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## Authority lauded for customer service

Kudos to the Notary & Authentications Division staff for their continuing commitment to customer service. The comments to the right were posted to the Authority's Facebook page from a very appreciative customer.

"Providing superior customer service is not just lip service here at the Authority, but is one of our core principles," said Authority Executive Director John Earle.

"Whether we're dealing with a Superior Court clerk or a member of the public, we want to be professional and efficient, as well as friendly and helpful. Chey and Lawana, with our Notary & Authentications staff, embody that giving spirit and help hundreds of Georgia citizens every work day."

During last fiscal year, the Notary & Authentications Division not only managed Georgia's notaries public database but also:

- ❖ issued 30,000 apostilles;
- ❖ issued 200 certificates of authority;
- ❖ provided service to 8,900 walk-in customers;
- ❖ processed 3,800 mail-in requests; and
- ❖ answered 8,500 phone calls.

I visited this office today to have sixteen documents apostilled for an adoption. I can't say enough about the two women who provided this service for me. This was absolutely the most pleasant experience I've encountered throughout my family's adoption journey. I was met with a level of friendliness, patience and helpfulness that is very rare. I am so appreciative of these ladies' attitudes. I left their office in a much better mood than when I arrived. I'm sorry I did not get their names, but I wanted to express my gratitude for positive interaction.

Like

Comment

Share

4



**Georgia Superior Court Clerks' Cooperative Authority** Hi Angela - We take great pride in our professionalism and customer service. Your kind words re-enforce the great work done by our Authentication Division. Cheywanda Neal and Lawana Pitts are the two associates that you reference. Chey and Lawana work tirelessly to help others. The Authentications Division's customers come from varying backgrounds and cultures. Chey and Lawana treat everyone with respect and understanding. "The Golden Rule" is alive and well in our office! Thank you, again, and please call on us anytime.



*Notary & Authentications Division Staff: Chey Neal (on left), Lawana Pitts (on right), and Division Manager Peter Keesom (back right)*

## April board meeting review

The Authority Board met on April 11 for its quarterly meeting. Following is a summary of the reports and actions of the meeting.

### General Business:

The minutes of the January 10 scheduled board meeting and February 27 called board meeting were approved by the Board as presented.

Greg Morgan, with Mauldin & Jenkins, provided the Accountant's Review and reported that the Authority's overall financial health is good, and that staff continues to accurately follow all accepted accounting principles and procedures.

### FY 2019 Budget:

The FY 2019 budget was approved by the Board as presented.

### Fines & Fees Division:

Collections for fines and fees are slightly lower when compared with the same period of the previous fiscal year. Non-compliance by courts remains very low and is closely monitored by Fines & Fees staff. Only 12-15 courts out of 1,100 are considered non-compliant month to month. Various legislative developments during the 2018 session of the Georgia General Assembly will necessitate that staff modify current remittance and reporting forms. Collections will also be affected. A letter will be sent to all clerks outlining legislative changes.



*Authority Board of Directors: Dan Massey, Charles Baker, Jean Rogers, Brenda Weaver, Connie Cheatham, Dana Chastain, Cindy Mason and Greg Allen. Not pictured: Randy Howard and Jim Weidner.*

### Training Update:

Approximately 73,000 users have benefited from accessing the Authority's Learning Management System (LMS) since its inception. A majority of the users have been general public users accessing

the online notary training and exam. To date, 66 Superior Court clerks and clerks' staff have successfully completed the Real Estate Indexing Certification Exam. Classroom training on Real Estate Indexing Standards continues to be very successful, and notary classes for the public continue to attract large audiences. Recently, more than 400 attended notary classes in DeKalb County. Staff is gathering information on new LMS programs, with the goal of replacing the current program in FY 2019.

### eFiling Project:

eFiling participation by Superior Court clerk offices for all document types continues on an upward trend. Currently, 108 clerks' offices participate in UCC eFiling. Approximately 28,000 UCCs have been eFiled during the 2018 calendar year. All 159 clerks' offices participate in Real Estate eFile to some degree: 95 allow all document types, 38 allow all document types except deeds, 21 allow plats and state tax liens only, 4 allow plats, state tax liens and a combination of deed and/or liens, and 1 clerk's office allows only state tax liens.



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## *Board Meeting Review — Cont. from Page 2*

Additionally, 123 clerks' offices participate in Child Support eFile, 135 participate in Notary Online, and all 159 participate in ACH Payment.

### **Historical Deed Re-Indexing Projects:**

The 1992 Historical Deed Project was completed March 28, 2018 with 85,253 records being published to production. The 1990-91 Historical Deed Project is advancing with 90 counties encompassing 60,615 records, of which 12,828 are currently being re-viewed in quarantine. For all historical deed projects, including the Voluntary Historical Deed Project, 1,747,956 records have been reviewed and published to production.

### **Virtual Microfilm Project:**

The Virtual Microfilm Project was undertaken to streamline the microfilm process and reduce costs for Superior Court clerks. The Authority has hosted two webinars on the new project in an effort to educate clerks about the virtual microfilm or VM process. In March, 1,085 deed books, which translates to 35GB of data, were processed. To date, 74,000 deed books containing 49,000,000 document images have been "virtually" microfilmed. Currently, 151 clerks' offices participate in the Virtual Microfilm Project, which is provided free of charge by the Clerks' Authority.

### **UCC Project:**

The number of UCCs filed through the end of the third quarter (March 31, 2018) mirrors

the filing numbers for the same period in the previous fiscal year. The number of UCCs filed in March 2018 was the highest since March 2011. For Certified UCC Search Requests, the numbers are on pace to match the most requests since FY 2011.

### **Subscriber Services:**

The Authority currently has more than 16,000 search account subscribers. This includes 3,883 Premium Account holders which is an increase of 346 over the previous quarter.

### **Notary & Authentications Division:**

The total number of notary com-

missions statewide is down 4% compared to the previous fiscal year. This decrease is attributable to Gwinnett County now requiring notary applicants to pass the notary exam. Gwinnett County has seen a 20% drop in notary applicants.

### **Legislative Update:**

The Authority's IT development staff, specifically Richard McPhaul, were commended for rapidly responding to the enactment of HB 661 which required immediate modifications to the state tax lien eFiling process.

### **Next Board Meeting:**

The next quarterly board meeting will be held on July 10-11, 2018 at the Authority office. ■



*Members of Authority staff: Richard McPhaul, Eric Bolton, Mike Smith, Stuart Myers, Andy Wightwick, John Earle, Will Dunn, Jamie McCarron, Rachel Rice and Gary Yates.*





# 2018 Spring Clerks Conference

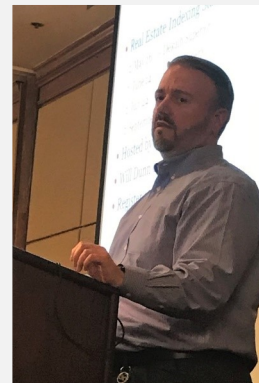
Georgia's Superior Court clerks held their Annual Spring Conference during the week of April 22-26 at the King & Prince in St. Simons. During the week, the Authority staff had the opportunity to present to the clerks on a wide range of topics including 2018 legislative updates, eFiling initiatives, cyber security, historical deed re-indexing projects and revised indexing standards. There were also ample opportunities to meet informally with clerks to discuss how they could better leverage the services and products offered by the Authority for the benefit of their office. Below are some of the pictures taken of Authority staff and current and former board members during this year's conference. ■



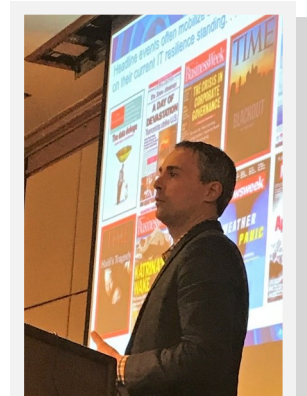
## *Congrats, Greg!*

*Congratulations to Authority Board member Greg Allen for being named the 2018 "Superior Court Clerk of the Year." He received the special award during the Superior Court Clerks' Association of Georgia's annual Clerk of the Year banquet held on the last evening of the Spring Conference. In receiving the honor, Greg, who is Superior Court clerk of Forsyth County, became the 33rd recipient of the award.*

*Pictured with Greg to the left, Barry Wilkes, former Authority chair and retired Liberty County Superior Court clerk, gave his thoughts on Greg's selection: "Greg is one of the finest persons I've ever known, a paradigm of public service, and one of the most dedicated and intelligent Superior Court clerks to ever be elected to office in our state."*



*Program Assistant Will Dunn presented to the group on upcoming Real Estate Indexing Standards training opportunities and the material that would be covered.*



*Authority IT Director Andy Wightwick presented on the critical and timely topic of cyber security at the Spring Conference.*

*Gary Yates provided information to clerks on the Authority's Historical Deed Re-Indexing Projects and the importance of quality control.*



# Training opportunities available

The Authority is halfway through its training schedule and still has plenty of opportunities to participate.

## Classroom Training:

Training on the **Real Estate Indexing Standards** will be offered in three more locations. See the schedule to the right. Classes are three hours in length (9am-noon), hosted by a Superior Court clerk, and offered free-of-charge. Suitable for new and experienced indexers, the classes will include a review of the GSCCCA Standards for indexing real estate, lien and plat records with an emphasis on underlying concepts behind the Standards, common errors, difficult parties and instruments, and the indexing certification test. To register, go to [www.gsccca.org/training](http://www.gsccca.org/training).

## Webinars:

In addition to classroom training, five more webinars will be held. This remote training is conducted via the internet and phone and allows a clerk to have as many staff members as they wish participate. Dates and descriptions of the classes follow. To register for a webinar, go to <https://gsccca.webex.com>.

**Authority Services How-to Guide** — This course takes an in-depth look at the services the Authority provides and how to maximize use of these services. Want to know how to replace equipment, learn about MyVault, access the Clerk Resource Center, set-up new email? Get the answers to these questions and many more through this two-hour webinar.

**Virtual Microfilm** — This one-hour webinar offers an introduction to the Authority's new Virtual Microfilm (VMF) project. The program will cover the features of the VMF dashboard and participants will learn to:

- ❖ View, save, print and download images from archive;
- ❖ Access the convenient image browser and viewing tool;
- ❖ Search for important documents;
- ❖ Purchase and place orders for physical microfilm reels; and

## 2018 Training Schedule

### Classroom Training — Real Estate Indexing Standards

June 14	Thomaston
July 24	Hartwell
September 13	Tifton

### Webinars

June 26	Virtual Microfilm
August 16	R.E. Indexing Certification Exam
September 18	Authority Services: How-to Guide
October 4	Virtual Microfilm
October 17	R.E. Indexing Certification Exam

- ❖ Check and track status of microfilm orders.

Additionally, statutory archival requirements and how VMF satisfies those requirements will be discussed, and basic functionality for accessing deed, lien and plat images will be explained and demonstrated.

**Real Estate Indexing Certification Exam: Study Guide** — This one-hour webinar takes an in-depth look at the Indexing Certification Exam and offers tips and tools for how to successfully pass it.

### Online Training:

In addition to classroom training and webinars, the Authority continues to offer five online training opportunities. Courses are available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, making training completely flexible. Courses include:

- ❖ Introduction to GSCCCA Indexing Standards
- ❖ Extended Real Estate Indexing Standards
- ❖ Fines & Fees Training
- ❖ Notary Public Training
- ❖ UCC Training

For any training question, contact Rachel Rice at [rachel.rice@gsccca.org](mailto:rachel.rice@gsccca.org) or 404.327.7322. ■

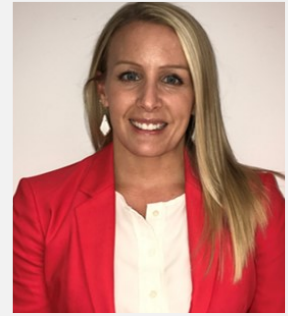


## Meet Fines & Fees staff

Following the passage of House Bill 1EX in 2004, the Authority created the Fines & Fees Division to collect, account for, and disburse to the state treasury and/or beneficiary funds all fines and fees.

Today, the division is staffed by **Kisha Collette** and **Brian Baker**. These dedicated staff members process all reports submitted each month from approximately 1,100 courts, indexing nearly 2,600 reports per month. Kisha and Brian also provide training, perform annual court reviews, provide courtesy compliance notifications, offer customer support, and so much more!

Have a question regarding fines and fees? Reach out to Kisha or Brian anytime at [finesandfees@gsccca.org](mailto:finesandfees@gsccca.org) or 1-866-847-4058.



## F&F changes

During the 2018 legislative session, the General Assembly passed a few bills related to fines and fees. House Bill 673, the Hands-Free Act, created a new offense for using cell phones while driving. A unique feature of this bill is that no surcharges are assessed. In addition, the bill reserves code sections 40-6-241.1 and 40-6-241.2.

Senate Bill 407 created a theoretical fine where the defendant is required to pay statutory surcharges. Surcharges would be remitted in accordance with Georgia Code. For instance, a “theoretical” fine of \$100 is imposed, surcharges would be assessed based on the \$100 “theoretical” fine, but the defendant only pays the surcharges such as POPIDF-A, POPIDF-B, LVAP, etc. SB 407 becomes effective upon the Governor’s signature or becoming law without such approval.

## Kudos to clerks

State tax lien eFiling went into effect January 1, 2018, and clerks’ offices were ready! All 159 Superior Court clerk offices were activated for state tax lien eFiling facilitating the submission of 76,889 filings by the Department of Revenue on January 1.

Clerks have worked tirelessly to file, index and transmit state tax lien eFilings in a timely manner. As of April 10, 2018, the Department of Revenue had submitted 80,848 and clerks had processed 80,800.

Congratulations to Georgia’s Superior Court clerks for a job well done!

