville, MI 49426  
Tuesdays, 8 a.m. to 12 p.m.  
(616) 662-6085

**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.

### 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.