



SHEBOYGAN COUNTY

Ellen R. Schleicher
Register of Deeds

February 10, 2020

Honorable Members of the Sheboygan County Board and County Administrator Adam Payne,

I am pleased to present you with the 2019 Register of Deeds Annual Report.

Overall, our revenues increased by 30% in 2019. The real estate market is unpredictable and it is difficult to predict what will happen in the future. We are hoping to maintain or exceed our revenues again in 2020.

I would like to commend the staff for the work accomplished in 2019. They continue to put the customer first by listening and helping resolve any concerns. They are willing to educate themselves when the opportunity arises and are ready to help work through issues that arise throughout the year.

The cross training of the staff has paid off tremendously as any given day we can count on staff to step up and help when needed. We will strive to continue to this process. 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.

Respectfully submitted,

Ellen R. Schleicher

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 subdivisions, condominium plats, Transportation Plats (TTPs) and Certified Survey Maps. The Register of Deeds also administers the Vital Records Registration system, which includes registration of all births, marriages, deaths and divorces of county residents, probate instruments, and business documents such as corporate filings.

Other duties include registration, preparation, and issuance of copies of military records (DD-214s), alternative informal probate procedures (Termination of Decedents 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) 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 \$9.9 billion dollars in real estate lying within the borders of Sheboygan County which is a 5% increase in real estate value from 2018.

Goals and Objectives Achieved in 2019

- Processed 21,060 real estate documents.
- Filed 3,169 vital records.
- Issued 49 Military Discharges.
- Issued 25,999 legal documents.
- Served 353 genealogist searchers.
- Copied 86 documents to County Departments.
- Recorded 85 new condominium units.
- Recorded 101 subdivision lots.
- Back indexed to September 29, 1970.
- Back scanned and imported 167,516 images (241 Deed Books) into our land record software system.

- Back indexed 14, 710 documents.
- Updated confidentiality forms and Laredo Contracts.
- Shared with legislator's bills our association is working on.
- Work with State Vitals Office on implementation of statewide issuance of marriage certificates.
- 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 manner 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.

Budget

2019 was again a very good year for the real estate market, helping us exceed our budget expectations. We hope to continue that trend in 2020. Total revenues were \$2,447,695. State received \$1,400,692 and the County received \$910,090. Land Records account received \$136,912. We surpassed our projected revenues by \$211,007. 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

Effective October 2020, Real IDs issued by the Department of Motor Vehicles must be marked with a "star" to comply with the Real Act of 2005. To receive the ID, more documentation is required such as birth and marriage certificates therefore we anticipate heavier traffic in our department. State-wide issuance of marriage certificates started January 2, 2020 and we are working with the state on issues that arise on a daily basis. We anticipate increase traffic for these records also. We need to continue to offer the best customer services we can and be diligent to ensure that people continue to utilize our office for their vital record needs.

Goals and Objectives for 2020

- 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. We will attempt to keep that turn-around to less than a week.
- Continue back indexing of documents.
- Host a Public Services Seminar with Ozaukee County and our software company.
- Complete back scanning project.
- 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.
- Look into a more efficient billing system for our Laredo customers.
- Work with our software vendor to update and improve programs.

- Work with our legislatures to help them understand legislation that our association submits and supports.
- Continue to work on updating and improving our written procedures.
- Continue to work with the State Vital Records Office to update and improve service.
- Ensure a confidentiality form is signed for internal users of our Laredo software.
- Continue to encourage folks to record their land records electronically.
- Continue to get pertinent information to all the staff in our office via email or short meetings.
- Offer staff opportunities for on-line training.
- Encourage staff to look for ways to improve themselves.
- Resume back indexing our vital records and Military Discharges.
- Explore the possibility to integrate document numbers located in the Treasurer's software.

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.