

# 2019 & 2020 Annual Report County Clerk & Register of Deeds

## **St. Joseph County, Michigan**

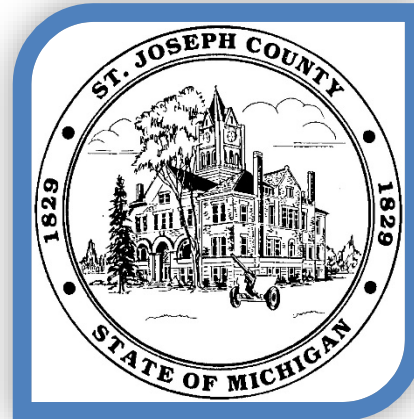
Lindsay Oswald, Clerk & Register  
Dena Clark, Chief Deputy Clerk  
Gina Everson, Chief Deputy Register  
Valerie Casterline, Election Specialist  
Joan Skinner (retired), Deputy Clerk  
Gloria Tate (retired), Deputy Clerk  
Jill Ross, Deputy Clerk  
Melissa Patch, Deputy Clerk  
Amanda Frye, Deputy Clerk  
Tracie Hinkley, Deputy Register  
Melissa Bliss, Deputy Clerk



## Executive Summary

I am pleased to present the 2019 & 2020 Annual Report for the St. Joseph County Clerk and Register of Deeds offices. My goal is to provide some insight to the wide range of activities through statistical information. We have navigated through a truly challenging time with the covid-19 crisis that emerged early in 2020. The impact continues, yet we continue to provide our residents the services they need in the safest, most cost-effective manner possible.

State Proposal 3 passed in November of 2018 resulting in significant changes to how elections are managed. We were able to implement new policies with the 2019 elections, but the full effect was not truly realized until the November General election in 2020 when our election officials processed over 25,000 voters.



In the Register of Deeds Office, we are continuing to see a rise in the use of electronic business. The next step in customer convenience is e-notary service which is now legal in the state of Michigan. Implementation for e-notary will be rolling out over the next 2 years. We already are accepting e-notarized documents from other states. Another electronic service we provide is the raw data to title and property companies to advance the services those businesses can provide to our residents.

Property fraud prevention continues to be a priority in the Register of Deeds Office, and we encourage the use of Property Alert for residents. I serve on the Legislative Committee for the Michigan Association of Register of Deeds (MARD) which strives to legislate protections for our residents from property fraud.

As a Legislative Committee member for both the Michigan Association of County Clerks (MACC), I stay on the front line of legislation and affect changes that will best serve our residents. I was also honored to be appointed as a District 4 Chair for both the MACC and the MARD and serve on both boards.

The challenges of 2020 have been well documented, but there were remarkable things that happened over the past year. We had staff making significant, amazing changes with little to no advanced notice. They were amazing! We had property and legal industry partners who switched to electronic means of doing business with quick turnaround.

I am proud of the professionalism and hard work of the staff with the General Division, Circuit Court Division, and Register of Deeds. It is because of their dedication that 2019 and 2020 were successful years, and we look forward to continued success in 2021. I would also like to thank the St. Joseph County Board of Commissioners and County Administration for their continued support.

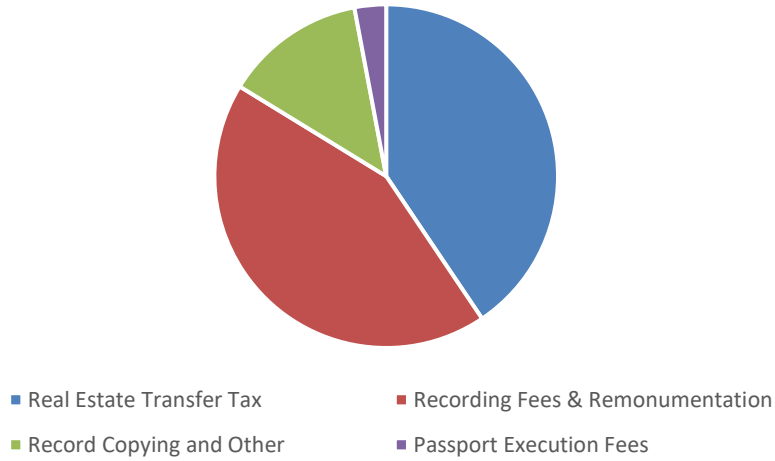
Respectfully,

Lindsay Oswald

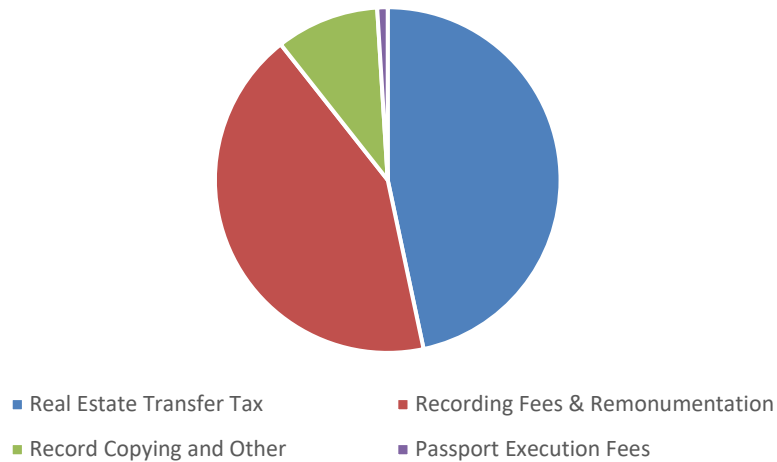
### Register of Deeds Statistical Information

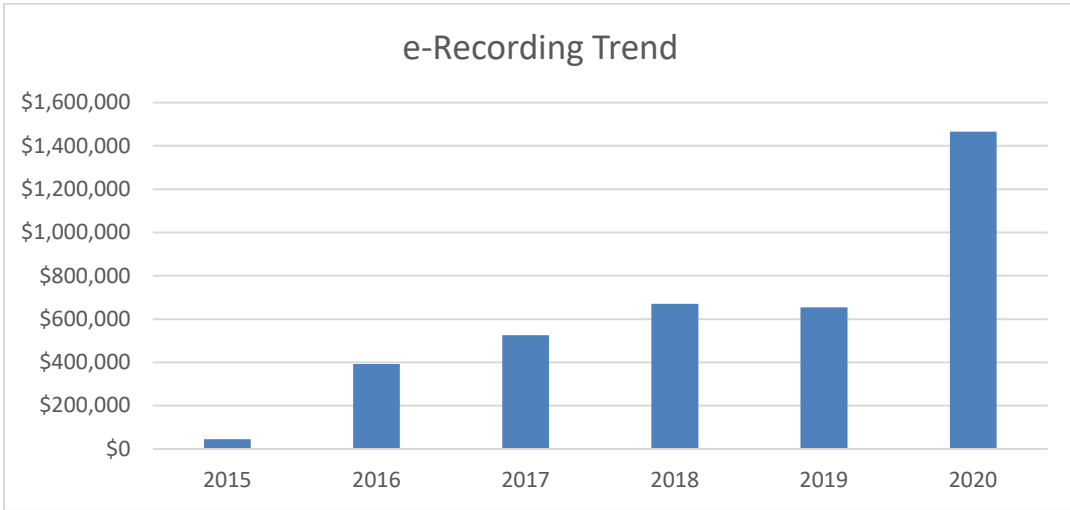
The Register of Deeds Office collected almost **\$2.2 million** in 2019 and just over **\$2.5 million**. Over \$650K in 2019 and almost \$1.5M in 2020 was through e-recorded documents processed completely electronically. Of the funds collected which were designated to the general fund, recording fees and county real estate transfer tax represent most of the revenue.

2019 Revenue - General Fund Contributions

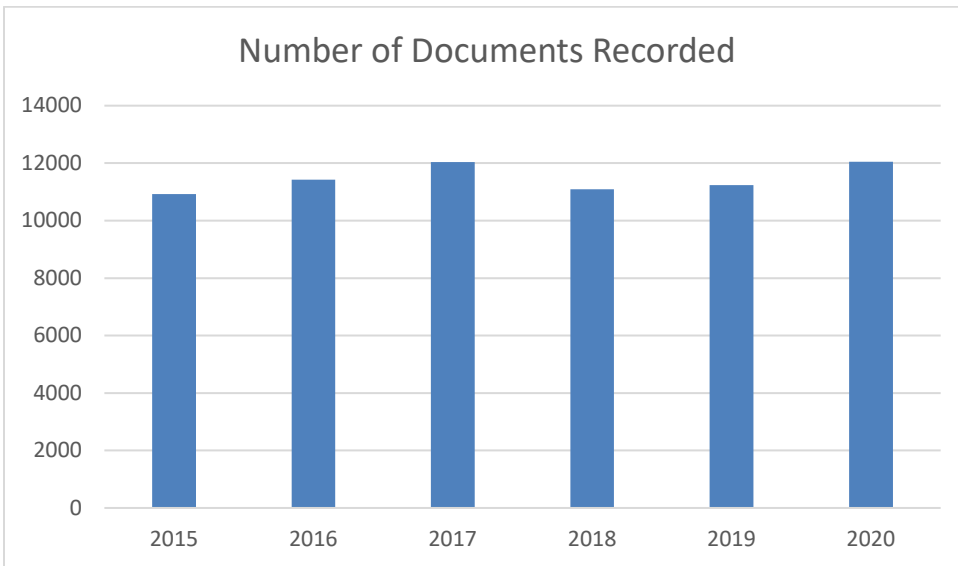


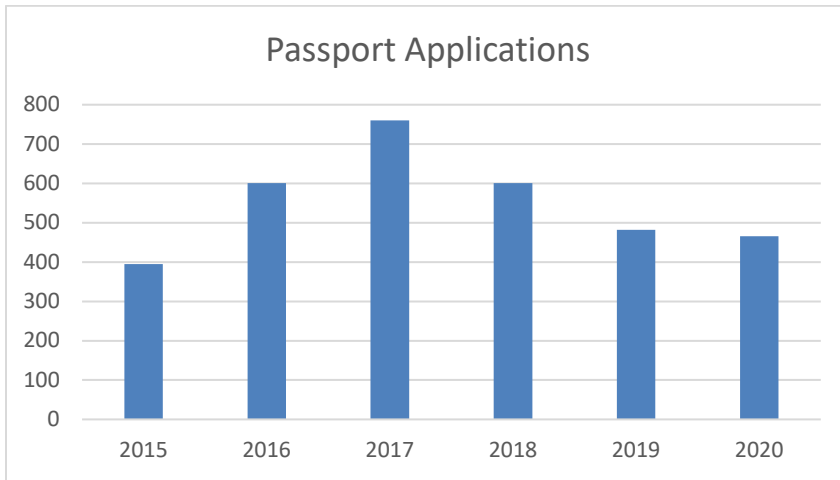
2020 Revenue - General Fund Contributions





PRIOR TO COVID SHUTDOWN, WE WERE ALREADY WORKING ON BUSINESS CONTINUITY PLANS TO BE ABLE TO SET UP ANYWHERE.

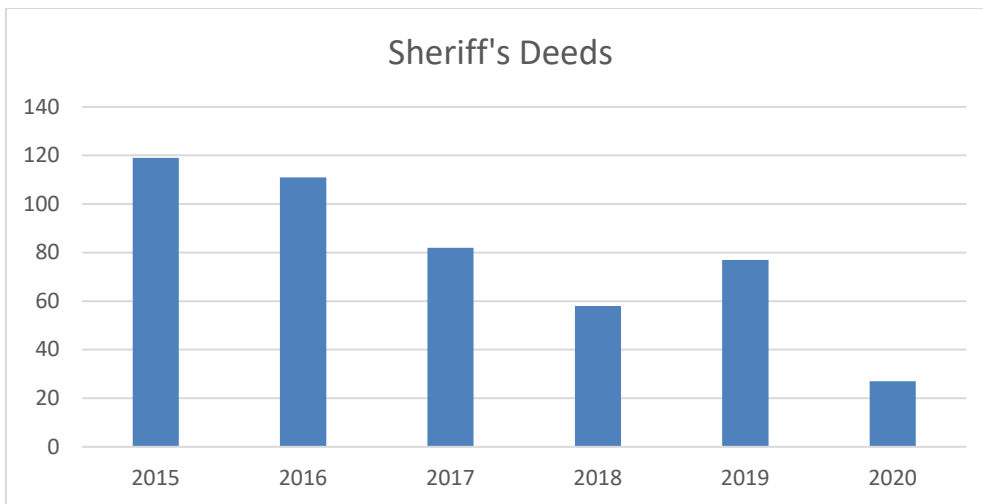




*Passport application processing is a source of income for the County. “You Rock” was the official response during our DOS December 2020 facility audit.*

### Sheriff’s Deeds

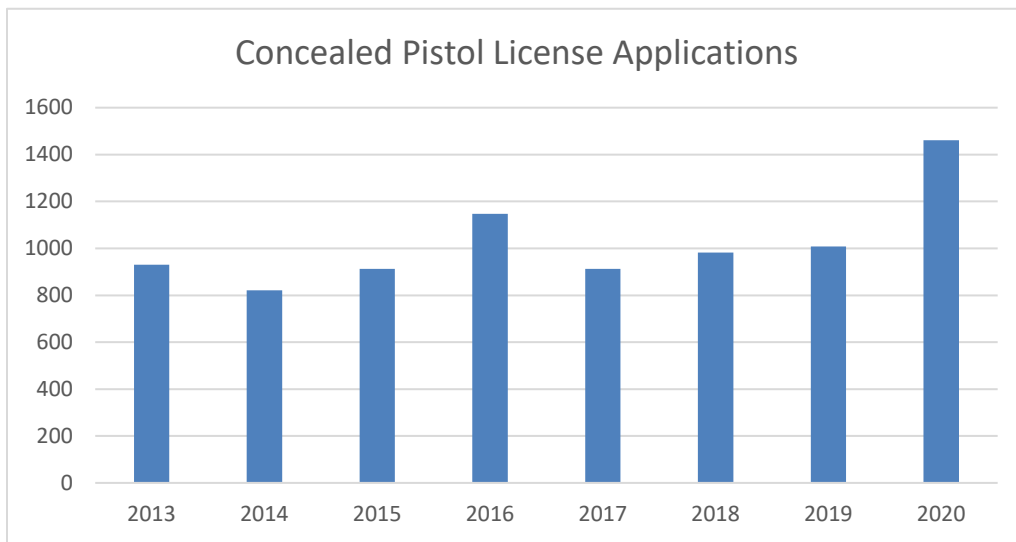
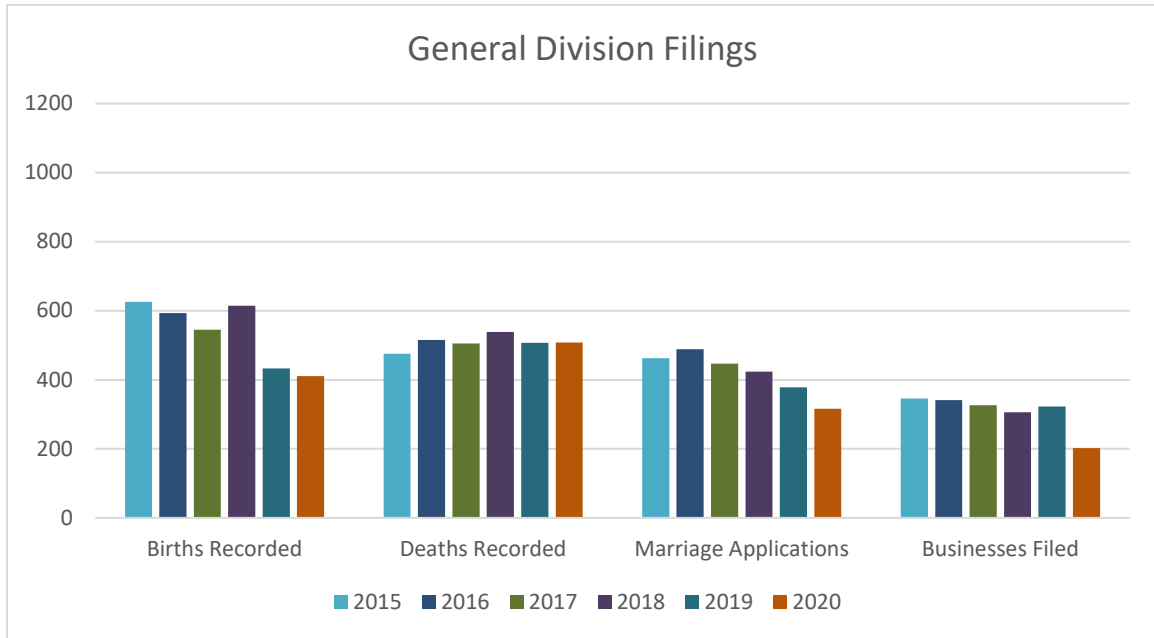
Federal restrictions stopped foreclosures in 2020.



## Clerk’s Office Statistical Information

### General Division

The General Division handles birth, marriage, death, and veteran discharge records, veteran IDs, notary filings, DBAs, elections, and concealed pistol licensing. Revenue for the Clerk’s office included over \$60,000 for certified vital record copies.

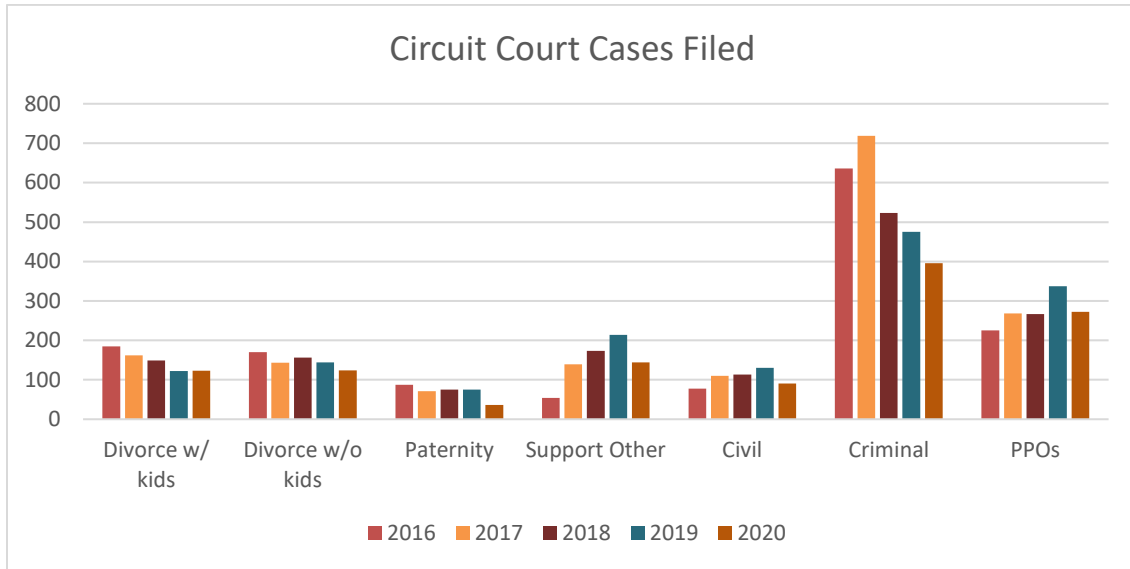


### Election Equipment

St. Joseph County participated in a risk limiting audit across the state and conducted our own in December of 2019 with high success. During a hand recount of an August 2020 election precinct, the numbers from the equipment were exact.

### Court Division

The court division of the office is part of Circuit Court. The Court Division manages case files for circuit and juvenile court and schedules jurors for circuit, juvenile, and probate court. While the number of cases decreased in 2020, each case took more time to process because of covid safety procedures. The office is prepared for the high 2021 caseload to address backups from the 2020 shutdown.



WE WERE ABLE TO MAKE MORE DOCUMENTS AVAILABLE ELECTRONICALLY BY CREATING A DATA EXPORT FOR A FILE SCANNING PROJECT.

