

2021 & 2022 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
Abby Fader, Election Specialist
Valerie Casterline, Deputy Clerk
Amanda Frye, Deputy Clerk
Megan Gauthier, Deputy Clerk
Tracie Hinkley, Deputy Register
Melissa Patch, Deputy Clerk
Jill Ross, Deputy Clerk



Executive Summary

I am pleased to present the 2021 & 2022 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.

In the Register of Deeds Office, we saw another increase in the utilization of electronic business processes for recording and an increase in electronic searching. We moved the physical location into the General Division office with a smooth transition. Staff have been flexible and worked as a team during the adjustment period.

State Proposal 22-2, nicknamed Promote the Vote, passed in November of 2022, once again causing significant changes to how elections are administered. Legislation and administrative rules are expected to finalize the processes to meet the new constitutional requirements.

Election methods around the country continue to make the news, and our audits throughout the County continue to be successful. Our election canvass is open to the public, and we have had attendees in the past 2 years wanting to observe the process. While each canvass offers an opportunity to learn our County's needs, the Board of Canvassers has confidently certified each election.

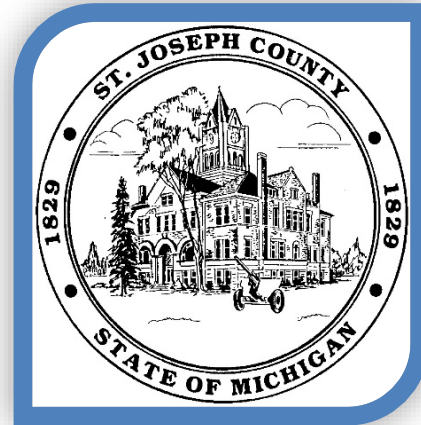
As a Legislative Committee member for both Michigan Association of County Clerks (MACC) and Michigan Association of Registers of Deeds (MARD), I stay on the front line of legislation and affect changes that will best serve our residents. I was also honored to be reappointed as a District 4 Chair for MACC and served as District 4 Chair in 2021 and 3rd VP in 2022 for MARD.

I am proud of the professionalism and hard work of the staff with the General Division, Circuit Court Division, and Register of Deeds. They have enthusiastically been the pilots of beta testing projects such as the automatic set asides and electronic vital record submission to the State. We benefit from volunteering in this capacity because we can guide development of software and processes while making a statewide impact.

I would also like to thank the St. Joseph County Board of Commissioners and County Administration for their continued support as we continue to implement technology solutions and make data more readily available to our customers. We are now paperless in the Circuit Court office and are working on scanning all neglect abuse and delinquent cases into our onBase system. Future steps include migrating data so that we are on one case management system instead of the two systems we currently use.

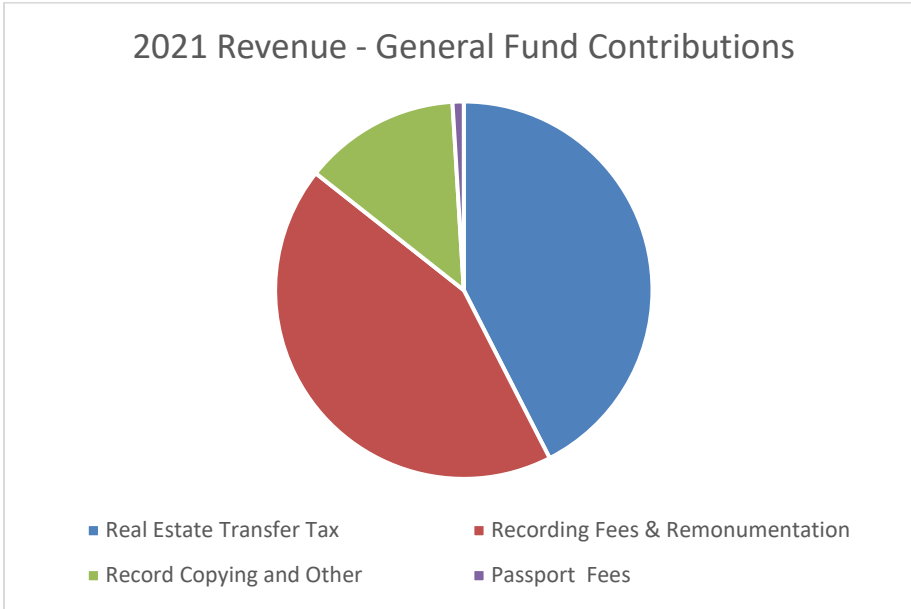
Respectfully,

Lindsay Oswald
County Clerk and Register of Deeds

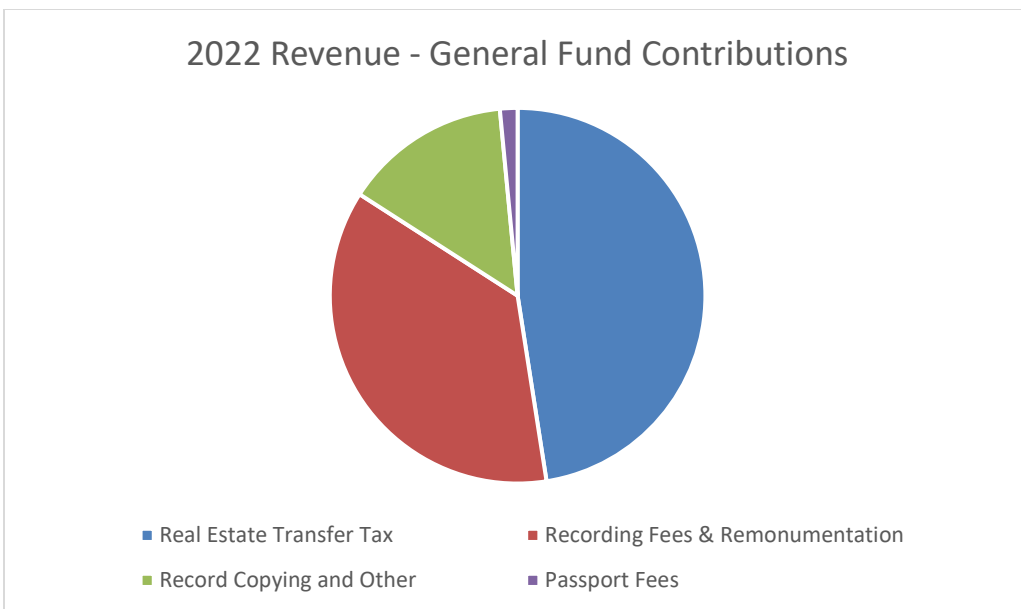


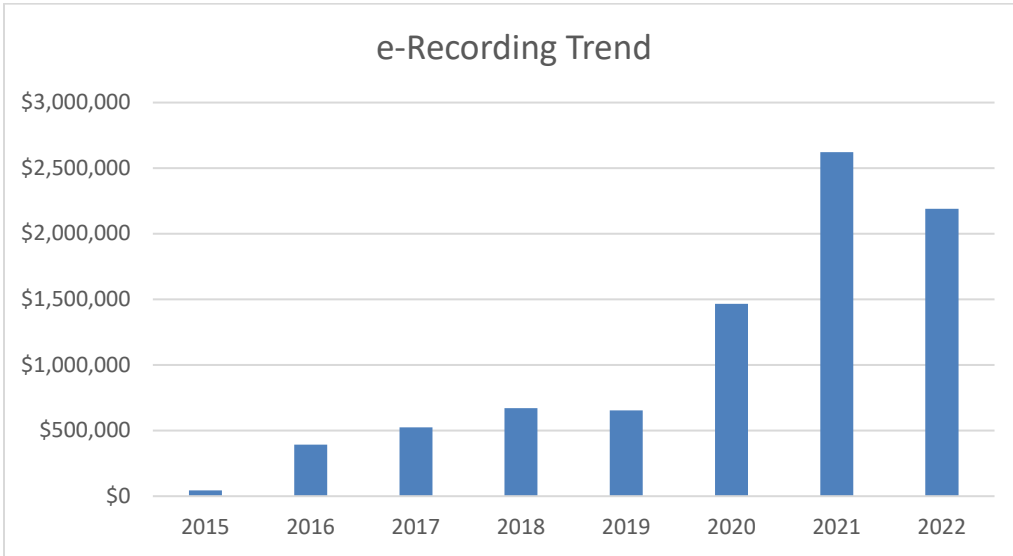
Register of Deeds Statistical Information

The Register of Deeds Office collected over **\$3.3 million** in 2021 and just over **\$2.8 million** in 2022. We continue to see an overall increase in electronic filing with \$2.6 million in 2021 and \$2.2 million in 2022. Of the funds collected designated to the general fund, recording fees and county real estate transfer tax represent most of the revenue.



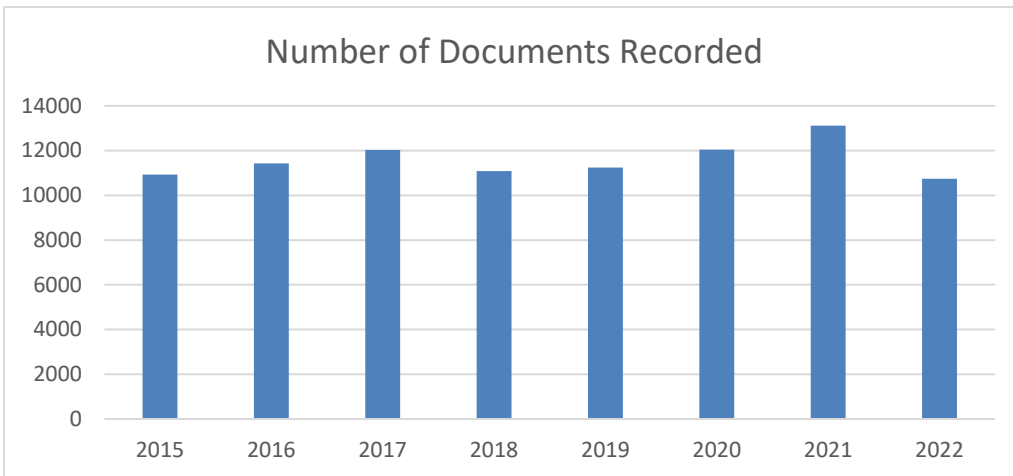
MARD WORKED WITH LEGISLATURE TO PASS A BILL TO STOP THE 2023 SUNSET ON A MONUMENTATION FEE

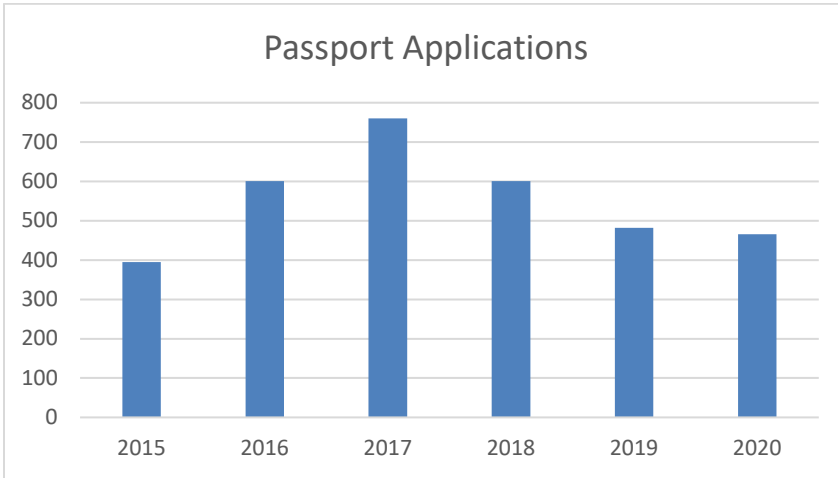




2022 HOUSING MARKET AND RISING INTEREST RATES DIRECTLY AFFECTED REVENUE TREND

ROD STAFF HANDLED AN ADDITIONAL 2,024 DOCUMENTS IN 2021 AND ADDITIONAL 1,690 DOCUMENTS IN 2022 BECAUSE OF REJECTIONS

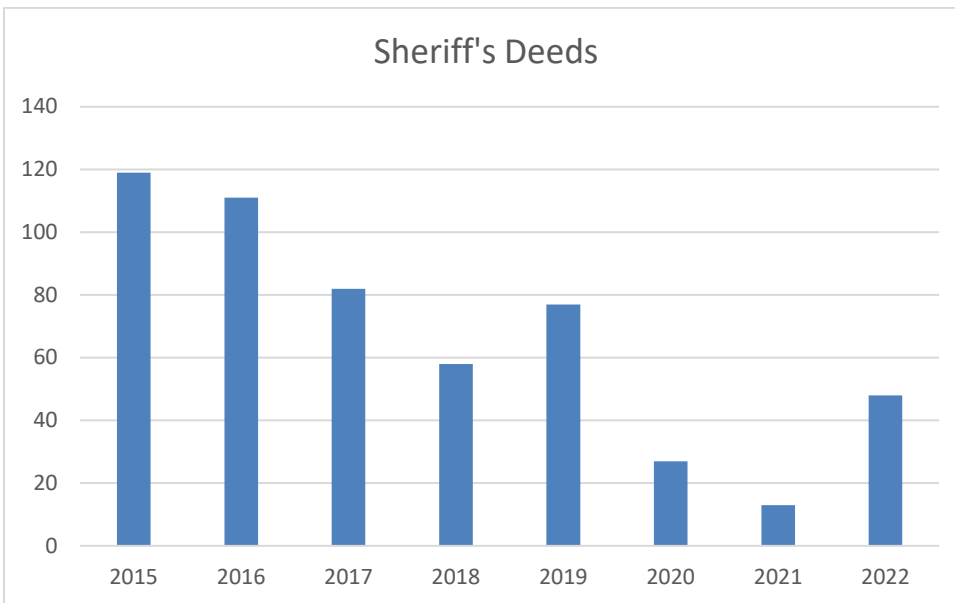




Passport application processing and photographs are a source of income for the County.

Sheriff's Deeds

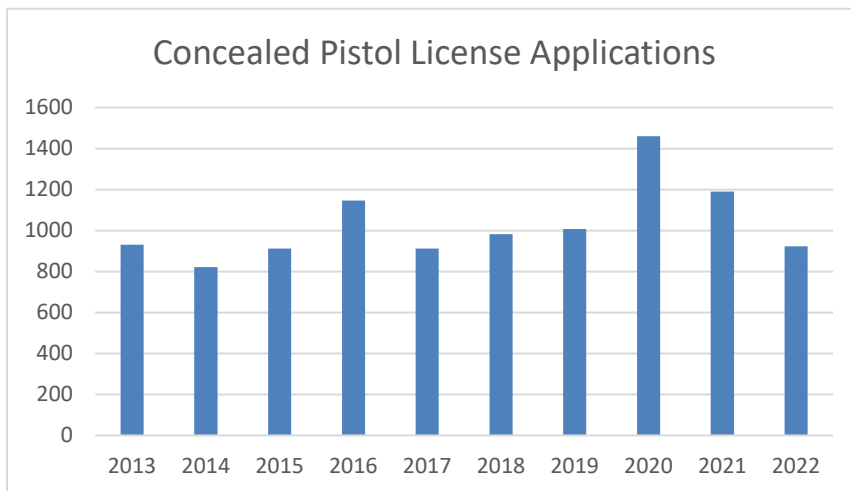
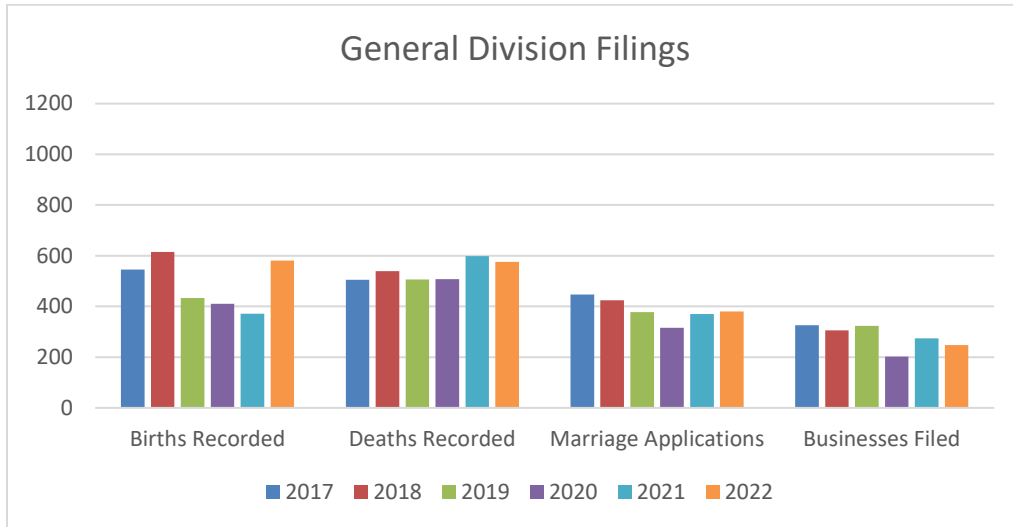
While there has been an increase in sheriff's deeds, the number is still relatively low. Federal restrictions had stopped foreclosures in 2020 until July 31 of 2021.



Clerk’s Office Statistical Information

General Division

The General Division handles birth, marriage, death, and veteran discharge vital records, notary filings, DBAs, elections, and concealed pistol licensing. Revenue for the Clerk’s office included over \$107,000 in 2021 and \$110,000 in 2022 for certified vital record copies.

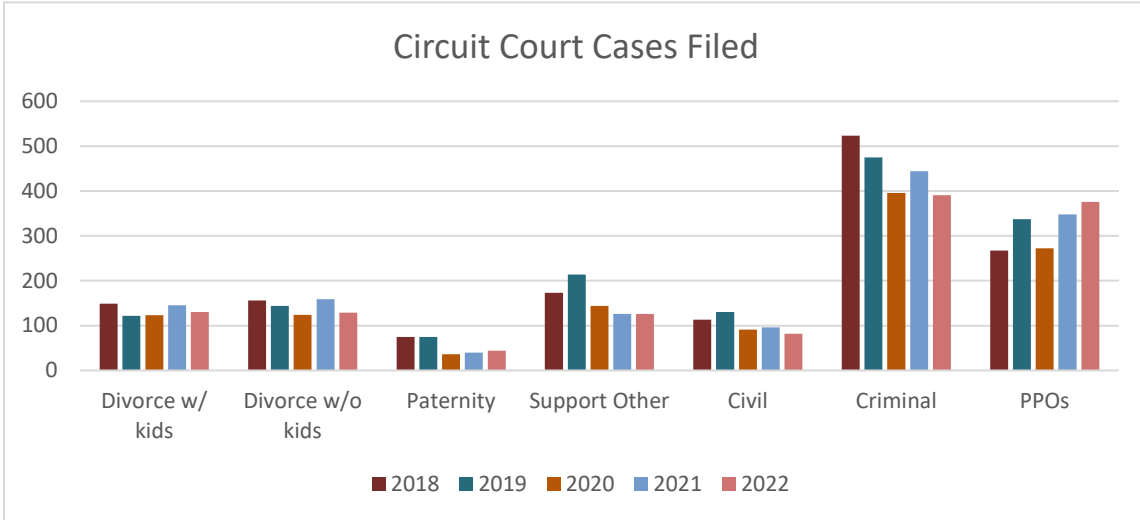


Elections

In November of 2022, over 7,000 of our residents, about half of the voters, voted absentee. With the changes since the November 2018 State Constitution amendments, the Clerk’s office has had increased duties and responsibilities, and we strive to aid the local clerks’ offices when needed and able. The responsibilities falling on the parttime township positions have been a challenge and create fulltime work in the months preceding each election for the local clerks. State Proposal 2-2022, Promote the Vote, has increased the requirements for local election officials, and the Clerk’s Office is planning collaborative agreements to assist with the duties.

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, probate, and district 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.



ADDED AN ADDITIONAL DATE FOR ADULT AND JUVENILE COLLECTIONS TO ACCOMODATE

