



# BRANDEN C. MEYER FAIRFIELD COUNTY CLERK OF COURTS ANNUAL REPORT

## FISCAL YEAR 2020

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

I am extremely proud to present you with the 2020 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:

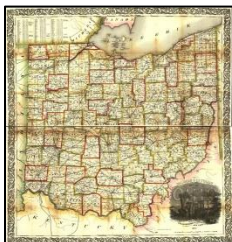
- All the records for the Common Pleas Court and the 5<sup>th</sup> District Court of Appeals are properly maintained and prudently secured;
- All motor vehicle and watercraft titles in Fairfield County are issued in the most efficient, lawful manner and preserved according to current provisions of the 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  
Fairfield County Clerk of Courts

**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, Clerk of Courts Branden 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 four locations to serve the public throughout the county; the legal offices are located in the Hall of Justice in downtown Lancaster, the Fairfield County Records Center also located 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 5<sup>th</sup> 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 three departments: Administrative and 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 5<sup>th</sup> 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.

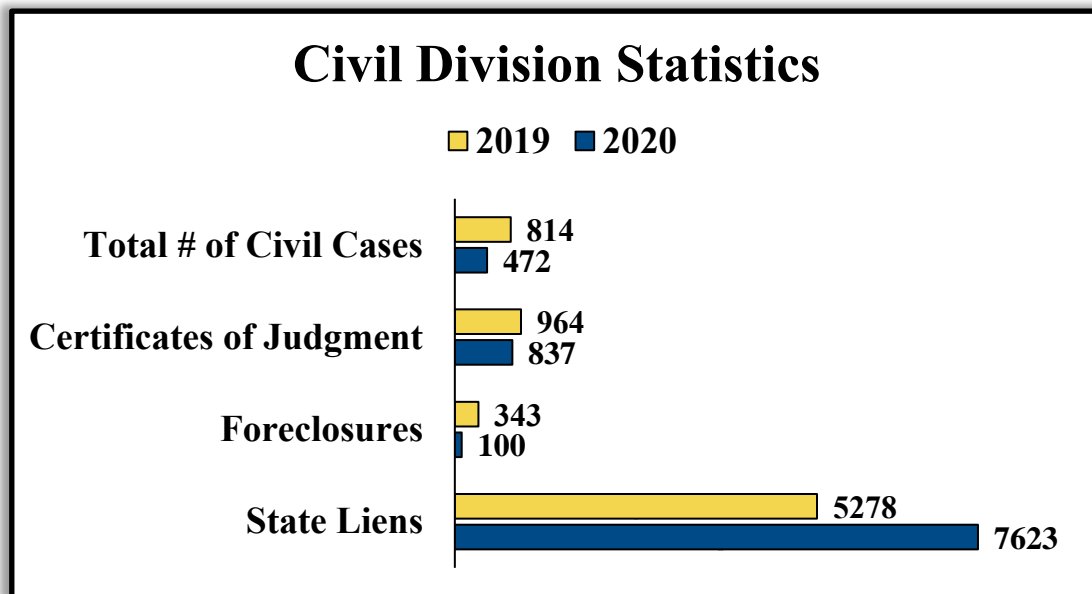
**Administrative and Fiscal Department** - The Clerk of Courts' Administrative and Fiscal Department provides integral support to both the Legal and Title Departments by overseeing all budgetary matters and performing the statutory fiduciary duties of the office by allocating funds, disbursing payments,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



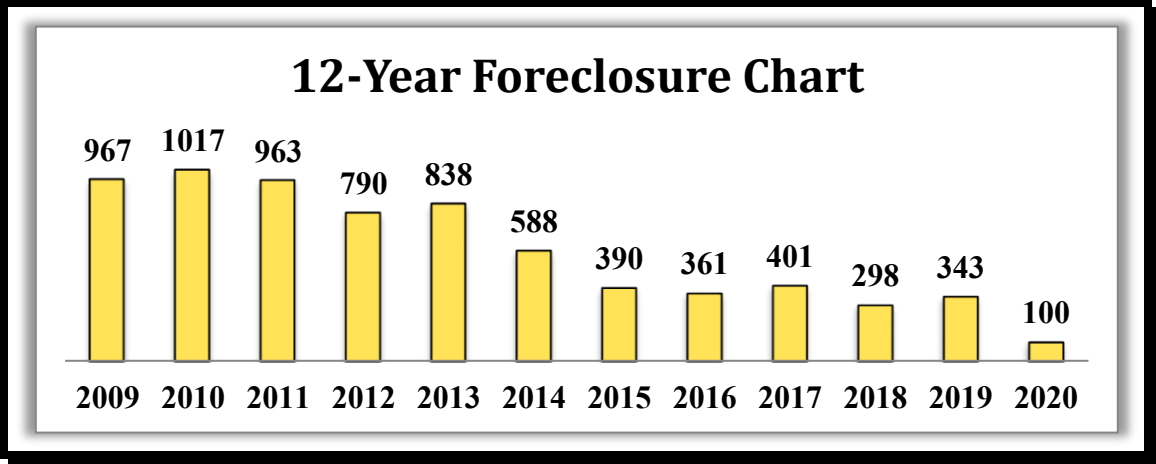
**Legal Department** - The Clerk of Courts' Legal Department handles documents or filings for five separate areas: the Civil Division, the Criminal Division, the Domestic Relations Division, the Court of Appeals Division and the Records Division. The Court of Common Pleas serves as a trial court for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



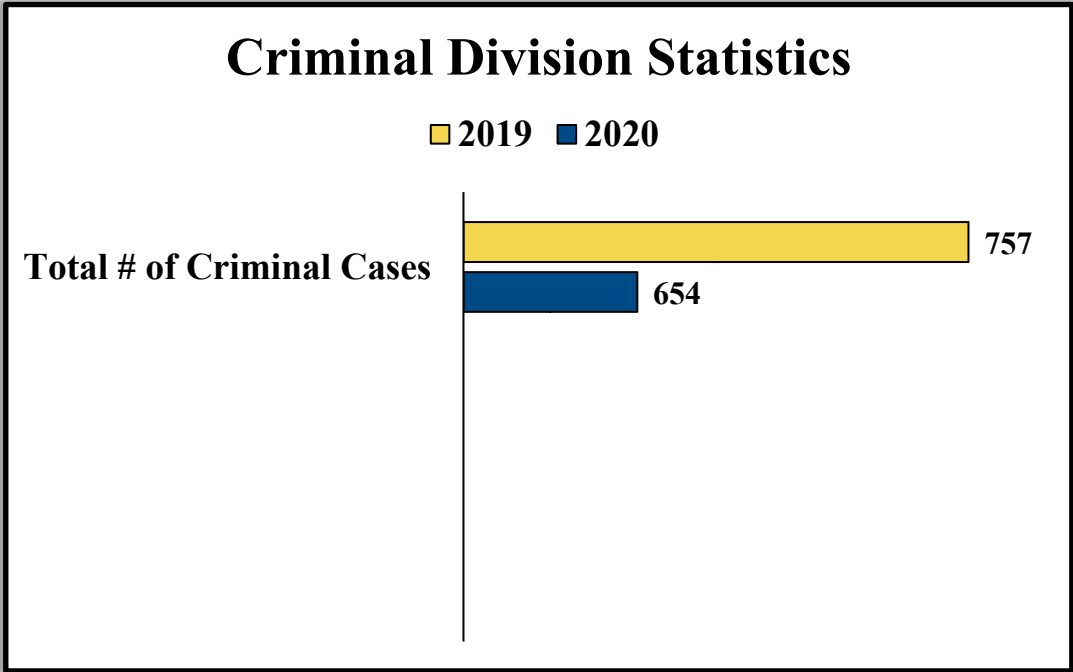
**Civil Division** - The Civil Division docket all pleadings in foreclosures, money judgments, garnishments, and other miscellaneous civil actions. The Civil Division also issues and files summonses, subpoenas, writs, Certificates of Judgment, and all other related service in civil cases.



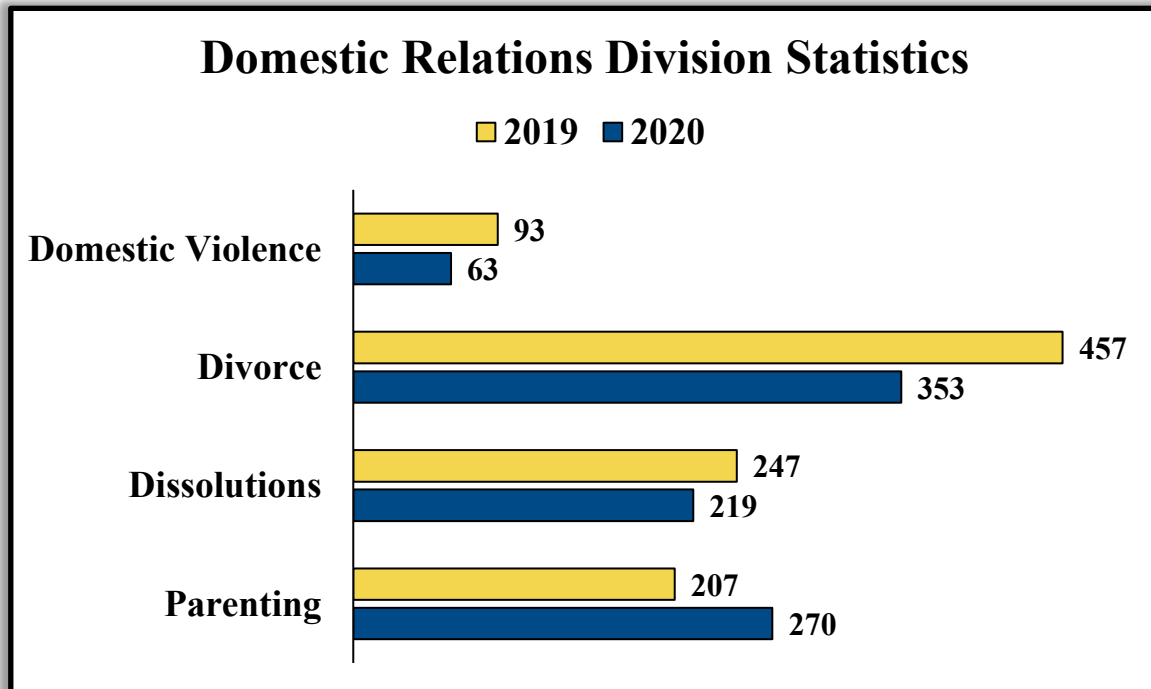




**Criminal Division** - The Criminal Division files and docket all pleadings in felony criminal cases bound over to the grand jury and all grand jury indictments. The Criminal Division also issues summonses, subpoenas, warrants, capiases and all other related service in criminal cases.

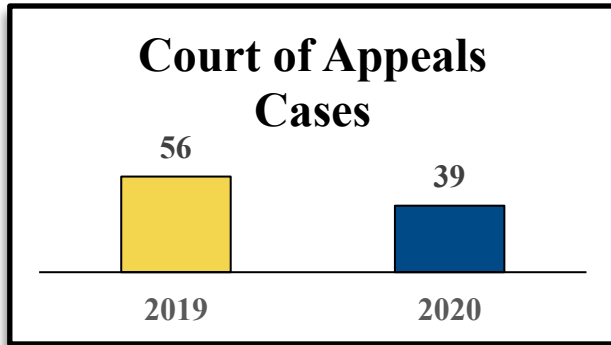


**Domestic Relations Division** - The Domestic Relations Division files and docket all pleadings in divorce, dissolution, parenting, and other miscellaneous domestic actions. The Domestic Relations Division also issues and files summonses, subpoenas, capias, and all other related service in domestic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

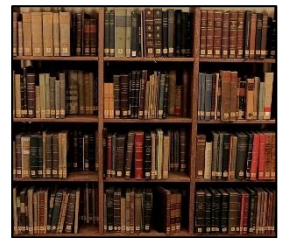


**Court of Appeals Division** - The Court of Appeals Division receives all filings and manages all paperwork relating to cases which have been appealed to the 5<sup>th</sup> District Court of Appeals. This includes any appeals from the Common Pleas Court, Juvenile/Probate Court, and the Municipal Court in Fairfield County. As indicated in the chart below, there were 56 Court of Appeals cases filed in 2019 and 39 Court of Appeals cases filed in 2020.





**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. Records staff work in both the Hall of Justice and also at the Fairfield County Records Center.

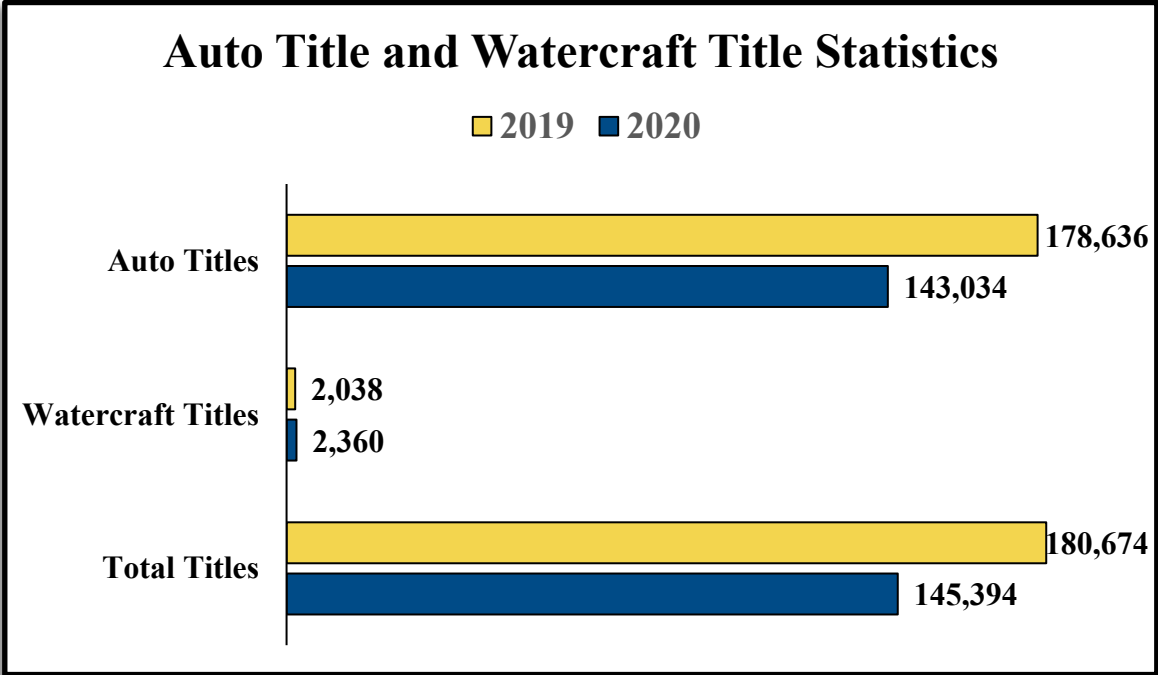


**Title Department** - The Title Department is responsible for issuing and maintaining all motor vehicle and watercraft titles in Fairfield County. This includes handling trailers, campers, motor homes, boats, and boat motors, all-terrain vehicles (ATV), off-highway motorcycles, wave runners, and jet 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.



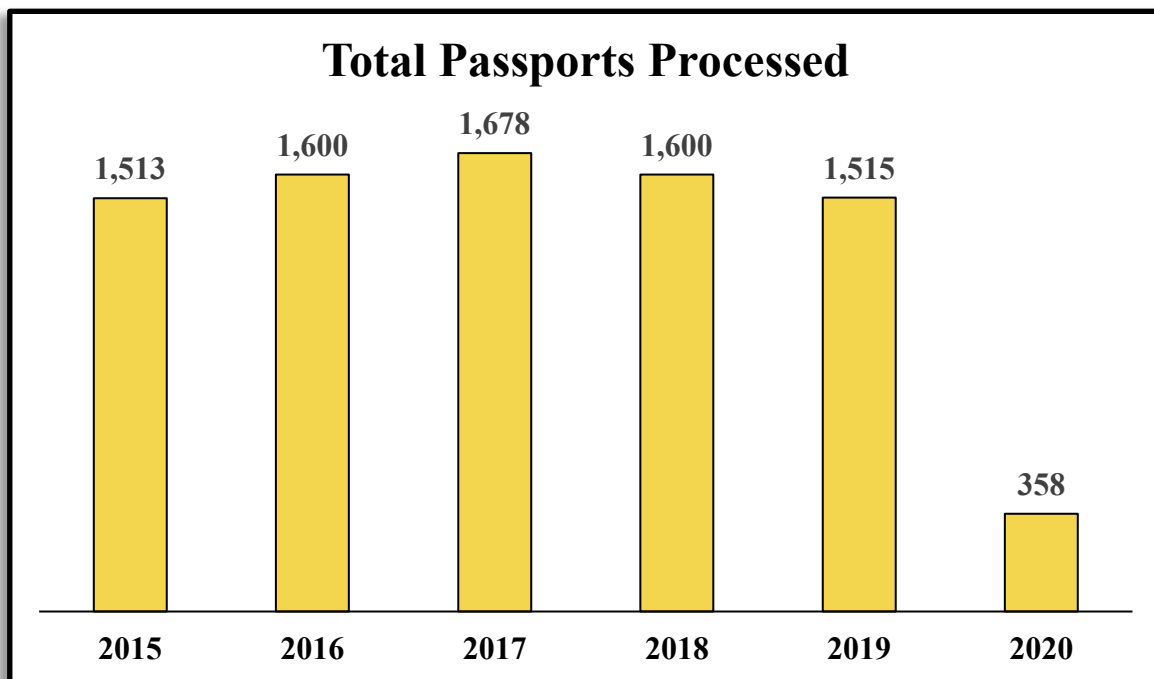
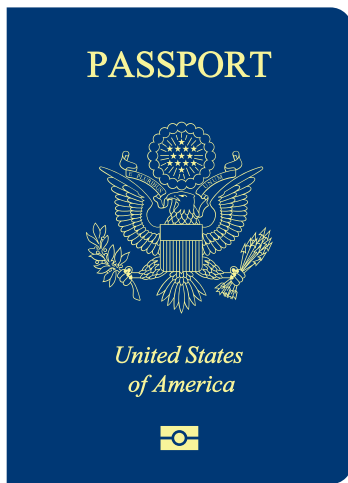
The Title Department processed 140,674 auto titles in 2020 compared to 178,636 in 2019 and processed 2,360 watercraft titles in 2020 compared to 2,038 in 2019. There were 143,034 total titles processed in 2020, compared to 180,674 in 2019, a decrease of 37,640 titles.



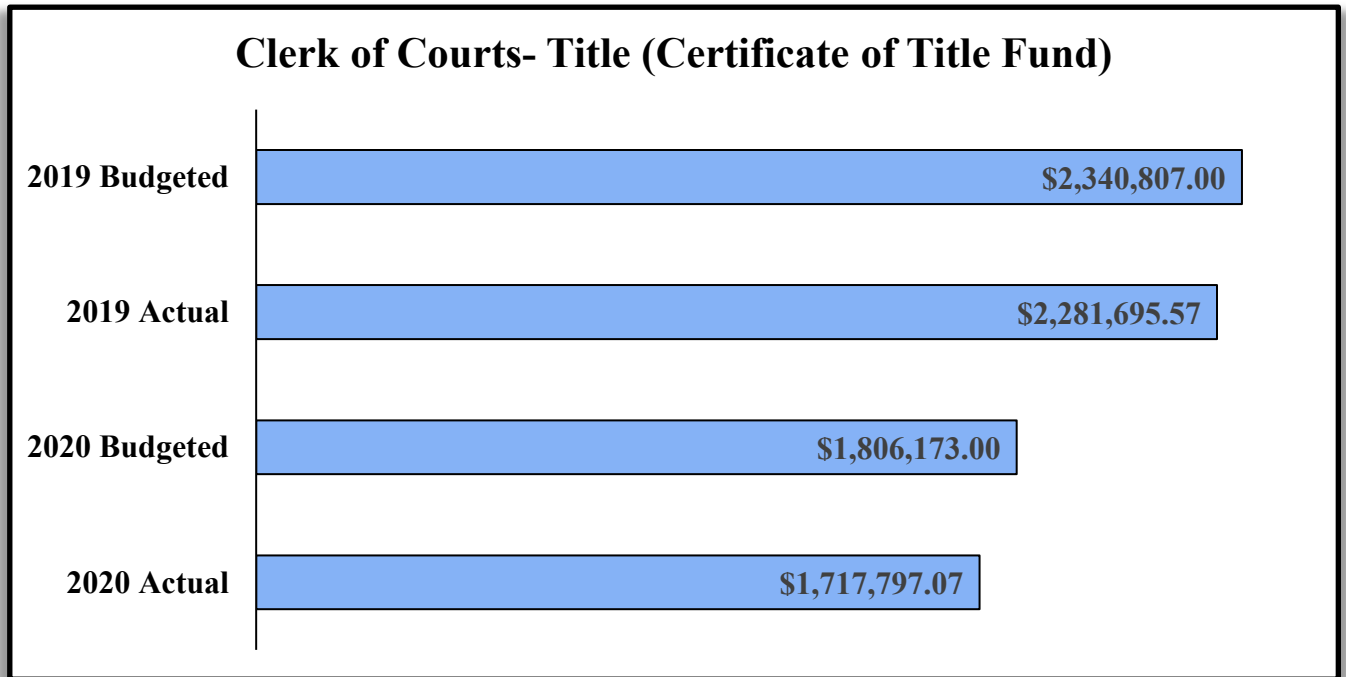
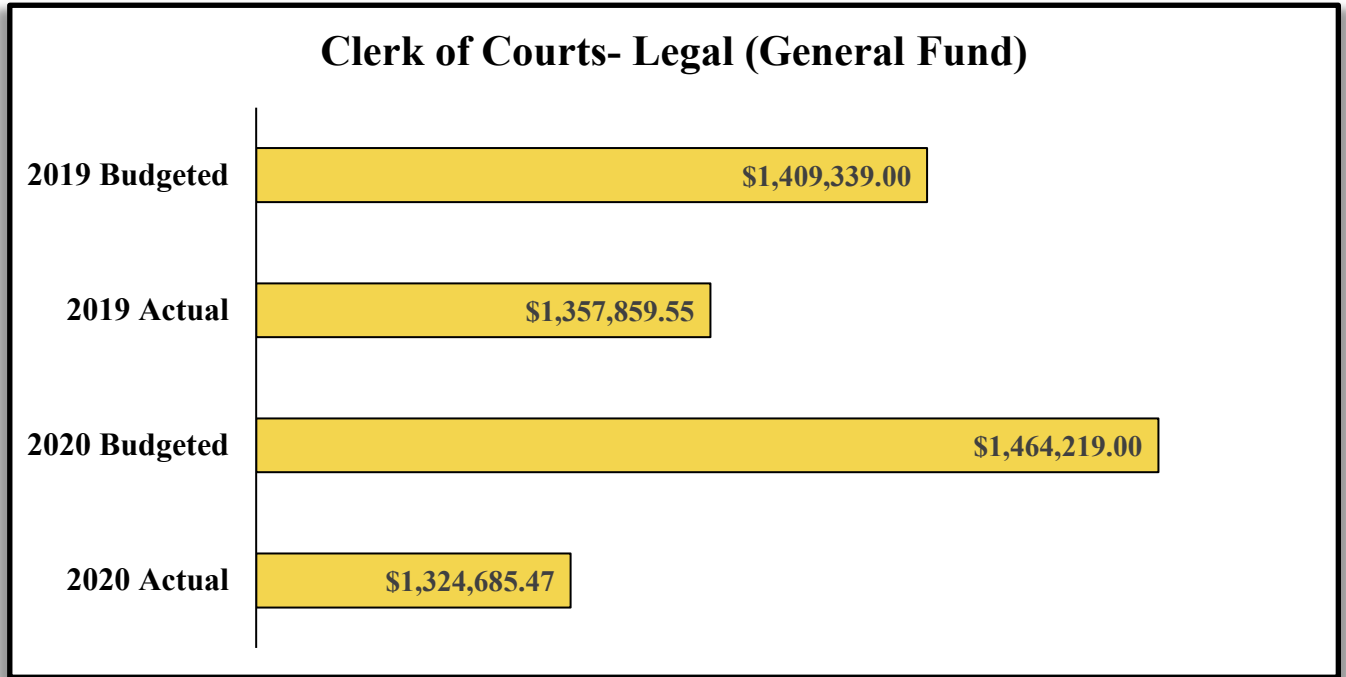


## Passports

The Fairfield County Clerk of Courts has been designated as an authorized passport acceptance facility by the U.S. Department of State. Passport processing was temporarily suspended by the U.S. Department of State due to the COVID-19 pandemic. A total of 358 passports were processed within the title offices in 2020, compared to 1,515 passports in 2019. The Pickerington title office received a 100% passport inspection grade from the U.S. State Department (the Lancaster title office received a 100% grade in 2018).

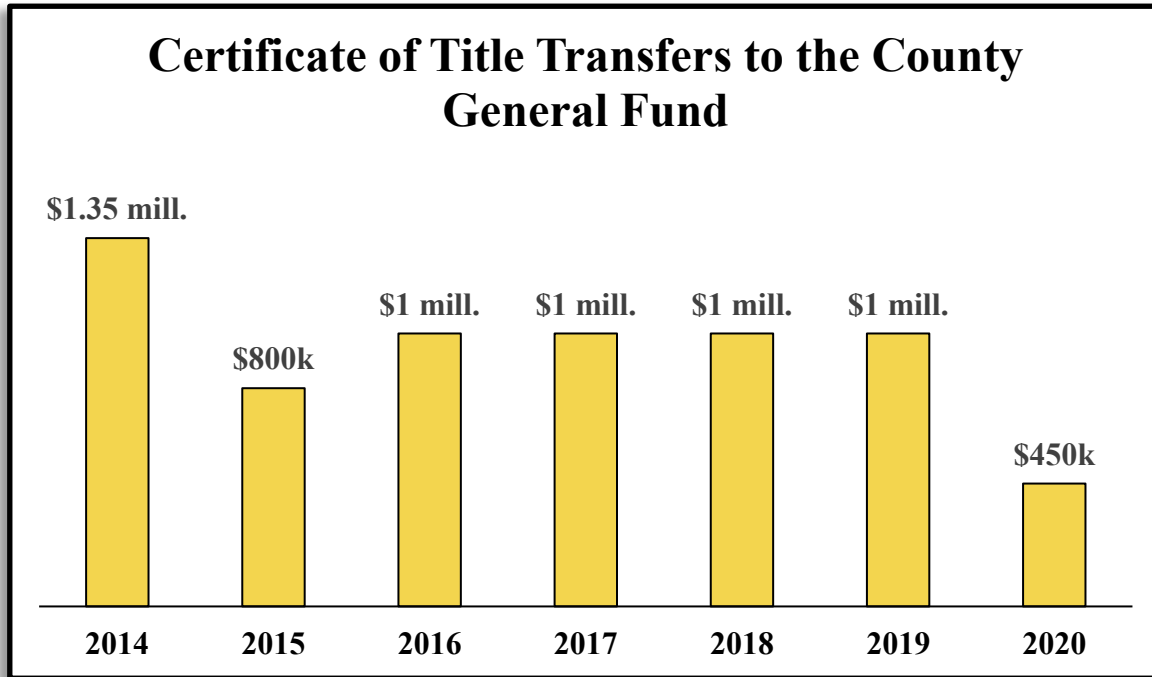


**2020 Budget Analysis: Budgeted vs. Actual**



**Certificate of Title Fund Transfers**

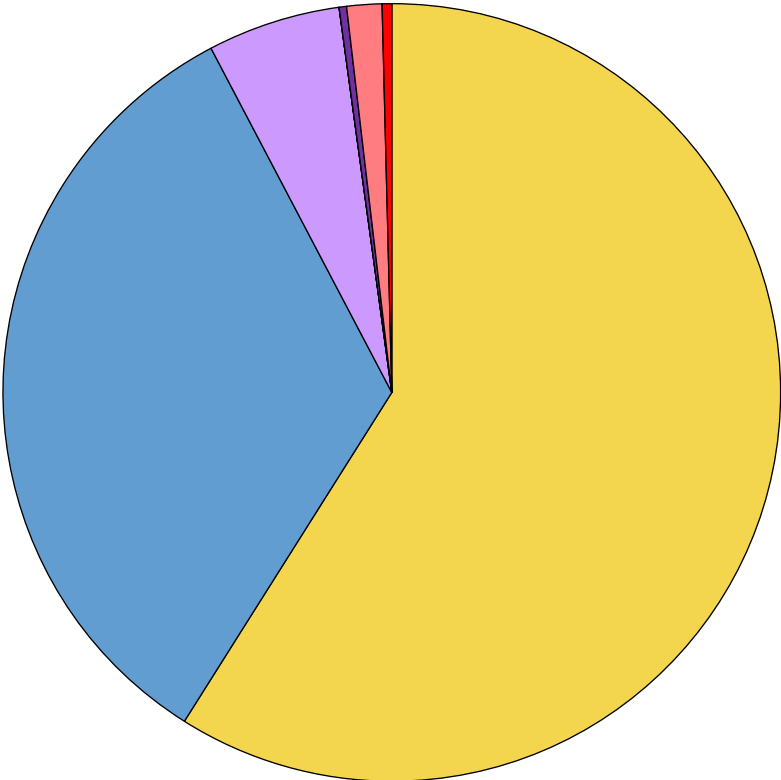
The Clerk of Courts office takes seriously its responsibility to be faithful and committed custodians of public funds. The legal operation is funded by a General Fund appropriation and the title operation is funded by the Certificate of Title Administration (CTA) Fund. The CTA Fund (See O.R.C. 4505) is generated from title fees and not included in the General Fund budget.



Due to a surplus in 2020 and to provide the County with a solid base for achieving future goals \$450,000 has been transferred from the Clerk of Courts’ Certificate of Title Fund to the General Fund. Since 2014 \$6,600,000 has been transferred to the General Fund.

**2020 Expenses: Legal (General Fund)**

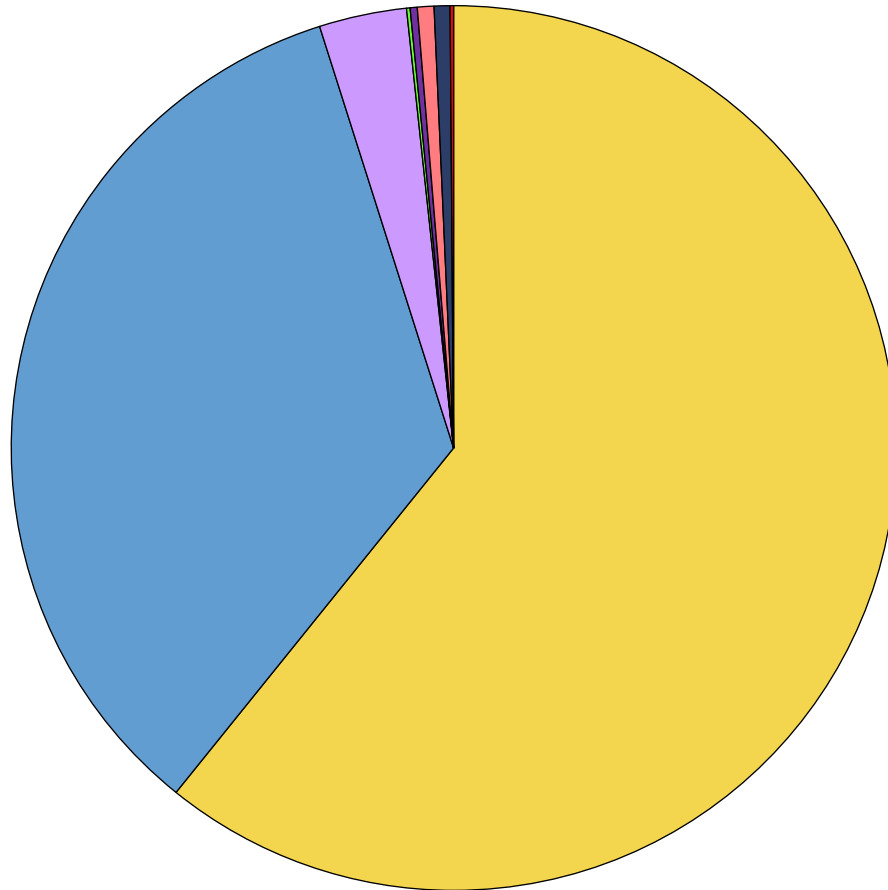
**Clerk of Courts- Legal (General Fund)**



- Employee Salaries- \$783,831.47
- Employee Benefits- \$443,353.20
- Contract Services- \$73,518.98
- Repairs & Maintenance- \$19.80
- Training/Workshops/Travel/Fuel- \$4,115.52
- General Office- \$19,398.66
- Furniture & Fixtures- \$5,287.00

**2020 Expenses: Title (Certificate of Title Fund)**

**Clerk of Courts- Title (Certificate of Title Fund)**



- Employee Salaries- \$775,266.12
- Employee Benefits- \$437,464.22
- Contract Services- \$40,785.67
- Repairs & Maintenance- \$1,651.70
- Training/Workshops/Travel/Fuel- \$3,313.45
- General Office- \$7,715.91
- Equipment & Software- \$7,381.10
- Furniture & Fixtures- \$1,600.00



**Monies Collected: General Fund and Certificate of Title Fund**

**Clerk of Courts- Legal (General Fund)**

<b>Account Distribution</b>	
Clerk Fees Collected	\$508,989.84
Notary Applications	\$4,400.00
Computer Fund	\$137,467.47
Garnishment Deposit Received	\$553,559.38
Deposit Money Received	\$2,214,711.91
Bond Money Collected	\$170,400.00
Probation Fees Collected	\$116,025.60
Other Misc. Fees and Fines Collected	\$723,618.97
<b>Total Monies Collected and Distributed</b>	<b>\$4,429,173.17</b>

**Clerk of Courts- Title (Certificate of Title Fund)**

<b>County Remittance Summary</b>			
	<b>Amount collected and remitted to County</b>	<b>Amount collected and remitted to State</b>	<b>Total amount collected and remitted</b>
Total Vehicle Fees:	\$1,289,430.00	\$416,440.50	\$1,705,870.50
Total Vehicle Taxes:	\$703,429.26	\$70,110,052.39	\$70,813,481.65
<b>Total Vehicle Fees and Taxes:</b>	<b>\$1,992,859.26</b>	<b>\$70,526,492.89</b>	<b>\$72,519,352.15</b>
Total Watercraft Fees:	\$27,756.50	\$7,690.50	\$35,447.00
Total Watercraft Taxes:	\$12,973.09	\$1,271,492.01	\$1,284,465.10
<b>Total Watercraft Fees and Taxes:</b>	<b>\$40,729.59</b>	<b>\$1,279,181.51</b>	<b>\$1,319,912.10</b>
Grand Total Fees:	\$1,331,565.35	\$424,197.00	\$1,755,762.35
Grand Total Taxes:	\$716,402.35	\$71,381,544.40	\$72,097,946.75
<b>Grand Total Fees and Taxes:</b>	<b>\$2,047,967.70</b>	<b>\$71,805,741.40</b>	<b>\$73,853,709.10</b>

**Clerk of Courts- Legal (Computer Fund)**

<b>Account Distribution</b>	
Computer Fund	\$137,467.47

**Clerk of Courts- Monies Collected**

<b>Monies Collected by Payment Type</b>	
Total ACH Payments	\$41,257,235.52
Total ADA Payments	\$595.92
Total Cash Payments	\$1,300,598.09
Total Check Payments	\$33,617,000.00
Total Credit Card Payments	\$1,095,262.39
Total EFT Payments	\$20,970.00
<b>Total Monies Collected by Payment Type</b>	<b>\$77,291,661.92</b>

## 2020 Accomplishments



Total 2020 collections received from partnership with the Ohio Attorney General's Office Debt Collection Program is \$33,873.43 as of October 21, 2019 (Domestic, Civil, and Criminal). Total collected amount since participation in the program began is \$105,401.11. Collections began at the end of calendar year 2015.



In working with the Ohio Clerk of Courts Association (OCCA) we assisted with the development of [www.OhioLegalHelp.org](http://www.OhioLegalHelp.org), a free online resource for legal aid.

All documents filed in January 2018 to present date, except for documents in Domestic Relations cases, are viewable online. Staff members are continuously working on redacting confidential information from images to expand and increase the number of documents that are available online.

Continued to require mandatory staff training for more efficient services, heightened productivity, and procedural accountability (Ethical Behavior for Local Government, Ethics for Court Employees, Sexual Harassment in the Workplace, Legal Advice vs. Legal Information, Computer Security Basics, Preventing Accidents in the Workplace, Customer Service for Court Employees, FLMA, Certified Public Records Training, and Supervisor 101).

Continued to image non-financial and non-court documents in MAPSYS system for organization and safe record keeping in preparing for the future move to the County Records Center.

Continued to participate in various workgroups initiated by the Fairfield County Commissioners (Records Center Committee, Recruitment and Retention Committee and the Environmental Stewardship Committee).

Continued Saturday hours at the Lancaster and Pickerington Title Offices with no salary increase due to flextime.

Continued accepting online and over the phone credit card payment capabilities through LexisNexis VitalChek so that paying court costs is more convenient for our customers and to increase collections.

Continued to serve as custodian for all exhibits formerly in the custody of the Common Pleas Court (transferred to the Clerk of Courts on January 20, 2017).

The Clerk of Courts office received a \$10,000 grant from the U.S. Department of Justice to purchase a live scan fingerprint machine. The machine will be housed at the Hall of Justice to fingerprint individuals on site rather than at the Sheriff's Office.

## **Fairfield County Records Center**

In 2019, the move of the Clerk of Courts records which consisted of 3,456 boxes and 3,736 journals to the new Records Center was completed. Clerk of Courts staff re-boxed all files and assisted the other county departments on their individual moves to the new facility that included 6,658 boxes and 8,710 journals. The 16,320 square foot facility houses the records for nearly all county departments. In addition to records storage, the building county office space including the offices for the human resources department and a training room that is used for trainings and meetings.

## **Clerk of Courts Office Activities 2020**



The Clerk of Courts office was the recipient United Way's 2018 Campaign Chairman's Award.



Fairfield County Commissioners Jeff Fix and Dave Levacy and Clerk of Courts Branden Meyer attending the Ohio Council of County Officials (OCCO) Legislative Reception at the State House.

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Fairfield County’s Annual Employee Recognition Event: Kristi Arter (15 years), Ashley Arter (10 years), Kelly Turben (25 years) along with Clerk of Courts Branden Meyer and Commissioner Dave Levacy.



Clerk of Courts staff participating with the County’s Environmental Stewardship Committee.



Clerk of Courts staff being recognized by the Fairfield County Commissioners for receiving a 100% grade from the U.S. State Department for passport processing compliance.



Clerk of Courts Branden Meyer served as President of the Ohio Clerk of Courts Association (OCCA) for 2019.

**Fun Facts**

1,971=  
most titles processed  
in one day  
(June 6, 2016).

22,007=  
most titles processed  
in one month  
(March 2016).

1780=  
the oldest document in our  
historical archives is a land  
document from Thomas  
Jefferson (July 12, 1780).

223,586=  
most titles processed  
in one year (2016).

1803= the year the  
first Fairfield County  
Clerk of Courts was  
appointed  
(Hugh Boyle).

4,747,465=  
website hits in 2020.  
[www.FairfieldCountyClerk.com](http://www.FairfieldCountyClerk.com)

\$6,600,000=  
Total amount transferred  
(2014-2020) from the  
Certificate of Title Fund to  
the county General Fund.

44= the number of  
employees in the  
Clerk of Courts  
office.



**Clerk of Courts Office Locations**



**Administrative & Fiscal Department  
Legal Department**  
Hall of Justice  
224 E. Main Street  
Lancaster, OH 43130



**Records Division**  
Fairfield County Records Center  
138 W. Chestnut Street  
Lancaster, OH 43130



**Title Department**  
**Lancaster Title Office**  
982 Liberty Drive  
Lancaster, OH 43130



**Title Department**  
**Pickerington Title Office**  
485 Hill Road  
Pickerington, OH 43147

[www.FairfieldCountyClerk.com](http://www.FairfieldCountyClerk.com)