



**ANNUAL REPORT**

**2019**

**Clerk | Register of  
Deeds**



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## To the Ottawa County Board of Commissioners and Residents of Ottawa County:

In the following pages you will find the 2019 Annual Report of the County Clerk and Register of Deeds Office. This document offers a glimpse into the work that our team performs on a daily basis as we carry out our mission, which is simply: **To help our customers and encourage their trust in government.**

During the course of our daily work throughout 2019 we interacted with thousands of Ottawa County residents; and our number one focus remains on them. Whether we are walking through the adoption process with a family, helping a new homebuyer record their purchase or educating a group of students about the voting process, our goal is to connect with residents in a meaningful way that leaves them with a positive view of their county government.

One of our ongoing priorities remains to expand customer access to our growing number of online services. Just a few of the most utilized of those online services are the electronic recording of documents in the Register of Deeds Office (67% done electronically), Marriage License Applications (78% done online), and also electronically certified copies of death records (98%). As I sit to write this introduction letter in the middle of a historic pandemic, we are realizing just how critical these online options are to the continuity of our operations and to serving this community.

None of our work would be possible without the excellent team of people that we have in place. I am proud to lead a group of individuals, from our management team to our front-line employees, that embodies the mission and vision of our organization. I continue to be grateful for the leadership of our County Board of Commissioners, Circuit Court Judges, County Administration and the professionalism and helpful spirit of my fellow County employees in every department. Each of you contribute to the success of our work, and to making Ottawa County the special place that it is.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "John R. [last name]".

# MANAGEMENT TEAM OBJECTIVES

To reach our goals, the Management Team is focusing on the following standard operating objectives:



Customer  
Service



Staff  
Morale



Budget



Accuracy



Forward  
Thinking

## MISSION

### WHY DO WE EXIST?



To help customers and encourage their trust in government

### WHAT DO WE DO?



Create and preserve records for current and future generations

## VISION

### HOW WILL WE SUCCEED?

- Exceed the expectations of our customers in every aspect of service
- Be creative, strategic, and forward thinking leaders to continually improve government services
- Create a positive, caring, and engaging environment for our employees and coworkers
- Be conscientious of taxpayer resources

# VALUES

## HOW DO WE BEHAVE?



We provide excellent customer service.

"[Jacki] leaves her cubicle to go out into the lobby to help...she provides such excellent and personable service."



We are humble.

"So many times [Amber] told me that she is just doing her job and in no way was that the case!"



We value people.

"[Terry] could have told me to come back another day, but he graciously stayed late to process the application."



We are authentic.

"[Sam] was calm and courteous in the face of my confusion and anxiety, which helped me realize that everything would be alright"



We are eager to learn.

"Zac is always eager to help, very professional... He is willing to learn anything that is thrown at him."



We seek input from others.

"Jody contacted the bank and others involved in the process while keeping us informed each step of the way."



We are accountable.

"Instead of denying or throwing out my application, Paula sent me a friendly email asking for the missing pieces of information"

# Employee Highlights >>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>

## Customer Service Award



3rd Quarter Customer Service Award Recipient  
Chris Wolff

The Clerk/Register's office received 14 Customer Service Award nominations in 2019. We are proud to announce that Chris Wolff was chosen for the 3rd Quarter Customer Service Award! On December 10, 2019, Chris was recognized at the Ottawa County Board of Commissioners meeting for receiving the Outstanding Customer Service Award—External. The customer wrote that Chris "was more helpful to me and my cause and remained very personable over three visits. Having dealt with other counties on many occasions I must say that she was unexpected and refreshing. Please commend her on a job well done." Chris is just one example of the excellent customer service that comes out of our office every day.

## Employee All-Star Award

The Employee All-Star Award is an internal award given to employees who go above and beyond the standard expectation.

### Jacki Eastling, Clerk/Register Technician

Jacki earned the All-Star Award for helping out her co-worker. The Holland office has two employees, so when Jacki's co-worker called in sick, Jacki voluntarily pulled back vacation time to help avoid last minute scheduling changes.



# Website Information >>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>

**21,975**

Circuit Court  
Record page  
views

**69,278**

Total page views

**3,628**

Vital Records  
page views

**21,382**

Clerk|Register of  
Deeds homepage  
views

**13,742**

Register of Deeds  
page views

**8,551**

Elections page  
views

The Clerk|Register of Deeds office is proud of our contribution to the total number of online transactions through Ottawa County's website.



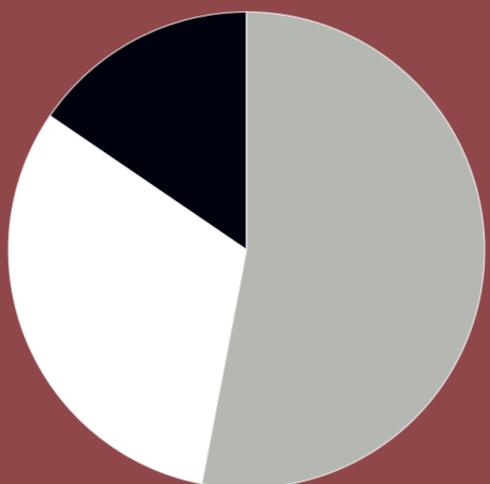
**36.7%**

of online transactions were for services offered by our office, which totals 31,628 online transactions.

Our office also contributed \$238,657 or 8.6% of Ottawa County's total revenue for online services.

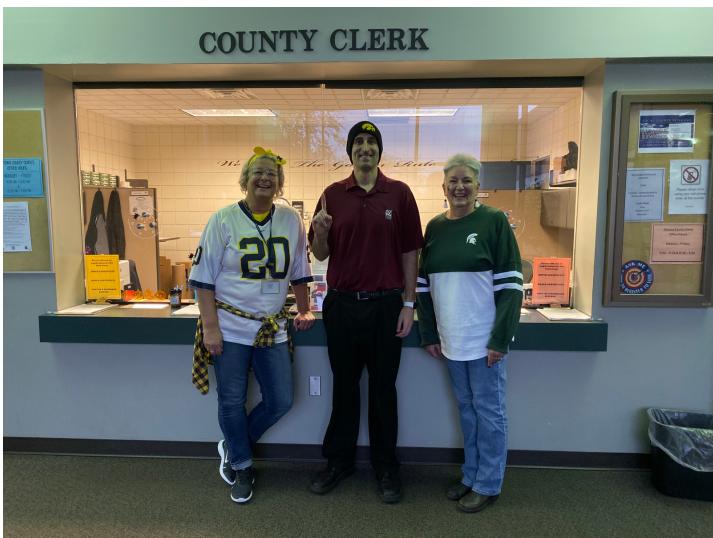
Clerk|Register of Deeds Revenue for Online Transactions

By Division



Court Records	\$126,513
Vitals	\$75,193
Deeds	\$36,950

# APEX



Marshall from Fidlar Technologies with Holland staff celebrating our first APEX customer!

in helping to create a software program that integrated the duties of the Register of Deeds division and Clerk Vitals division all in one program. Since our office has successfully cross-trained, we were the prime candidate to help with this project. This program provides customers the convenience of beginning the vital record process from anywhere and on any electronic device. Apex's guided application processes are customer friendly and fosters an environment that will minimize the likelihood of human error. Once the customer arrives at our office to finalize their requested vital record service, Apex's electronic verification process provides an additional inspection of the data, decreases processing time and significantly minimizes our carbon footprint as we no longer print out many documents. Signatures are obtained electronically. In addition, customers now have the option to have their receipt emailed, printed or both. Being a beta test site has its challenges. As with anything new, there are bugs to tweak and some hurdles to overcome as we continue to grow the program. However, we have already seen the positive impact this program will have on our office. We look forward to fully implementing this software as it will be a great benefit to our team and our customers!

This year the Vitals/Deeds division embarked on a new journey as the first Michigan beta test site for a very promising software program. The program is called Apex and the benefits this software will provide are very advantageous to the long-term goals of our office. It will increase our efficiency, enhance our cross-training efforts, reduce data input errors, minimize our carbon footprint and surge our office forward in the effective use of advanced technology.

At the beginning of the year we were approached by our vendor, Fidlar Technologies, to partner with them

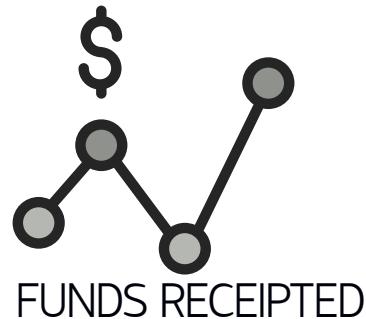
## Ottawa County License Portal

Welcome! Please select an option below to begin filling out your license online.

A screenshot of the Ottawa County License Portal website. The page features a large, semi-transparent image of a building with trees and flowers in the foreground. Overlaid on the image is a graphic of a marriage certificate. The certificate is cream-colored with gold lettering. It reads "MI Marriage Application", "Certificate of Marriage", and "This certifies that [names] and [names] were lawfully married on [date]". Two gold rings are placed on the certificate.

Online portal page that customers see when applying for a Marriage License

# Circuit Court Records >>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>



**\$4.69 MILLION**

Circuit Court Records receipts all funds for the Circuit Court and the Juvenile Court for items including restitution, state fees, fines and costs, bonds, court orders, filing fees, attorney fees, and several others



**12%**

Increase in funds received compared to 2018

## E-filing in Michigan

E-Filing through the State's program MiFile became mandatory for most Civil and Domestic Cases on December 3, 2018. The transition went even better than expected for both attorneys and in pro per parties.



**2018**

\$28,895 collected in  
statutory e-filing fees



**2019**

\$101,030 collected in  
statutory e-filing fees



**2018**

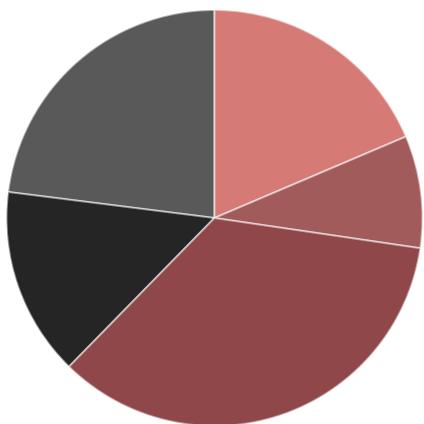
10,992 documents  
were e-filed



**2019**

30,596 documents  
were e-filed

## Cases Filed by Division - 4,608 Total



Criminal	857
Civil	402
Domestic	1,613
PPO	676
Family	1,060

**133,946**  
DOCUMENTS  
FILED IN 2019



**24**

TRIALS COMMENCED AS  
JURY TRIALS



**1,155**

JURORS WERE CALLED  
TO SERVE



**40**

CASES SENT TO THE  
COURT OF APPEALS



**148**

ADOPTION CASES FILED



**38**

CHILDREN ADOPTED OUT OF  
THE FOSTER CARE SYSTEM

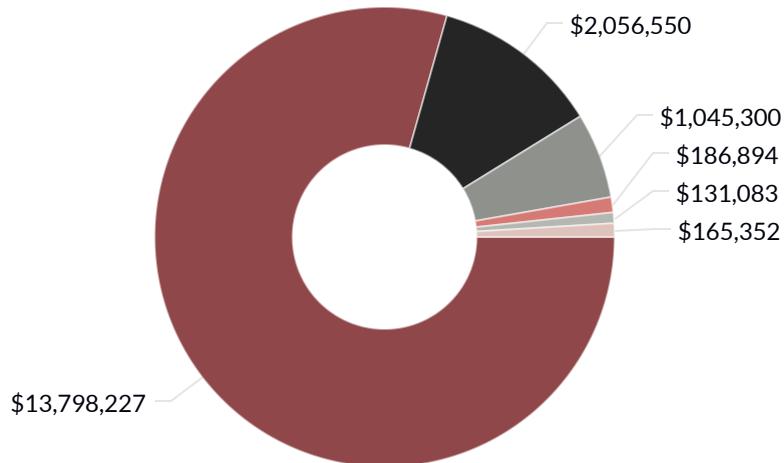


**5**

ADOPTIONS FINALIZED  
ON MICHIGAN  
ADOPTION DAY

# Register of Deeds >>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>

## Funds Received in 2019



State Transfer Tax	\$13,798,227
County Transfer Tax	\$2,056,550
Recording Fees	\$1,045,300
Remonumentation	\$186,894
Copy Sales	\$131,083
Bulk Images	\$165,352

## Property Fraud Alert

Property Fraud Alert is a free system that notifies you every time your name appears on a document that is being recorded.



Purchase real property



Record documents in  
Register of Deeds  
office



Sign up for Property  
Fraud Alert



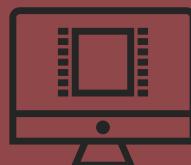
Protect your most  
valuable asset

## Free Online Search

 **10,776**

Documents were purchased through the free online search, generating \$31,230 for the County's General Fund

## Electronic Documents



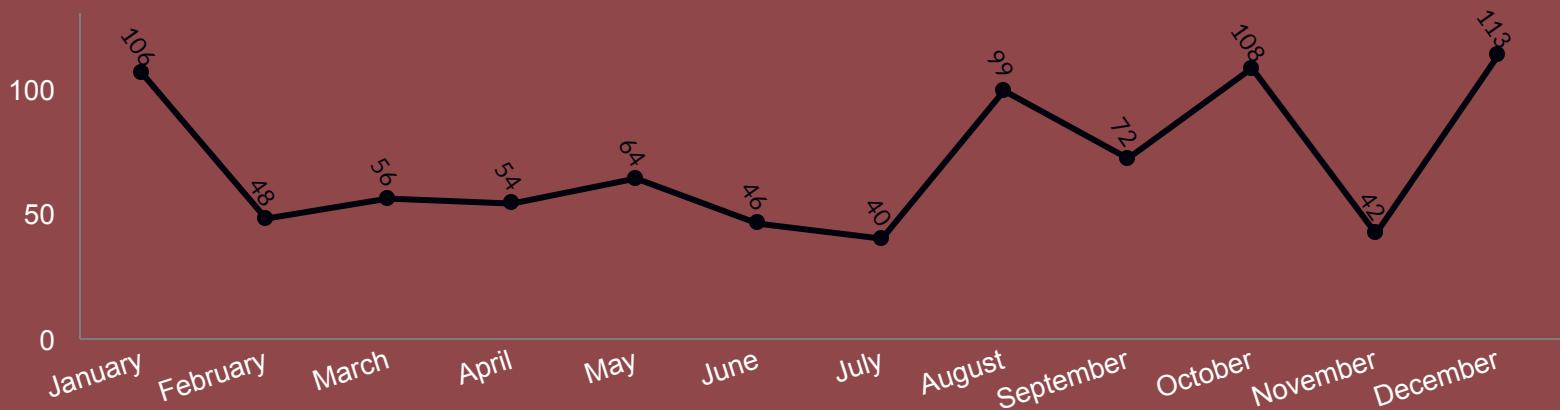
**67%**

of documents were recorded electronically, which equates to 33,126 of 49,256 total documents, a 7% increase from 2018



# Passports

## Applications Accepted by Month



# 848

Total number of passports accepted in 2019.  
408 of these appointments were made online.



# 30,000

Total revenue from passports



# \$4,710

Total revenue from passport photos

## Plat Board

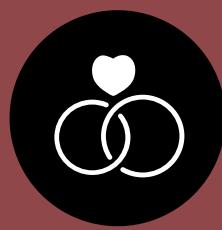
The Ottawa County Plat Board consists of three members including the Chairperson of the Board of Commissioners, the County Treasurer, and the County Clerk/Register of Deeds. The County Clerk/Register of Deeds is the secretary to the Plat Board and therefore responsible for accepting the plats to be reviewed by the board. The board reviews and approves plats to ensure the dimensions of the proposed plat are compliant with the provisions of the Subdivision Control Act of 1967.

### Plats Approved

by Jurisdiction



# Vital Records >>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>



**1,811**

MARRIAGE  
LICENSES  
ISSUED



**986**

BUSINESS  
REGISTRATIONS



**14,295**

COPIES OF  
DEATH CERTIFICATES



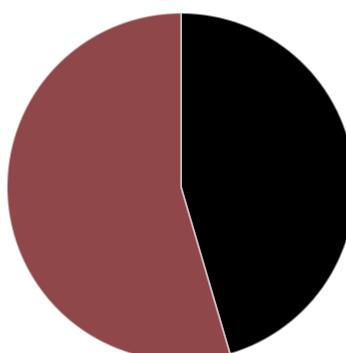
**7,022**

COPIES OF  
BIRTH  
CERTIFICATES

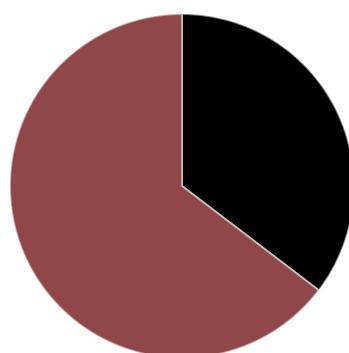
## Honor Rewards

Honor Rewards is a nationally recognized program that allows veterans to receive discounts at participating area businesses by showing their Honor Rewards ID card. To obtain a card, Ottawa County veterans can fill out an application and file their military discharge papers with our office.

New in 2019



Total Since 2015



## Birth Count vs. Death Count

OVER THE PAST YEAR,

OVER THE PAST YEAR,

**2,420**

VS

**1,865**

BABIES BORN IN  
OTTAWA COUNTY

DEATHS IN  
OTTAWA COUNTY

Notary



Applications

**0583**

Notary applicants are required to file a \$10,000 bond with the County Clerk's Office

## TOP BABY NAMES

### Ottawa County

Boy:

1. Oliver

2. Jack

3. Theodore

4. Elijah

5. Lincoln

6. Wyatt

7. Caleb

8. Grayson

9. Levi

10. Benjamin

Girl:

1. Emma

2. Charlotte

3. Natalie

4. Harper

5. Sophia

6. Amelia

7. Isabelle

8. Evelyn

9. Mia

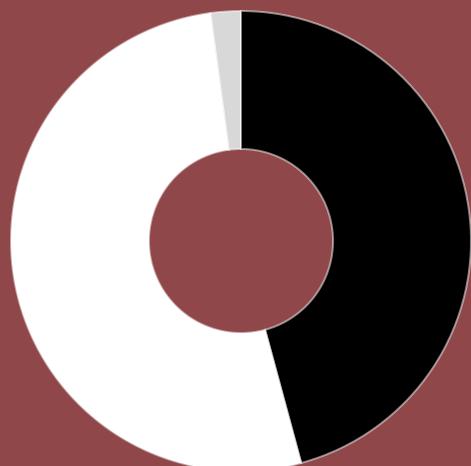
10. Olivia



## Concealed Pistol Licenses

- Michigan State Police approved 3,245 applications, or 99%, of the applications we received
- Our office received a total of 3,267 CPL applications
  - 1,107 of these were new applicants
  - 2,160 of these were renewal applicants
- Renewal applicants now have the option to renew by mail, online, or in-person

How did Ottawa County applicants choose to renew?



● Online	989
● In-person	1,125
● By mail	46

# 2019 Elections Rundown

# BALLOTS CAST

MAY

**19,414**

# VOTER TURNOUT



# AUGUST

4,699



# NOVEMBER

17,543



# November City Elections

City of Coopersville  
Council Member:  
Degeus, Gavin, Lampe  
Council Member (Partial Term):  
Fynewever

City of Ferrysburg  
Mayor: Hopp  
Council Member: Montgomery, O'Donnell, Sias

City of Grand Haven  
Mayor: Monetta  
Council Member: Fritz, Cummins  
Board of Light and Power: Crum

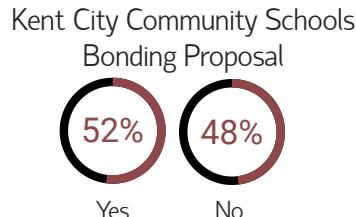
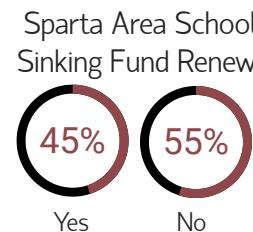
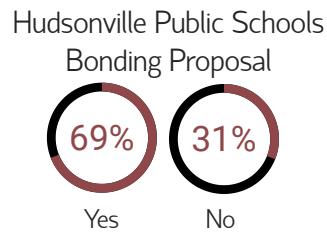
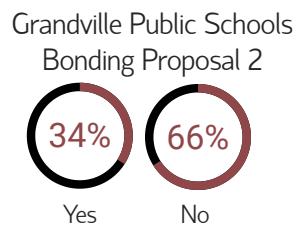
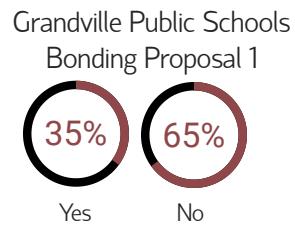
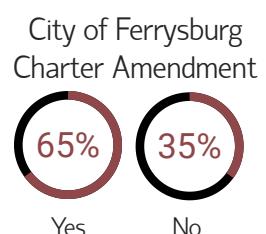
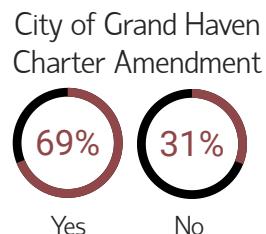
City of Holland  
Mayor:  
Bocks  
Council Member:  
Raymond (At-Large), Peters (2nd Ward), Arendshorst (4th Ward), Hoekstra (6th Ward)

**City of Hudsonville**

Mayor:  
Northrup

Council Member:  
DeVree (1st Ward), Steigenga  
(2nd Ward), Leerar (3rd Ward)

City of Zeeland  
Mayor:  
Klynstra  
Council Member:  
Gruppen, Lam, Timmer

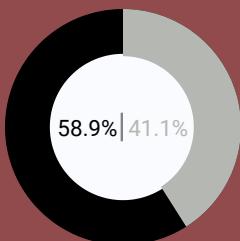


# Implementation of Proposal 3

In November 2018, voters passed Proposal 18-3, which changed the way elections are run in Michigan. Two main changes for voters include allowing same day registration and no reason absentee voting. We tracked how Proposal 18-3 affected Ottawa County voters in the May, August, and November 2019 elections.

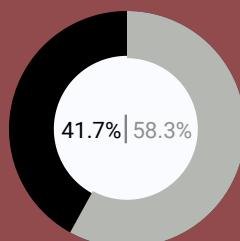
## May

Absentee Voting vs In-Person



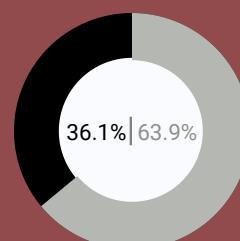
## August

Absentee Voting vs In-Person



## November

Absentee Voting vs In-Person



Same Day Registration

# 117

Voters registered on  
Election Day

Same Day Registration

# 78

Voters registered on  
Election Day

Same Day Registration

# 145

Voters registered on  
Election Day

## State Committees

### Election Modernization

#### Advisory Committee

Secretary of State Jocelyn Benson created the advisory committee in February 2019 in order to assist with the implementation of Proposal 18-3, which greatly impacted election administration across the state. Our office was one of four counties selected for the committee, and we worked with state and national partners to determine how to best implement same-day voter registration, no-reason absentee voting, and improving voter communication.

### Election Forms Committee

Our office assisted the Michigan Bureau of Elections' Forms Committee to redesign several critical elections materials in 2019. Among these changes were updates to absentee voting materials to reflect changes to absentee voting laws from Proposal 2018-3. The absentee ballot application was simplified because voters no longer needed to provide a reason to receive an absentee ballot. Absentee ballot envelopes were also updated and color coded to be more easily identifiable as election mail by the postal service.

### AV Working Group

One of the most important changes from Proposal 18-3 was the implementation of no-reason absentee voting. Due to this change, election administrators across the state anticipated a large increase in absentee voting. To prepare for this change, the Michigan Bureau of Elections, in collaboration with the State Office of Continuous Improvement, used Lean Process Improvement (LPI) to streamline absentee voting. As part of this initiative, our office helped develop a calculator to estimate absentee ballot processing times and infographics to help voters understand how absentee ballots are processed.

# In the Community >>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>

Our office has the privilege of attending various events around the county to engage with our residents. We believe attending events in our community helps us build relationships and encourage their trust in government.



## Voter Registration Drives

Throughout 2019, our office participated in voter registration drives at Grand Valley State University, Hope College, Loutit District Library in Grand Haven, and Herrick District Library in Holland.



## Girl Scout Troop

We had the opportunity to meet with a Girl Scout troop from Coopersville to talk about democracy and voting. We helped the girls earn their community engagement badge. Our staff talked to the girls about what democracy is, how elections work, who their elected officials are, and the importance of voting. The girls were able to fill out a voter registration form and vote using their own ballot. They voted on topics like what's your favorite ice cream and who is your favorite superhero – no surprise that Captain Marvel won that category!

# Constitution Day

Our Election staff went to Jenison High School to talk to government students about the constitution, voting, and democracy!



Veterans Day  
To honor our veterans and promote the Honor Rewards program, staff attended veteran ceremonies at Allendale High School, Unity Christian High School, and Holland High School.



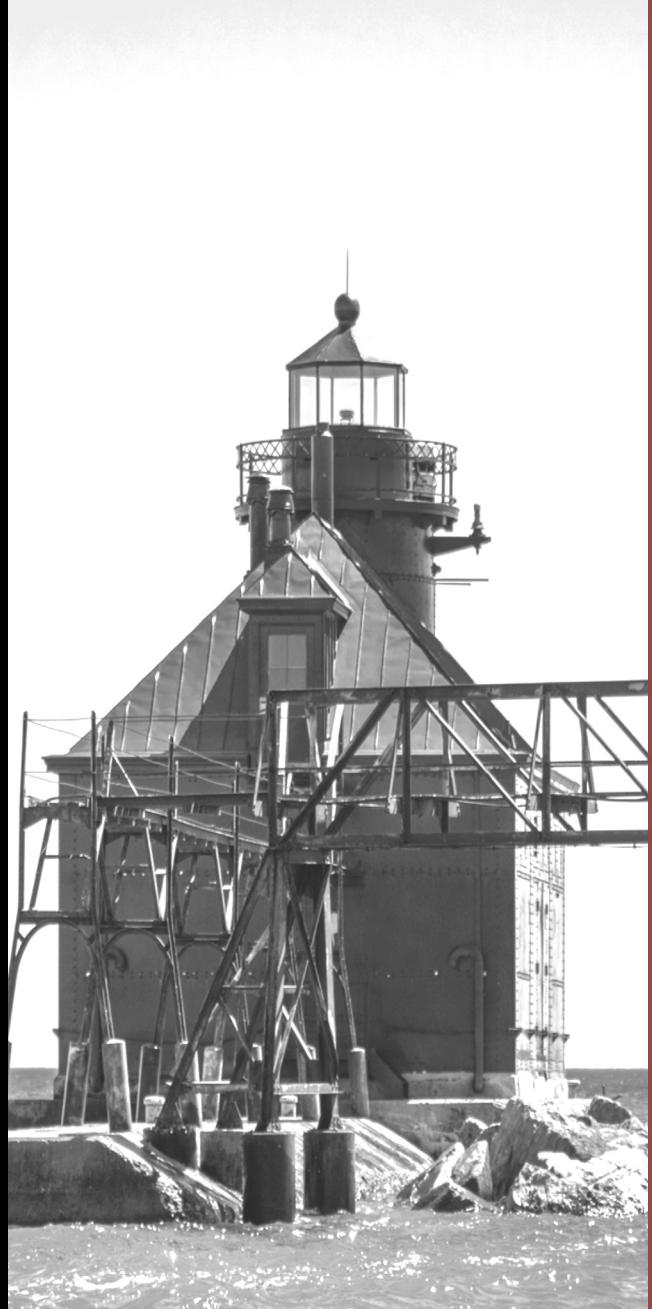
# Naturalization Ceremonies



The Clerk's Office regularly participates in naturalization ceremonies where the country's newest citizens are welcomed and take their oath of allegiance to the United States.

The Clerk's Office is on hand to help them get started with the process of getting a US passport, and may also help them register to vote.

Our office participates in several of these ceremonies each year, some at the Loutit District Library in Grand Haven, and others at the Herrick District Library in Holland.



## 2020 Board of Commissioners

Roger A. Bergman, Chair  
Matthew Fenske, Vice Chair  
Francisco C. Garcia  
Joseph Baumann  
Douglas R. Zylstra  
Allen Dannenberg  
Randall J. Meppelink  
Kyle J. Terpstra  
James Holtvluwer  
Gregory J. DeJong  
Philip D. Kuyers

## Clerk|ROD Management Team

Justin F. Roebuck  
*County Clerk/Register of Deeds*  
Sherri A. Sayles  
*Chief Deputy Clerk*  
Rachel A. Sanchez  
*Chief Deputy Register of Deeds*  
Jody L. Hansen  
*Vitals/Register of Deeds Supervisor*  
Renee E. Kuiper  
*Circuit Court Records Supervisor*  
Steven R. Daitch  
*Elections Coordinator*

## Clerk|ROD Staff

Amber Reagan	Kenneth Barry
Amy Rooks	Lauren Corrigan
Arlette Quistian	Mariela Magner
Aubrey Williams	Molly Johnson
Barbara Holt	Nicole Poel-Skofic
Carla Lieffers	Patrice Frantz
Christine Wolff	Peggy Hoisington
Connie Barker	Rebecca Nieboer
Curtis Hegel	Samantha Rollins
Deborah Vickers	Terrance Sands
Elizabeth Lange	Theo Randall
Jacklyn Eastling	Todd Rasmussen
Jonathan Marin	Viridiana Bautista
Karen Rubin-Fortier	William Thayer
Kathryn Sims	Zachary Carlson