



# SHEBOYGAN COUNTY

**Ellen R Schleicher**  
*Register of Deeds*

**Debbie Huberty**  
*Office Supervisor*

February 20, 2018

TO: Adam Payne, County Administrator  
Thomas Wegner, County Board Chair  
Honorable Members of the Sheboygan County Board of Supervisors

Greetings:

I am pleased to present you with the 2017 Register of Deeds Annual Report. In it, you will find a mission statement for the Register of Deeds office that summarizes our goals and responsibilities.

Home/Property sales were a higher in 2017 verses 2016 we cannot predict how sales will be in 2018. We again exceeded our projected budget no telling what will happen in 2018. Very hard to predict what the future housing market will be.

I would like to commend the staff for the work accomplished in 2017. We started out the year short staffed and behind on returning documents. They stepped up to the plate to ensure that the customer(s) needs came first, within three months we were caught up and working together to train our new staff member. The cross training of the staff has paid off tremendously as any given day we can count on folks to step up and help when needed. We will strive to continue to this process so we don't get rusty.

They make a great team working together towards the greater goal; to make things better for the customer. I wish to thank them for their help, support, enthusiasm and hard work. Their dedication to their positions, the office and Sheboygan County make our accomplishments possible.

Respectively submitted,

*Ellen R Schleicher*

Ellen R. Schleicher, Register of Deeds

# ELLEN R. SCHLEICHER - REGISTER OF DEEDS

## SUMMARY OF ANNUAL REPORT

2017

### Mission Statement/Summary of Responsibility

*To be fiscally responsible while serving the public in a courteous and friendly manner, following and enforcing the state statutes that dictate our office along with preserving and protecting real estate records, vital records and miscellaneous documents.*

The Register of Deeds office is the primary source of legal documents, which affect virtually every individual living in Sheboygan County. This includes personal and real estate ownership and encumbrance records in addition to financing instruments that are the basis of individual and business credit ratings. This office executes the final acceptance and filing of new subdivision and condominium plats and Certified Survey Maps, administers the Vital Records Registration system, which includes registration of all births, marriages and deaths of county residents, probate instruments, and business documents such as corporate filings.

Other duties include registration, preparation, and issuance of copies of military records, administration of the Wisconsin Rental Weatherization Program, alternative informal probate procedures (HT-110; Termination of Interest in Property), and registration of US Treasury Federal Tax IRS Liens. Other statutory responsibilities include the collection of Real Estate transfer fees and recording fees, currently divided between Sheboygan County and the State of Wisconsin.

Required reports are given to the following governmental agencies: US Treasury (Federal IRS Tax Liens), Wisconsin Department of Revenue (transfer fee tax collection and property valuation for tax equalization), and the Wisconsin Department of Administration (plat review and the Wisconsin Land Information Program), the Wisconsin Department of Safety & Professional Services (Rental Weatherization) and the Wisconsin Department of Health and Social Services (Vital Records).

Sheboygan County Departments that depend upon us for information and services include Veteran's Services Office, Planning & Conservation, Clerk of Courts, Treasurer/Real Property, County Clerk and Transportation.

Recorded land records are the basis of the real estate property tax. Translated into monetary terms the land records in the Register of Deeds office represent \$9.2 billion dollars in real estate lying within the borders of Sheboygan County. A one point seven-six (1.76) percent increase in real estate value from 2016.

### Goals and Objectives Achieved in 2017

This year we continued to focus on the back indexing project. Currently we are offering images from June 12, 1974, forward. Our main goal is to offer images back to 1962. The timeline on completing this project is unpredictable as it is worked on as time allows.

Due to shortage of staff and then training a new employee the indexing project concerning the veteran's records and the older birth, death and marriage certificates, was put on hold.

Electronic recordings have kept a steady pace. In 2016, 33 percent of the documents we received came in electronically, in 2017 that increased to 37 percent. A 4 percent increase. We hope this continues to increase. This helps reduce the handling of paper documents and decreases our postage costs.

Beginning January 3, 2017, we are able to issue birth vital records for anyone born in the State of Wisconsin. Also available are Divorce records that occurred after January 1, 2016, along with Death and Marriage records.

The entire office was involved in webinars given by Fidar (our land record software).

Our goal to update and improve written procedures within the office is going well, we have some procedures complete and will continue to work on that project. We were also able to update some of the work stations by adding slip printers, readers and scanners to them.

During 2017, we looked at our outdated and little used equipment; we removed 4 computers, one plat scanner, one large scale printer, 2 printers that were not working well. We are utilizing equipment in the Planning office for our plat scanning and printing.

We outfitted two of our work stations with stand up capability. The folks who have them really like the versatility.

Worked with Legislators regarding Foreclosed Property Bill (Procedures related to a sale of foreclosed property), Small Estate Affidavit Transfer (options for small estates), and Register of Deeds Documents (volume and Page clean-up of various statutes). These bills were all passed in 2017.

Worked with our association on a clean-up bill for Chapter 69, hopefully it will pass in 2018.

### **Budget**

	2016	2017
Revenues	2,149,309	2,168,131
State Share	1,254,448	1,264,805
County Share	894,861	903,325
General Fund (excess over budget)	87,775	123,209

2017 was an active year for the real estate market, helping us exceed our budget expectations. Hopefully we can continue that trend in 2018. The elimination of the Wisconsin Rental Weatherization Program will have a negative impact on the 2018 budget; we estimate that to be a loss of roughly \$8000.00 in revenue. Our projected budget of \$674, 950 is slightly less than our 2017 budget. We will continue to contain our expenses while still giving quality service. It is our goal to ensure that the Register of Deeds Office will not utilize any property tax levy but continue to add to the tax levy and general fund, when possible.

## **Issues and Challenges Ahead**

Excellent Customer Service is always our focus and one of the ways we achieve this is by Recording and returning documents in a timely manner. Counter customers are greeted in a friendly way and helped within minutes of walking through the door. If there is a problem with their requests, we promptly explain the problem and give them an estimated time when we can get an answer for them. Remote Access customers can view their recorded documents almost immediately after processing, usually within 24 hours. We strive to return paper documents within days of recording. In 2017, we processed 21,609 real estate documents, filed 3,141 vital records documents and 35 Military discharge records. Legal documents issued totaled 22,126 and that does not include copies issued to county departments, which were 371. We had a total of 379 genealogical searches.

According to the Department of Revenue, Sheboygan County's Growth in Equalized Value in 2016/2017 increased one point seven six percent. We recorded 59 new condominium units in 2017 and 35 subdivision lots.

In 2017, we actually exceeded our goal of 12,000 documents being back indexed we were able to back index 20,522 documents.

## **Goals and Objectives for 2017**

Continue to keep our focus on the turn-around time of real estate documents. The needs of banks and lenders must be met in order to keep the local financial market and economy healthy. This is an ongoing objective for our office. We will attempt to keep that turn-around to less than a week.

- Continue back indexing of documents.
- Resume back indexing our vital records and DD-214.
- Continue to work with the marriage officiants, funeral directors, nursing homes, hospices, hospitals and doctors with questions they have regarding the state's vital record system.
- Encourage Laredo customers to embrace an electronic billing process.
- Continue to work with our legislatures to help them understand legislation that our association supports.
- Work with our software vendor to update and improve programs. Significant upgrade coming in March
- Continue to work on updating and improving our written procedures.
- Continue to work with the State Vital Records Office to update and improve service.
- Work on getting the rest of the land records scanned
- Introduce a confidentiality form for internal users of our Laredo software.
- Continue to encourage folks to record their land records electronically.
- Work with the Sheriff and Clerk of Courts to establish guidelines for the newly established Sheriff's deed requirements.
- Continue to get pertinent information to all the staff in our office via email or short meetings. We feel it is important to keep the communication lines open

Ensure that employees are utilizing their time to improve the productivity within the office. We are constantly striving to find the proper technology to help improve our productivity and efficiency, without compromising our customer service. In order to maintain and improve our customer service I will continue to empower the staff by communicating the information they need to meet our customers' questions and concerns.

## **Mission Statement & Summary of Responsibilities**

*To be fiscally responsible while serving the public in a courteous and friendly manner, following and enforcing the state statutes that dictate our office along with preserving and protecting real estate records, vital records and miscellaneous documents.*

The Register of Deeds office is the primary source of legal documents, which affect virtually every individual living in Sheboygan County. This includes personal and real estate ownership and encumbrance records in addition to financing instruments that are the basis of individual and business credit ratings. The office executes the final acceptance and filing of new subdivision and condominium plats and Certified Survey Maps, administers the Vital Records Registration system, which includes registration of all births, marriages and deaths of county residents, probate instruments, and business documents such as corporate filings.

Other duties include registration, preparation, and issuance of copies of military records, administration of the Wisconsin Rental Weatherization Program, alternative informal probate procedures (HT-110; Termination of Interest in Property), and registration of US Treasury Federal Tax IRS Liens. Other statutory responsibilities include the collection of Real Estate transfer fees and recording fees, currently divided between Sheboygan County and the State of Wisconsin.

Required reports are given to the following governmental agencies: US Treasury (Federal IRS Tax Liens), Wisconsin Department of Revenue (transfer fee tax collection and property valuation for tax equalization), and the Wisconsin Department of Administration (plat review and the Wisconsin Land Information Program), the Wisconsin Department of Safety & Professional Services (Rental Weatherization) and the Wisconsin Department of Health and Social Services (Vital Records).

Sheboygan County Departments that depend upon us for information and services include Veteran's Services Office, Planning & Conservation, Clerk of Courts, Treasurer/Real Property, County Clerk and Transportation.

Recorded land records are the basis of the real estate property tax. Translated into monetary terms the land records in the Register of Deeds office represent \$9.2 billion dollars in real estate lying within the borders of Sheboygan County which is a 1.76% increase in real estate value from 2016.

## **Goals and Objectives Achieved in 2017**

In 2017, we processed 21,609 real estate documents, filed 3,141 vital records documents and 35 military discharge records. Legal documents issued totaled 22,126 and that does not include copies issued to county departments, which were 371. We had a total of 379 genealogical searches.

According to the Department of Revenue, Sheboygan County's growth in equalized value in 2016/2017 increased 1.76%. We recorded 59 new condominium units in 2017 and 35 subdivision lots.

This year we continued to focus on the back indexing project. In 2017, we exceeded our goal of

12,000 documents being back indexed we were able to back index 20,522 documents. Currently we are offering images from June 12, 1974 and forward. Our goal is to eventually offer images dating back to 1962. The timeline on completing this project is unpredictable as it is worked on as time allows. Due to shortage of staff and then training a new employee the indexing project concerning the veteran's records and the older birth, death and marriage certificates, was put on hold.

Electronic recordings have kept a steady pace. In 2016, 33% of the documents we received came in electronically, in 2017 that increased to 37%. We hope this continues to increase as it helps reduce the handling of paper documents and decreases our postage costs.

Beginning January 3, 2017, we are able to issue birth vital records for anyone born in the Wisconsin. Also available are divorce records that occurred after January 1, 2016, along with death and marriage records.

During 2017, we looked at our outdated and rarely used equipment and removed numerous devices. We outfitted two of our work stations with stand up capability.

Additionally, our office worked with Legislators regarding Foreclosed Property Bill, Small Estate Affidavit Transfer, and Register of Deeds Documents. These bills were all passed in 2017. We also worked with our association on a clean-up bill for Chapter 69 which will hopefully pass in 2018.

**Budget**

2016

2017

Revenues	2,149,309	2,168,131
State Share	1,254,448	1,264,805
County Share	894,861	903,325
General Fund (excess over budget)	87,775	123,209

The past year was an active year for the real estate market which helped us exceed our budget expectations. The elimination of the Wisconsin Rental Weatherization Program will have a negative impact on the 2018 budget and we estimate that to be a loss of roughly \$8,000 in revenue. We will continue to contain our expenses while still giving quality service. It is our goal to ensure that the Register of Deeds Office will not utilize any property tax levy but continue to add to the tax levy and general fund, when possible.

**Issues and Challenges Ahead**

Excellent customer service is always our focus and we achieve this is by recording and returning documents in a timely manner. Counter customers are greeted in a friendly way and helped within minutes of walking through the door. If there is a problem with their requests, we promptly explain the problem and give them an estimated time when we can get an answer for them. Remote access customers can view their recorded documents almost immediately after processing, usually within 24 hours. We strive to return paper documents within days of recording.

Our goal to update and improve written procedures within the office is going well, we have some procedures complete and will continue to work on this in the coming year. We were also able to update some of the work stations by adding slip printers, readers and scanners to them.

We also are striving to ensure that employees are utilizing their time to improve the productivity within the office. We are constantly striving to find the proper technology to help improve our productivity and efficiency, without compromising our customer service. In order to maintain and improve our customer service I will continue to empower the staff by communicating the information they need to meet our customers' questions and concerns.

### **Goals and Objectives for 2018**

Our main goal will be to continue to keep our focus on the turn-around time of real estate documents. The needs of banks and lenders must be met in order to keep the local financial market and economy healthy. This is an ongoing objective for our office and will attempt to keep that turn-around to less than a week. Additional goals include:

- Continue back indexing of documents.
- Resume back indexing our vital records and DD-214.
- Continue to work with the marriage officiants, funeral directors, nursing homes, hospices, hospitals and doctors with questions they have regarding the state's vital record system.
- Encourage Laredo customers to embrace an electronic billing process.
- Continue to work with our legislatures to help them understand legislation that our association supports.
- Work with our software vendor to update and improve programs. A significant upgrade is expected in March.
- Continue to work on updating and improving our written procedures.
- Continue to work with the State Vital Records Office to update and improve service.
- Work on getting the rest of the land records scanned.
- Introduce a confidentiality form for internal users of our Laredo software.
- Continue to encourage folks to record their land records electronically.
- Work with the Sheriff and Clerk of Courts to establish guidelines for the newly established Sheriff's deed requirements.
- Continue to get pertinent information to all the staff in our office via email or short meetings. We feel it is important to keep the communication lines open.