



BRANDEN C. MEYER
FAIRFIELD COUNTY CLERK OF COURTS
ANNUAL REPORT

FISCAL YEAR 2014

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Dear Fairfield County Citizens *and* The Public We Serve:

I am extremely proud to present you with the 2014 Annual Report of the Fairfield County Clerk of Courts Office.

In this report you will read about the various departments within the Fairfield County Clerk of Courts Office and the productive ways we are assisting the public we serve. Through the many statistical charts and analysis, you will notice examples of how we are increasing productivity, listening to our customers, advancing technological efforts and finding creative solutions for meeting the needs of the public. And finally, you will find strong examples of how our dedicated employees continuously strive to improve the quality of our services.

With all the achievements highlighted in this report, we constantly recognize that there is always work to be done to ensure that:

- All the records for the Common Pleas Court and the 5th District Court of Appeals are properly maintained and prudently secured;
- All motor vehicle and watercraft titles in Fairfield County are issued in the most efficient, lawful manner and preserved according to current provisions of the Ohio Revised Code;
- All financial functions and statutory fiduciary duties of the office are performed in the most transparent, ethical and respectable manner; and
- All legal matters, including but not limited to civil, criminal and domestic relations issues, are discreetly processed in order to form a foundation of trust, security and alliance with the customers we serve.

Because the employees of the Fairfield County Clerk of Courts office live in the same community as the people they serve, you will find a sense of tremendous pride and enormous commitment in every aspect of their work.

I trust that, through this year's report, you will find that we take a serious approach to our commitment to transparency, fiscal responsibility and vision for the future.

Sincerely,
Branden C. Meyer, Clerk

Historical Look at the Clerk's Office - In Ohio, the Clerk of the Common Pleas Court, which was established by State Constitution in 1802, serves the citizens, the legal community, and the Common Pleas Court. The office was created by the state's founders to be responsive to the public, mindful of the taxpayers, and independent of the court itself.

In 1851, under the State Constitution, the position became an elected position for a three year term and was extended to a four year term in 1936. William Henry Harrison, ninth President of the United States was the Hamilton County Clerk of Courts when he was elected President in 1840. The first Fairfield County Clerk of Common Pleas Court was Hugh Boyle who was appointed in 1803. The Clerk serves as the official record keeper of the court and acts as a safeguard and processor of all monies collected.



The Present - Today, Branden C. Meyer and his staff serves one of the fastest growing counties in the state. The office is committed to quality customer service, technological improvements for more efficient service and being fiscally responsible. The office has three locations to serve the public throughout the county; the legal offices are located in the Hall of Justice in downtown Lancaster and two title offices, one in Lancaster and one in Pickerington.

Functions of the Clerk's Office - The function of the Clerk of the Common Pleas Court is to satisfy more than 250 state statutes and court rules. Among the responsibilities of the office are to: Provide public access to the records of the Common Pleas Court and the 5th District Court of Appeals; be the first stop in initiating any court action in civil, criminal or domestic relations court matters; collect and disburse court-ordered fees, fines, victim restitution in an expedient manner; receive, distribute and preserve official court documents; and be responsible for issuing and maintaining all motor vehicle and watercraft titles in Fairfield County. The Clerk of Courts office is made up of the following departments: Administrative/Fiscal, Legal and Title.

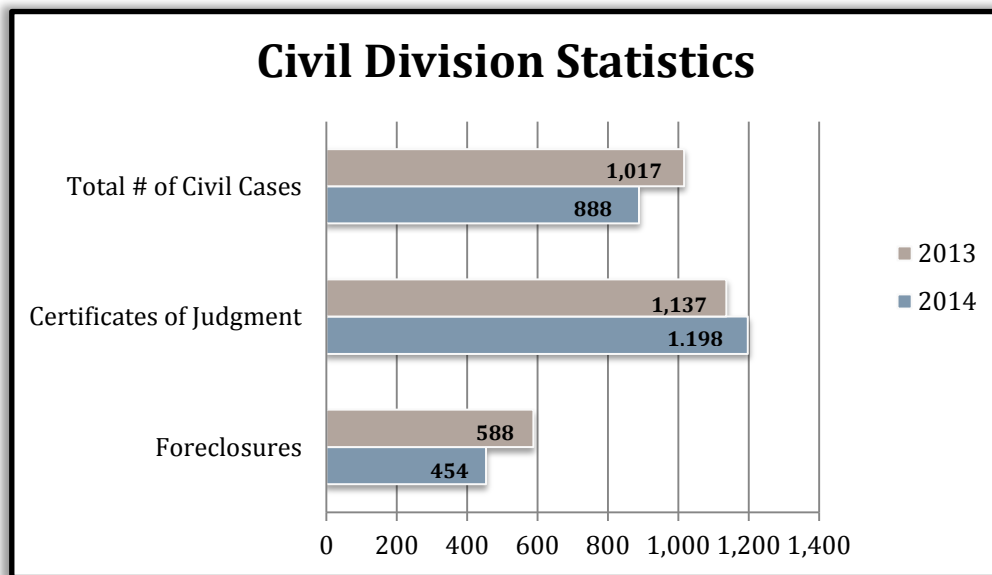
Mission - The Fairfield County Clerk of Courts Office is honored with the responsibility of serving the public by maintaining the records for the Common Pleas Court, the 5th District Court of Appeals and issuing/preserving all motor vehicle and watercraft titles in Fairfield County. Through our continuous quality improvement efforts, our team is dedicated to providing efficient, courteous and professional customer service.

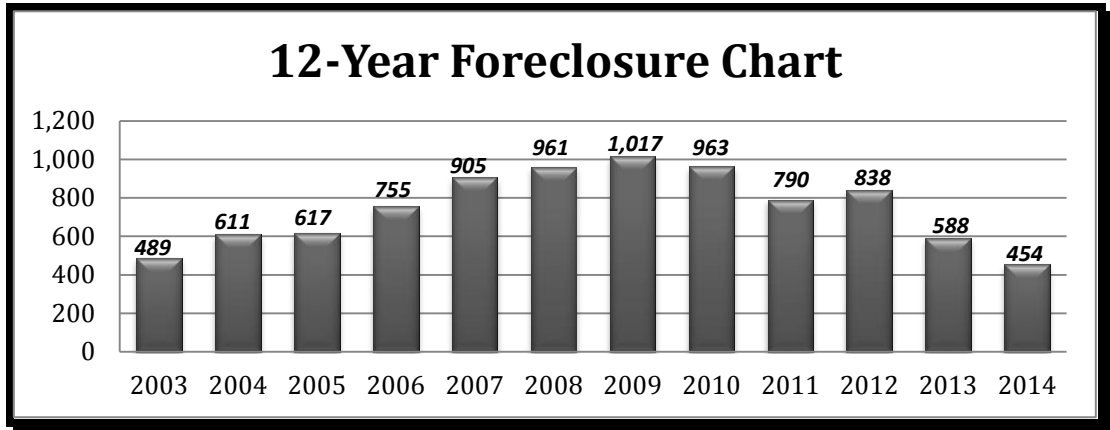
Vision - The vision of the Clerk is to anticipate, meet and exceed the expectations of our customers. We vow to remain compliant with the law, promise to hold our fiduciary responsibility to the highest possible standard and pledge to honor the trust bestowed upon this office with the utmost integrity, pride and respect.

A **Administrative and Fiscal Department** - The Clerk of Courts' Administrative and Fiscal Department provides integral support to both the Legal and Title Departments by overseeing all budgetary matters and performing the statutory fiduciary duties of the office by allocating funds, disbursing payments, and issuing bond, restitution, garnishment and refund checks. The office performs all financial functions and administrative related duties, including the processing of payroll.

L **Legal Department** - The Clerk of Courts' Legal Department handles documents or filings for five separate areas: the Civil Division, the Criminal Division, the Domestic Relations Division, the Court of Appeals Division and the Records Division. The Court of Common Pleas serves as a trial court for all civil, criminal, and domestic relations cases that occur within Fairfield County.

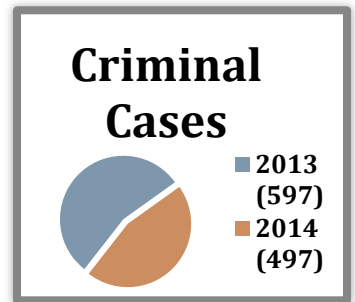
Civil Division - The civil division docket all pleadings in foreclosures, money judgments, garnishments and other miscellaneous civil actions. The civil division also issues and files summonses, subpoenas, writs, Certificates of Judgment and all other related service in civil cases. The civil division also records all Notary Public Commissions.



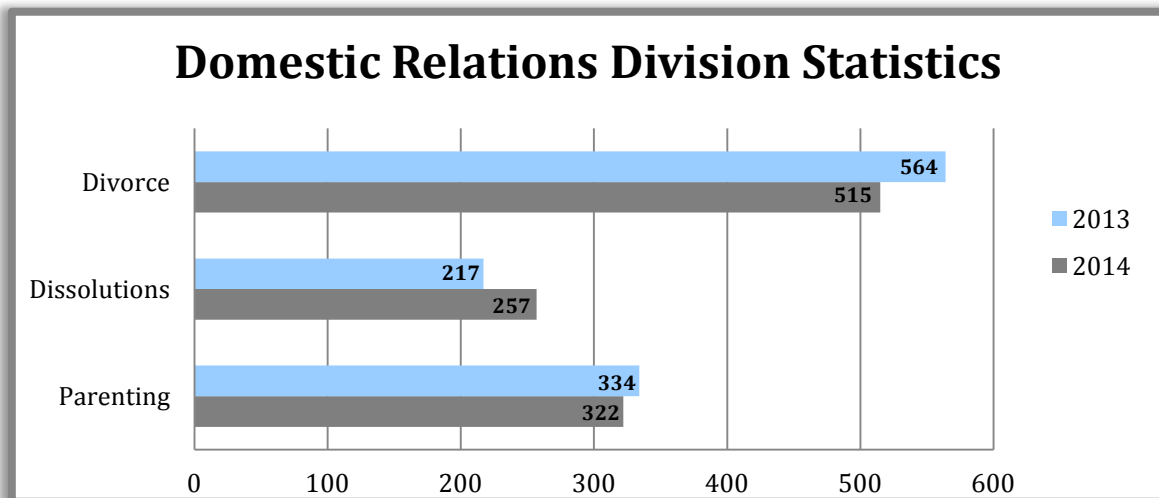


Special Note: Foreclosures are the lowest they have been since before 2003.

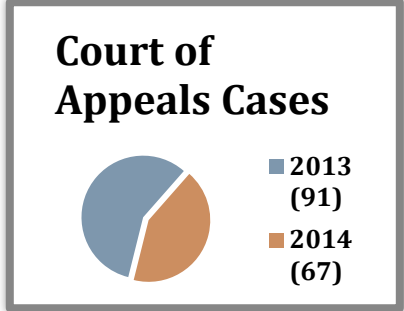
Criminal Division - The criminal division files and docket all pleadings in felony criminal cases bound over to the grand jury and all grand jury indictments. The criminal division also issues summonses, subpoenas, warrants, capiases and all other related service in criminal cases.



Domestic Relations Division - The domestic relations division files and docket all pleadings in divorce, dissolution, parenting and other miscellaneous domestic actions. The domestic division also issues and files summonses, subpoenas, capiases, and all other related service in domestic cases.



Court of Appeals Division - The Court of Appeals division receives all filings and manages all paperwork relating to cases which have been appealed to the 5th District Court of Appeals. This includes any appeals from the Common Pleas Court, Juvenile/Probate Court, and the Municipal Court in Fairfield County. As indicated in the chart to the right, there were 91 Court of Appeals cases in 2013 and only 67 Court of Appeals cases in 2014.

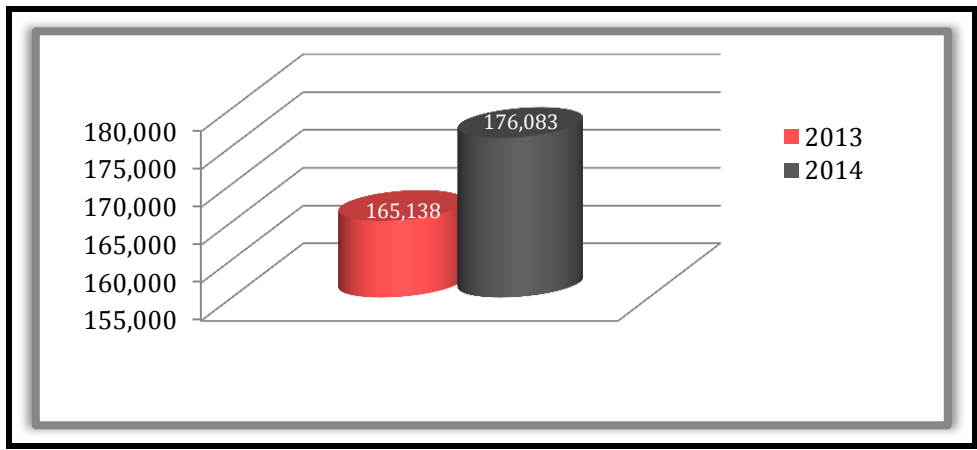


Records Division - The records division of the Clerk's office is responsible for protecting, preserving, and disseminating official records in accordance with the records retention schedule according to state archival standards and state and federal law. The records division also provides public access to records for the Common Pleas Court, manages public records requests and maintains over 22 million pages of documents for both the Legal and Title Departments.

Title Department - The Title Department is responsible for issuing and maintaining all motor vehicle and watercraft titles in Fairfield County. This includes handling trailers, campers, motor homes, boats, and boat motors, all-terrain vehicles (ATV), off-highway motorcycle, wave runners, and jet skis. The Title Department also issues duplicate titles when the original has been lost or stolen, titles for new Ohio residents, and mobile home titles as well.

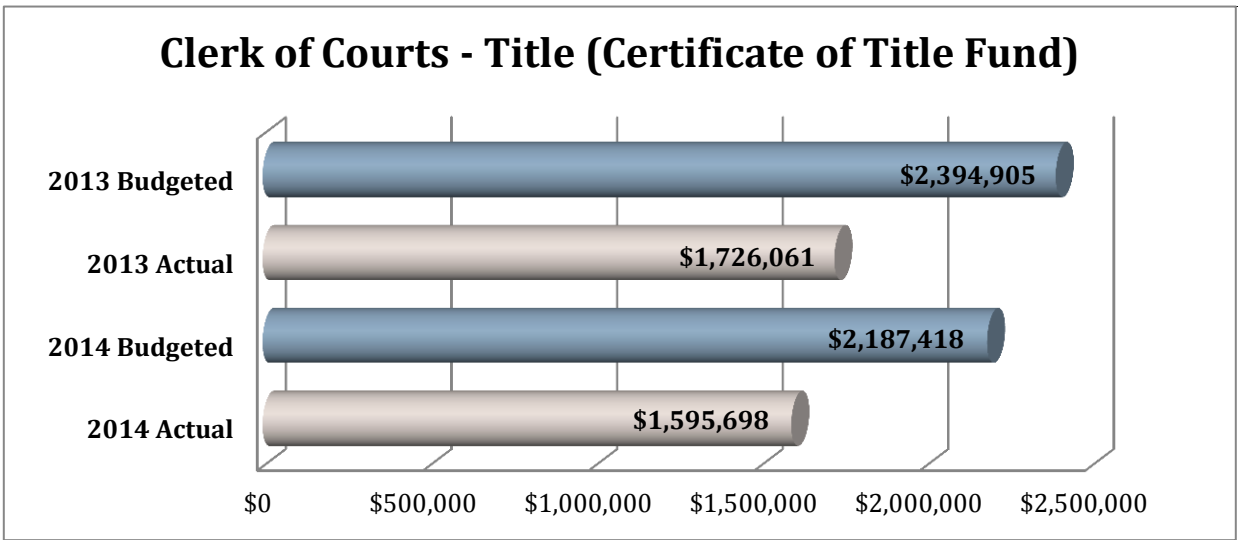
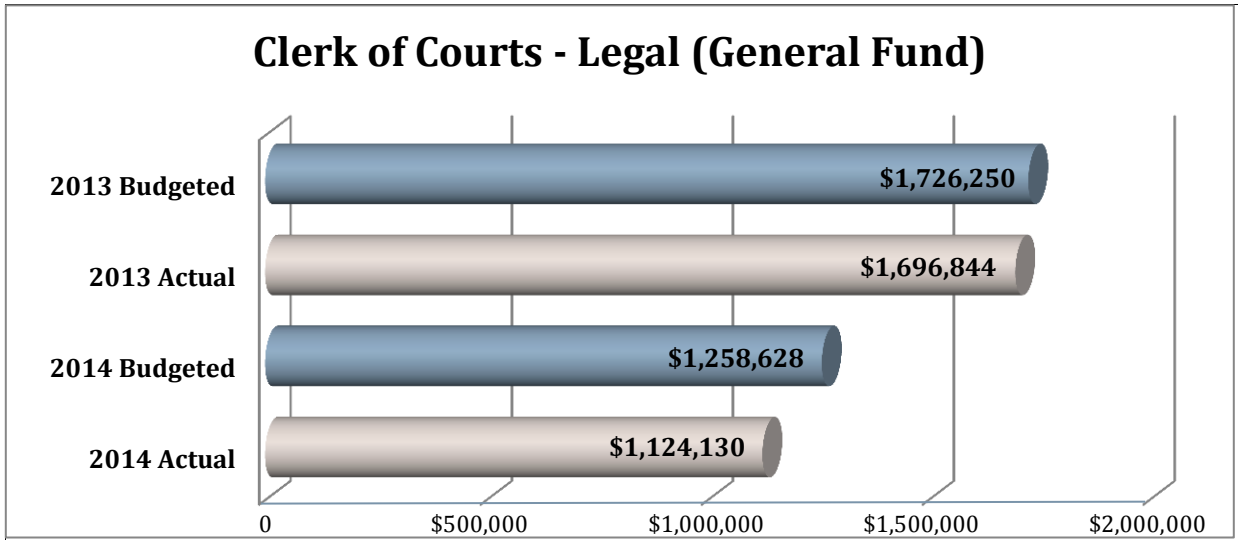
The Fairfield County Clerk of Courts has been designated as an authorized passport acceptance facility by the U.S. Department of State. A total of 1,008 passports were processed within the title offices in 2014.

AUTO TITLES



The Title Department processed 1,693 watercraft titles in 2014 compared to 1,525 in 2013. This figure amounts to a 10% increase in watercraft title processing or a total of 168 titles.

2014 BUDGET ANALYSIS



The Clerk of Courts office takes seriously its responsibility to be faithful and committed custodians of public funds. The legal operation is funded by a General Fund appropriation and the title operation is funded by the Certificate of Title (COT) Fund. The COT Fund (See O.R.C. 4505) is generated from title fees and not included in the General Fund budget. Due to a surplus in 2014 and in order to provide the County with a solid base for achieving future goals, Clerk Branden C. Meyer elected to transfer \$800,000 from the Clerk of Courts' Certificate of Title Fund to the Fairfield County General Fund.

2014 ACCOMPLISHMENTS

- ➔ **Generated new office policies and procedures (i.e., Cash Handling, Personal Time, Sick Leave Notification, etc.).**
- ➔ **Implemented staff training for more efficient court services, heightened productivity and procedural accountability (i.e., Mandatory ethics training, etc.).**
- ➔ **Made technological advancements by upgrading our website and making it more user friendly.**
- ➔ **Created new public information guides and forms.**
- ➔ **Upgraded our current telephone system to improve communication with the public by creating direct phone numbers for each department.**
- ➔ **Participated in various workgroups initiated by the Fairfield County Commissioners and the Clerk of Courts Office (e.g., Financial Transaction Devices-RFP; Postal Savings Project; Records Center Initiative; etc.).**
- ➔ **Increased cost savings by eliminating contracts and services no longer needed (e.g., Cell phones through AT&T; Advanced preparation for scanning of documents; etc.).**
- ➔ **Increased public access to the courts through improvements to signage within the Hall of Justice building.**
- ➔ **Improved employee morale by promising to operate in the most transparent, ethical and respectable manner and instructing the managerial staff to do the same.**
- ➔ **Increased employee interaction with all county departments and staff.**
- ➔ **Initiated an open-door policy to expand county-wide services and efficiencies (e.g., Opened up the Clerk of Courts conference room for use by all County departments, participation in meetings with other county departments, etc.).**
- ➔ **Due to a surplus in 2014 and in order to provide the County with a solid base for achieving future goals, Clerk Branden C. Meyer elected to transfer \$800,000 from the Clerk of Courts' Certificate of Title Fund to the Fairfield County General Fund.**

FAIRFIELD COUNTY CLERK OF COURTS ANNUAL REPORT- FY2014

Clerk of Courts Office Contact Information

HALL OF JUSTICE
224 E. MAIN STREET
P.O. BOX 370
LANCASTER, OHIO 43130



LANCASTER TITLE OFFICE
982 LIBERTY DRIVE
LANCASTER, OHIO 43130



PICKERINGTON TITLE OFFICE
485 HILL ROAD
PICKERINGTON, OHIO 43147



Legal Department

Civil/Criminal/Appellate Division

Phone (740) 652-7360

Fax (740) 687-0158

Domestic Relations Division

Phone (740) 652-7357

Fax (740) 652-7399

Records Division

Phone (740) 652-7358

Fax (740) 652-7399

Administrative/Fiscal Department

Phone (740) 652-7356

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