



**FAITH ANDREWS
LAKE COUNTY CLERK OF COURTS**

— Legal Office —
25 North Park Place
Painesville, OH 44077
Phone: 440-350-2657
Fax: 440-350-2958

— Title Central —
8804 Mentor Avenue
Mentor, OH 44060
Phone: 440-350-2800
Fax: 440-290-9253

— Title West —
30188 Euclid Avenue
Wickliffe, OH 44092
Phone: 440-918-3425
Fax: 440-730-5025

2021 ANNUAL REPORT TO THE LAKE COUNTY COMMISSIONERS-REVISED

The Clerk's Office is pleased to provide this 2021 Annual Report to the Lake County Commissioners for the year 2021. There have been some challenges coming into office in the middle of COVID-19, but I believe that my staff and I have a lot to be proud of. Below are some of the major accomplishments for the Lake County Clerk of Courts in 2021.

- Title Division
 - 2021 saw the highest ever recorded Title Bureau revenue
 - Title Bureau Surplus of a little over \$5M
 - Champ Titles Project – Clearing House to process Salvage Titles for all of USA
 - Bernie Moreno Company
 - Lake one of only 2 counties working with Champ Titles
 - Staff/Staffing Levels
 - Performance appraisals given for first time ever in 2021
 - All staff received merit increases in 2021 w/the exception of one employee under probation for abuse of sick leave who had previously been written up for same issue
 - Individual annual goals set
 - Title Bureau is fully staffed
 - Breach of County Financial Transaction Device Contract – Resolved
- Legal Division
 - eFiling for all case types except Domestic Relations accomplished before end of 2021
 - Still tying up a few loose ends such as Judgment Liens for example
 - We should be eFiling everything including Domestic Relations by the summer of 2022
 - Online Public Records
 - Public Records available online back to 2020
 - Locked in pricing for several more years of backfile redaction
 - Redaction Team is current day-forward and making good progress on backfile queue
 - eWarrants Phase 2
 - Lake County given tester/SME status to assist with driving development of application, which is typically only reserved for Phase 1 participants
 - Project progressing nicely under Project Lead Masie Hall
 - Civil Protection Order piece delayed for now

- Won Supreme Court Tech Grant
 - Shannon Lubeking wrote grant to finish digitization of very old records
 - New IT Director, Deb Urankar, submitted on behalf of Clerk and Court
 - Project complete and financials submitted to Judge Lucci
- Staff/Staffing Levels
 - Performance appraisals given for first time ever in 2021
 - All staff received merit increases in 2021
 - Money in budget for merit increases (did not replace the clerk that left to work for Judge Lawson until last quarter of 2021)
 - Individual annual goals set
 - Staffing levels within normal range given the times
 - Fully staffed in the Legal Department
 - New hires in the Legal Department are ramping up very quickly
 - Have begun showing interviewees what they would be making when factoring in benefits package, which seems to help attract new employees
 - Increased staffing for Digitization Project as we are out of room for files and now on month-to-month lease at Vic Place
- Breach of County Financial Transaction Device Contract/Point and Pay Issues – Resolved
 - Requested and received a waiver from Point and Pay immediately so that we would not be sued
 - Requested and received a GOVERNMENT PayPal account
 - Requested to be spun out of the Point and Pay contract
 - Requested that the Treasurer bid out financial transaction devices for my departments
 - Participated in the bidding process which resulted in contracts with the necessary vendors
 - Attempting to get ORC 301.28 that governs financial transaction devices updated to allow for sole source exemption as well as not having to bid out state-chosen FTD vendors for systems, such as the Citizen Title Portal, which will be DOA for Lake unless we go through another bidding process and hope that Grant Street will bid (Note: I still find it counterproductive and a waste of taxpayer money to go through a bidding process when we know only ONE vendor can be contracted with, i.e. Grant Street as that is the FTD vendor the state chose for this system)
- Balancing w/Petty Cash Issue (not based in law) – Resolved
 - Nina Germano, Esquire (Prosecutor's Office) assisted me with writing a Cash Drawer/Change Box Policy for the Legal Division
 - Experienced about 3 months of balancing issues once Cash Drawer/Change Box Policy was implemented, i.e. we wrote several checks for small amounts
 - Considered closing shared cash drawer and getting individual locking cash bags
 - Balancing has been light-years better with addition of 10-key calculator process, which was a suggestion from one of my staff members, Terri Conley; I thought it was a good idea and implemented
 - Pursuant to instructions from Mr. Matas in Finance Department, the excess of \$170.28 was transferred into General Fund on April 1, 2022
 - Pursuant to further instruction from Mr. Matas in Finance Department, all emails and documents involved in resolving this issue are being gathered in a file that will be retained permanently

- Paying Legal Expenses Directly from Title (not based in law) – Resolved
 - Entire annual salary of former IT Director and the Clerk's share of the second IT employee was being paid directly from Title Funds (can only take up 50% from Title Funds)
 - Worked with Mr. Matas in Finance Department to correct budget in all four funds to ensure that monies were coming out of the correct funds in compliance with the Ohio Revised Code
 - Worked with Mr. Matas in Finance Department to take salaries of Digitization Project staffers from Digitization Project funds (406) rather than the Clerk's General Fund account (127)
- Awarded sick time to 3 part-time employees retroactively back to their date of hire
 - Two of the 3 employees were hired in 2012 (9 years)
 - The employees likely could have sued us if they had to be off without pay due to illness
 - All were very grateful for the correction of this oversight
- Refunded \$1,700 in Overpayment of Filing Fees (Foreclosures)
 - Incorrect percentage was previously entered into CourtView by previous IT Director (4% rather than the 3% the credit card company was charging)
 - Prior up-charging of credit card convenience fees was not based in law
 - Very few man hours required to determine who got refunds as we are sitting on a database
 - Cut 5 checks to law firms representing overages in filing fees due to up-charging of convenience fees involving 418 transactions
- Implemented Public Records Training/Certification Requirement for Public Records Department Staff
 - Clerks of Court are exempt from Ohio Sunshine Law Public Records Training under ORC 109.43(A)(2)
 - During transition meeting with Prosecutor Coulson in December 2020, I was briefed on a lawsuit against the Clerk of Courts relative to failure to produce public records for an inmate
 - Prosecutor stated matter was handled so badly the case was lost before they even got it
 - As Prosecutor Coulson predicted, we lost the lawsuit in 2021 and had to pay \$1K to inmate
 - All new file clerks must obtain Ohio Sunshine Law Public Records Training Certification before they are able to access the Public Records Portal and begin responding to public records requests