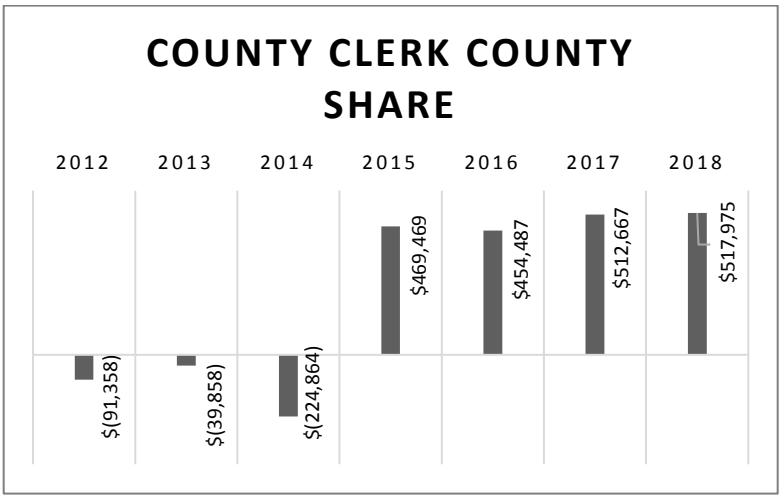
COUNTY CLERK AND HALL OF RECORDS 1410, 1411



MISSION STATEMENT

The mission of the County Clerk is to receive, preserve, and provide public access to records managed by our office, including the records of other Albany County and City of Albany agencies stored in the Albany County Hall of Records (ACHOR). This mission is to be accomplished in a cost-effective manner, in order to allow our Department's revenue to continue to exceed our expenses, providing a modest surplus to reduce County property taxes.

WHO WE SERVE

Owners of property in Albany County; plaintiffs and defendants in larger civil court actions; residents seeking to file DBAs (Doing Business As), public information requests, passport applications, notary public renewals, pistol permits, and those who wish to locate important information already on file here that relates to them. At ACHOR: County and City agencies needing to store or retrieve records (and their customers); historians, genealogists and members of the public who need to find information in our records.

ABOUT OUR DEPARTMENT

The Department is composed of two physically separate units: the County Clerk's office in the County Court House and the Hall of Records. The Clerk's office is legally responsible for all land records such as deeds and mortgages, all records of the Supreme Court and County Court in Albany County and a variety of miscellaneous records. The County Clerk collects approximately $30 million in revenue annually, and disburses this revenue to a variety of state and local offices.

The Hall of Records provides systematic secure storage of inactive and archival records of both the County and the City of Albany (and receives funds from both). There are over 104,000 cubic feet of such records stored in a specialized facility at a much lower cost than if these records had to be kept in regular office space. We recycle obsolete records at the end of their legal retention period. ACHOR staff maintains a computerized inventory of all holdings; preserves older documents, scans or microfilms records of lasting value; and provides records management advice to County and City departments. We are the only shared services records management program in the State of New York.

2017 ACCOMPLISHMENTS AND CHALLENGES

<u>County Clerk</u>

- Continued to use the new, county-wide F.O.I.L.system
- Continued to work with the Legislature to further implement the codification of the County Charter
- Purchase five (5) microfilm reader-scanners for customer use that provide high quality images of the microfilm.
- Working to digitize Mortgagor/Grantor and Map Indices to improve access while simultaneously ensuring that the original volumes are protected
- Scanning in missing images of Deeds and Mortgages to update availability online for the public.
- Back scanning old liens and miscellaneous records, providing access to old records not previously in our system.
- Working to advance the County Clerk system to include the eRecording of our land records.

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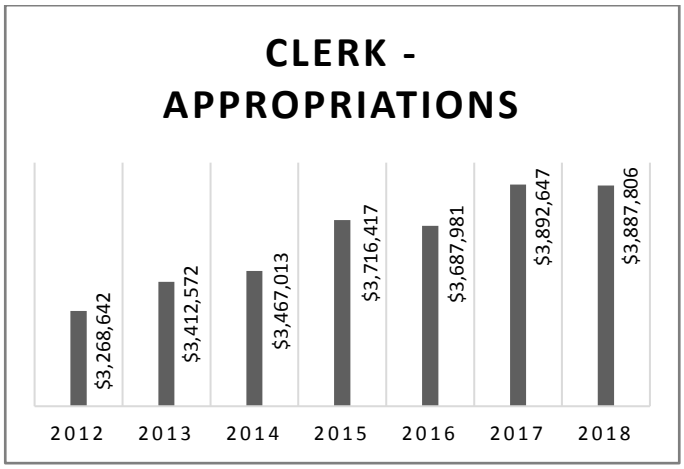
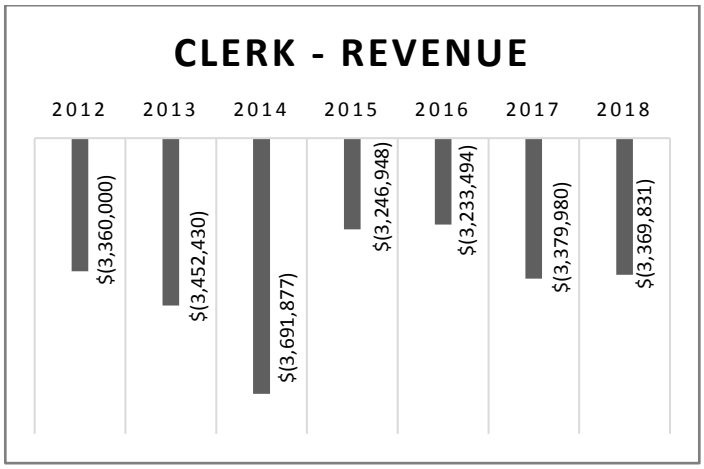
Hall of Records

- Awarded a grant from the Local Government Records Management Improvement Fund (LGRMIF) 2017-2018 for a shared services project with the City of Albany Department of Buildings and Regulatory Compliance for the purposes of digitalizing the County's deed books at the Hall of Records and Clerk's Office as well as the City's building records and files; in the amount of $149,078.28.
- Purchased new microfilm reader-scanner for customer use that provides a higher quality image of the microfilm in the search room
- Developed staff capabilities and skills with Laserfiche Rio electronic content management system (ECMS) purchased through 2016-2017 LGRMIF grant funds
- Provided tours to the public for groups such as the Rochester School for the Deaf and the Bethlehem Historical Society
- Created exhibits for Albany County's Black History Month in February 2017
- Continued to develop our digitization capabilities and services for County agencies through the purchase and employment of a new Canon Large Format Scanner Printer capable of scanning and printing maps, blueprints, and other oversized items
- Continued to develop our digitization capabilities and services for County agencies through the purchase of a Konica Minolta ScanDIVA oversize book scanner with 2016-2017 LGRMIF grant funds.





2018 GOALS AND PERFORMANCE TARGETS

County Clerk

- Increase the use of e-Filing and e-Recording to reduce processing time, postage and storage expenses.
- Digitize Mortgagor/Grantor and Map Indices to improve access while simultaneously ensuring that the original volumes are protected
- Maximize revenues while controlling expenses in order to further increase net departmental surplus.
- Improve efficiency in the office through the purchase of new printers
- improve furnishings and safety for the public and staff by purchasing new chairs.
- Continue to find more records to digitalize, providing more online access to the public

Hall of Records

- Move ahead with the Capital Plan expansion of the Hall of Records, adding 50,000 cubic feet of storage.
- Continue to process records in our archival collection.
- Continue to produce exhibits periodically throughout the year (e.g. Black History Month in February and Archives Month in October), including our many online exhibits.
- Continue to provide high-quality customer service for the general public as well as for County and City agencies who store items with ACHOR.
- Continue to assist local schools with historical records.

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SUMMARY OF BUDGET CHANGES

As a result of the above technological changes for both the County Clerk's office, as well as for the Hall of Records (including but not limited to the New County Clerk F.O.I.L. system, pistol permit identification system, new hardware generally, and Laserfiche RIO ECMS software especially), both agencies believe that a full-time dedicated Info Services/Information Technology employee has become necessary. As our electronic records program via Laserfiche expands (ideally throughout the County to provide it with the cost savings associated with electronic records as opposed to physical paper records, including but not limited to decreased storage costs), the need for IT expertise will only increase.

Related to this need is a further technological one; the need for additional storage space off of the County network, to make sure that each record is backed-up in a different medium and location so that in the event of a disaster, some version of the record would be preserved. This storage will allow ACHOR to back up some of our most cherished records (e.g. the Dutch Records from the 17th century). The County Department of Information Services estimates the cost for the required storage at $40,000.
We have also budgeted funds to update some of the office furniture to provide safe work stations for the public.

The Hall of Records has worked very closely with the County of Albany to create an exhibit for African American Month and we were able to display our records for the public at the County Office Building on February 16, 2017

ACHOR also had several tours including with the Wildwood School and the Cool Maps of Albany.

ACHOR has a stream of visitors each day that come here to use our records to obtain information about their family history or their ancestors as well as looking at property records. We have about 1,200 visitors each year using our records.