

An update on the activities of the Georgia Superior Court Clerks' Cooperative Authority

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Authority dedicates Lawler plaque

On October 17, 2012, the Authority officially dedicated a memorial plaque in honor of former Authority Chairman Thomas C. Lawler III. Tom was the Gwinnett County Clerk of Superior Court for over 14 years and served as chairman of the Authority from 2005 until his death on November 23, 2011. The bronze plaque was commissioned by the Authority Board of Directors to stand as a lasting tribute to Tom on behalf of his hard work and dedication to the clerk community and the Authority.

Below are the comments made by current Authority Chairman Barry Wilkes during the dedication.

"Someone once said, 'Be who you are and say what you feel because those who mind don't matter and those who matter don't mind.'

"That, in a nutshell, was Tom Lawler's watchword. He was who he was and didn't put on pretenses for anyone. He was blunt. He was honest. He spoke his mind. He was kind, yet tough as nails whenever he had to be. He was loyal. But, most of all, he was loyal to his friends and family.



Authority board members pose with Trish Lawler in front of the newly dedicated plaque to honor of her late husband and former Authority Chairman Tom Lawler. Front row: Trish Lawler, Brenda Weaver and Connie Cheatham. Back Row: Barry Wilkes, Jean Rogers, Charles Baker, Cindy Mason and Rhett Walker.

"Soon after Tom was elected Clerk of the Superior Court of Gwinnett County in 1996, he came to one of our conferences and let us all know that he, having already wrapped up a long and distinguished career as district attorney of his judicial circuit, was going to serve one term and then voluntarily send himself out to pasture. 'I'm not getting involved in anything,' he proclaimed. It wasn't long before he was neck-deep in everything that affected us

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October Board Meeting Review

The Authority Board met on October 17 for its quarterly meeting. Following is a summary of the reports and actions of the meeting.

Dedication of Thomas C. Lawler III Memorial Plaque:

Authority Chairman Barry Wilkes began the meeting with some personal comments about former Authority Chairman Tom Lawler and his friendship with and great service to the clerk community and the Authority. Barry called Tom a leader, a visionary and a realist, and spoke of his love for his fellow clerks and for the Authority. He finished his comments with these words: "To say we loved Tom is an understatement. He was a dear friend. He was family. We sorely miss him every day and most assuredly always will."



Authority Chairman Barry Wilkes, Executive Director David Williams, and Vice Chairman Jean Rogers listen to a report during the Board meeting.

Following his moving speech, he invited Board members and visitors, including Tom's wife, Trish, to step into the Authority lobby to officially dedicate the memorial plaque in honor of the Authority's former chairman and dear friend, Thomas C. Lawler III.

General Business:

Following the dedication, the minutes of the July 11, 2012 scheduled board meeting were presented and approved unanimously by the Board.

Next, a review of the annual financial audit of the Authority was presented. The audit revealed that the Authority is following accepted accounting principles and is commended for its diligence and professional work to ensure that the Authority's financial reporting is consistently accurate and dependable. This has been a "low-risk" year from an auditor's standpoint. Expenses were held in check, due to the efficiency of Authority staff, and no audit adjustments were required. A motion to accept the annual audit as presented was approved unanimously by the Board.

The Authority's financial reports as of August 31, 2012 were then presented and it was reported that the Authority's financial picture is very stable.

Fines & Fees Division:

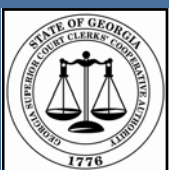
An update on the Fines & Fees Division was given and it was revealed that approximately \$26M has been collected to date for the first quarter of FY 2013 which is down from Q1 FY 2012. It was also reported that all criminal fees are down.

eFiling Project:

An update on the eFiling Project was given, and it was reported that there is increased participation in real estate eFiling. It is expected that the Authority portal will increase usage even more.

The proposed changes to the eRecording Standards were then reported. The changes are necessary to incorporate the eFiling of plats. The proposed changes include: 1) adding surveyors as a trusted user, and 2) including that all e-Recorded documents must be prepared in accordance with OCGA 15-6-77.

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A motion to approve the “Real Estate eRecording Standards for the State of Georgia; Proposed Changes” was approved unanimously by the Board.

Historical Deed Project:

It was reported that the Historical Deed Project remains suspended due to a lack of funds. A motion to continue the suspension of the Historical Deed Project due to budgetary constraints was approved unanimously by the Board.

Voluntary Historical Deed Project:

An update was given on the Voluntary Historical Deed Project. Through this project, counties have the ability to transmit historical deed data outside of the Historical Deed Project but clerks are not paid for the data. Information will be presented at the 2012 Fall COAG Conference reminding clerks that this project is available to all clerks’ offices.

UCC Project:

An update was given on the UCC Project, and it was reported that for the first quarter of FY 2013, UCC filings are down 2% over the same period of the previous year, and Certified Searches are down 24% for the same reporting period.

Training Update:

A training update was given and it was reported that the 2012 training schedule has been well received. Training has primarily consisted of webinars with some in-person training. Eleven webinars and four in-person classes have been conducted. In person attendance totaled 161 participants. Training outreach involved three classes for the Georgia Municipal Court Clerk’s Council. Additionally, the Authority continues to offer five online training courses: Introduction to GSCCCA Indexing Standards, Extended Real Estate Indexing Standards, Fines & Fees Training, Notary Public Training, and UCC Training. Plans for 2013 include offering more webinars.



Authority Secretary/Treasurer Cindy Mason and Board member Rhett Walker listen to the tribute for Tom Lawler.

Premium Subscriber Account:

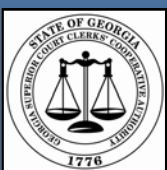
An update was given on the Premium Subscriber Account, and it was reported that the conversion of users from the “regular” account to the Premium Subscriber account continues and has increased revenue. The focus now is to continue to increase the value of the premium search options.

It was also reported that the GSCCCA mobile application is complete and approval from Apple is expected very soon. The app will be available for free at the app store but will require the customer to have a Premium Account subscription.

Other Business:

- **Next Board Meeting** – The next quarterly Board meeting is scheduled for January 8-9, 2013.
- **New GSCCCA Website** – The Authority will soon introduce a new and improved version of www.gsccca.org.
- **ACCG Meeting** – It was reported that ACCG is examining all court fees and has interest in creating a circuit-wide state court clerk.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned. ■



Lawler Plaque — Cont. from Page 1

and soon became one of the foremost authorities on clerks' business and clerking.

“One of the things he loved most was lobbying on our behalf at the Capitol, which is primarily why he was so successful doing so. Those of us who lobbied alongside him attribute his tremendous legislative success to the fact that he was always forthright, saying what he meant and meaning what he said. When we enlisted the aid of realtors to help us with one of our legislative initiatives, we agreed to put a sunset on the statute that provided

funding for the authority. Later, some clerks forgot our agreement and wanted to remove the sunset. Tom, being the honorable person he was, reminded us as only he could that we had made a commitment and that our commitment had to be honored. ‘A person's only as good as their word,’ he admonished us.

“Tom was a visionary. Even though he was a realist to the core, he dreamed big. Following conversations about improving our profession, he surmised that, first and foremost, we had to

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26 Have Passed R.E. Certification Test

Congratulations to the following clerks and clerk staff who have passed the Real Estate Indexing Certification Exam since the Authority began offering the test in 2009. For more information regarding the online course and certification exam, contact Rachel Rice at 404.327.7322 or 800.304.5175 ext. 1010 or rachel.rice@gsccca.org.

Bibb Superior

- ❖ Brenda Able
- ❖ Elizabeth Jordan
- ❖ Denise McGhee
- ❖ LaTecia Moran
- ❖ LaKeshia Thomas
- ❖ Indria Wimberly

Burke Superior

- ❖ Brenda Williamson

Chatham Superior

- ❖ Robin Osborne

Columbia Superior

- ❖ Chris Landers
- ❖ Kim Rhoden
- ❖ Cindy Scott
- ❖ Amy Redden

Coweta Superior

- ❖ Bethany Addison
- ❖ Billie LaMontagne

Dade Superior

- ❖ Kirby Hill

Fayette Superior

- ❖ Ben Grant
- ❖ Karen Semon

Fulton Superior

- ❖ Valerie Moton
- ❖ Marilyn Reed

Lanier Superior

- ❖ Deborah Clark

Liberty Superior

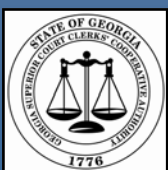
- ❖ Robin Bell
- ❖ Linda Bew
- ❖ Wanda Wedincamp

McDuffie Superior

- ❖ Connie Cheatham
- ❖ Lucretia Ferguson

Putnam Superior

- ❖ Sandra Mitts



Lawler Plaque — Cont. from Page 4

improve educational opportunities for clerks. At the time, I was president of our council. I asked Tom to chair a committee to explore expansion of educational opportunities. He and a handful of other clerks – who I soon dubbed ‘Tom-ites’ – developed the Superior Court Clerks' Reference Manual, a one-of-a-kind electronic resource that any clerk of superior court will tell you is the greatest development in clerking history. On one CD-ROM or on an office network, a clerk and his or her staff can readily find everything they need to know about every clerical and administrative duty required by law.

“Tom Lawler, the man who said he wasn't getting involved, soon became one of the most revered clerks of superior court in the state. He loved not only being Clerk of the Superior Court of Gwinnett County but loved being a clerk. He loved the 158 other clerks of superior court and they loved him. He served as president of the Council of Superior Court Clerks of Georgia for two years, chaired the legislative committee for four years,

served on other various committees, including representing us on several statewide committees, and, although he would deny it if he were here today, served as our involuntary in-house legal counsel during his entire tenure as a clerk.

“In 2002, Tom was appointed to the Authority board by the Council of Superior Court Clerks. Four years later, he was unanimously elected the second chairman of the Georgia Superior Court Clerks' Cooperative Authority

when Woodson Daniel retired. He wanted to be chairman because he wanted to help guide the Authority in meeting its statutory duties of providing essential services and technology to superior court clerks and the courts they serve. Under his leadership, the Authority was selected



Authority Chairman Barry Wilkes provides a moving tribute to Tom Lawler during the dedication ceremony.



Authority Communications Director Mike Smith unveils the bronze plaque honoring former Authority Chairman Tom Lawler.

by legislators to serve as the state agency responsible for overseeing the statewide fines and fees project under provisions of HB 1EX. After fighting a major war over provisions of the bill (which was enacted during a special session of the General Assembly called for the sole purpose of its enactment), Tom told David Williams, ‘Well, we got it for you, so, now, don't screw it up!’

“Tom loved this Authority. Once HB 1EX was passed, we struggled with creation of a systematic methodology for ensuring compliance while, at the same time, fulfilling our statutory duties. I think Tom tired of all the rhetoric. He told us all to leave him alone for awhile and then he disappeared. When he returned in a couple of hours, he had drafted the rules and regulations for the fines and fees division -- which, to this day, have been amended only slightly since he created them. His leadership also provided the spark to create other projects with which we are currently involved and take for granted -- the real estate e-filing system, including development of standards, and the archiving system, to mention a few.

“To say we loved Tom is an understatement. He was a dear friend. He was family. We sorely miss him every day and most assuredly always will.” ■

