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## Wilkes & Allen Awarded 2015 ÉCLAT

The Superior Court Clerks' Association of Georgia recently presented its 2015 ÉCLAT award to **F. Barry Wilkes**, clerk and court administrator for the Superior, State, Juvenile, and Magistrate Courts of Liberty County, and **Greg G. Allen**, clerk of Superior Court of Forsyth County. The ÉCLAT was created to recognize Superior Court clerks for exceptional commitment, leadership, accomplishment and teamwork.

Following are some of the comments made about the recipients by GSCCCA Executive Director John Earle during the ÉCLAT presentation ceremony.

### F. Barry Wilkes

Barry once said, "I've always believed that when you are part of an organization, you should be involved, take part, and give back whenever and whatever you can." He has more than backed these words up with his actions, spending the last two decades fighting for clerks and ensuring that they have the resources to be successful and the ability to control their destiny.

As McDuffie County Superior Court Clerk Connie Cheatham said, "There is little in

the 'clerk world' that Barry has not done or accomplished ... One of his best attributes is his ability to see into the future, plan for it, and take action on those plans ... Without his and others' foresight, most clerks' offices

would not have the resources and technology they have today. He is a born leader who exemplifies exceptionalism, leadership, teamwork, commitment and accomplishment."

Barry is one of the strongest clerk advocates in the

state and his many contributions to clerks, as well as Georgia's citizens, have made him a multiple ÉCLAT recipient. This year's award, though, is bestowed in appreciation for the work Barry did in crafting recent legislation, SB 135, and pushing for its passage. Barry has been involved in important legislative battles throughout his time in office, but SB 135 stands out as one of the most significant because of its impact on the future of clerks of Superior Court. In Barry's own words: "What began as a notion is now law, thus saying to the world that clerks of Superior Court are undeniably the sole and official custodians of all records of their offices and that no one can legally usurp our role as such."



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# October Board Meeting Review

The Authority board met on October 28 for its quarterly meeting. Following is a summary of the reports and actions of the meeting.

## General Business

The minutes of the July 8 scheduled board meeting were approved.

## Accountant's Review of Financials

Greg Morgan, with the Authority's outside accounting firm Mauldin & Jenkins, presented the Authority's year-end audited financial statements to the board and reported that a "clean opinion" had been issued. Comparative (2014) financial statements were not presented this year as in prior years due to the implementation of a new accounting pronouncement (GASB 68 related to the State retirement plan) that affected all state governmental entities. Morgan reported to the Board that his firm had received the requisite Management Representation letter required to issue the audited financials, and that the audited financial statements had been transmitted to the state as required by the September 30 due date. Morgan went on to present the audited financials noting changes between June 30, 2015 and June 30, 2014 balances.

Morgan also presented the Authority's internally prepared financial statements (unaudited) for the three-month period ending September 30, 2015 which indicate a net gain of cash of approximately \$318,000 compared to the June 30, 2015 balance. Collections for the Fines & Fees Division are in line with prior year collections. In summary, management has done a good job of monitoring expenses and operating well within budgeted amounts.

## Office Lease

Executive Director John Earle reported that a lease agreement has been executed that secures the Authority's current office space located at 1875 Century Boulevard, Atlanta, through January 2022.

## Fines & Fees Division

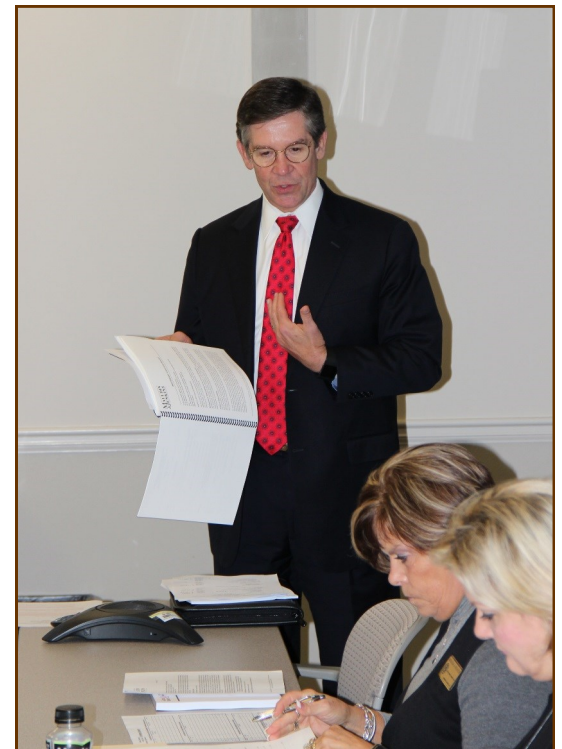
It was reported that collections are in line with the prior fiscal year and that the Fines & Fees Division continues to operate well within its budget. Special recognition was given to the Fines and Fees staff, Julie Maher, Maureen Miranda and Rachel Rice, for their hard work and exceptional performance.

## eFile Project

In an update on the Authority's eFile Project, it was reported that growth continues in all programs. Below are the current participation numbers:

- UCC eFile – 90 clerks of Superior Court
- Real Estate eFile – 26 clerks of Superior Court
- Child Support eFile – 111 clerks of Superior Court

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## GSCCCA Image Agreement Update

The GSCCCA Image Agreements became effective January 1, 2015. All 159 counties are either receiving cash payment or a credit statement each month for the dollars generated from prints made off the Authority website as well as from deed images transmitted to the Authority. For the nine months ending September 30, 2015, the Authority has returned to clerks of Superior Court, through payment or credit, \$3,606,025 for print monies generated and \$612,856 for deed images transmitted to the Authority by clerks' offices.

For those clerks who signed a 'Non-cash' agreement for their county, all credits earned January 1 through December 31, 2015 can be utilized through December 31, 2016. If you have any questions, please contact John Earle or Jamie McCarron at the Authority.

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

Additionally, there are 125 clerks of Superior Court participating in Notary Online, and 48 clerks of Superior Court participating in the ACH payment process. The Lien eFile project continues to gather momentum with input from tax commissioners and other stakeholders who would have a need to eFile liens.

#### **UCC Project**

It was reported that, for the first quarter of FY 2016, there was a slight increase of 5.2% of UCC filings compared to the same period last year. If filings continue at this pace, there will be an increase of approximately 12,000 more UCC filings for FY 2016.

#### **Notary Division**

It was reported that notary commissions for the first quarter are down 1% compared to the previous year. Statistics indicate that the notary staff performs approximately 80 "touches" with the public on a daily basis. This is defined as phone calls, mail, and web inquiries. The Notary Division staff was commended for its exceptional performance.

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

It was reported that 37 counties are participating in the Voluntary (County-Funded) Histor-

ical Deed Re-Indexing Project, to date, and 1,038,732 deeds are in production. Additionally, there are 23,410 records in production in the Voluntary Historical Plat program.

#### **Premium Search Account**

It was reported that the number of Premium subscribers continues to increase. Monthly revenue has doubled since inception of the account in September 2012. Currently, there are 2,800 Premium subscribers, which represents approximately 20% of all subscribers. Efforts continue to expose the Premium Search account to interested parties. It was suggested that the Authority reach out to the Georgia Bankers Association, Community Bankers Association of Georgia and the Association of County Commissioners of Georgia to increase awareness of the Authority's Premium Search account.

#### **Other Business**

The next scheduled board meeting will be held January 13, 2016. ■



## Authority's Equipment Replacement Program

Through the Authority's equipment replacement program, the Authority provides to Superior Court clerk offices certain computers, scanners and printers to assist clerks in the daily operations of their offices for the purpose of supporting Authority projects. The Authority replaces this equipment, typically on a three-year cycle, and will notify the clerk when certain equipment is up for replacement.

A Superior Court clerk's office may request equipment from the Authority if the office has acquired additional staff or a new project which requires additional computer equipment. The county must be in compliance with all GSCCCA projects at the time of the request and be within two weeks of the "Good Through Date" with deed, lien and plat indexes and images. Equipment is provided for immediate use and is not to be stored or stockpiled for later use. The equipment remains the property of GSCCCA and the clerk is responsible for ensuring that the equipment is under

his/her control at all times and is not placed in areas within the county that the Authority does not support. A "Request for Acquisition of Equipment" form must be completed by the clerk's office and submitted for approval.

All Authority-provided equipment is supported by the Authority. If the equipment is in need of repair or replacement, the clerk should notify the Authority immediately by calling technical support at 800.304.5174 or emailing them at [help@gsccca.org](mailto:help@gsccca.org).

The Authority is currently in the process of replacing certain computer models. Sharon Fort will be contacting all counties who are up for replacement for these models and will provide the necessary forms to complete so that the computers can be replaced. If you have any questions about the equipment replacement program, please contact Sharon Fort at 404.327.9058. ■

## Learn More About Authority's eFile Project

Did you know the Clerks' Authority now supports eFiling of all real estate document types – deeds, liens, and plats – as well as UCCs and child support cases? Documents may be submitted by users registered on <https://efile.gsccca.org> or value added submitters, companies who have demonstrated the ability to submit real estate forms and documents through the Authority's eFile portal. Payment for filings is handled through an agreement between the clerk's office and the selected value added submitter(s). A list is always available at <https://www.gsccca.org/learn/efiling-information/real-estate>, but current value added submitters are Corporation Service Company (CSC), eRecording Partners (ePN), Indecomm Global Services, and Simplifile.

The Authority has also created a special user type of "government." With the clerk's authorization, government users may submit filings for any real estate document type – deed, lien or plat – and not pay through the Authority portal but pay directly to the clerk's office. This allows a local tax commissioner's office to eFile liens on <https://efile.gsccca.org> but continue the current payment method, such as invoicing, monthly check, etc. All government users must be authorized by the clerk for their county and for the specified document types.



## Authority Hosts National Notary Meeting

The Authority recently hosted a meeting of state notary administrators (NPA), the National Association of Secretaries of State (NASS), and other notary industry stakeholders. Attendees from across the country gathered at the Authority office to discuss the National Electronic Notarization Standards.

Adopted in 2006, the Standards are scheduled for re-affirmation in 2016. The purpose of the meeting was to review the Standards and provide any recommended changes to be considered by NASS at the 2016 annual conference prior to re-affirmation. Meeting attendees thoroughly discussed and dissected the Standards and documented recommendations for NASS to consider.



With the potential that the Georgia General Assembly will re-introduce the “Revised Georgia Law on Notarial Acts” in 2016, the National Electronic Notarization Standards are of particular interest to the Authority and clerks of Superior Court in any implementation of an e-Notarization process in the state of Georgia.

## Upcoming Training

The Authority continues to conduct notary public training for constituents of Superior Court clerks. This year, almost 1,900 people have attended training hosted by 19 clerks! Hosting a class is a great opportunity to provide education, get to know your constituents, and allow them to get to know you! Conducted by Mike Smith, these 1.5-hour training sessions offer notaries a look at notarial law, best practices and potential, and upcoming changes. Interested in hosting a class in 2016? Contact Rachel Rice at [rachel.rice@gsccca.org](mailto:rachel.rice@gsccca.org) for the details.

The Authority is developing the 2016 training schedule in order to meet the needs of Superior Court clerks and their staffs. In addition to webinars on UCCs, Windows 10, Advanced Real Estate Indexing Standards, and Getting to Know the Authority, we will also be offer-

## Happy Holidays!

The Clerks’ Authority will be closed for the holidays on the following dates:

- ❖ Thursday, November 26
- ❖ Friday, November 27
- ❖ Thursday, December 24
- ❖ Friday, December 25
- ❖ Friday, January 1

Best wishes for a safe and joyous holiday season and a wonderful year ahead!

ing Real Estate Indexing Standards in-person training classes throughout Georgia, so look for a class near you! Training brochures will be emailed soon. ■





A native of southeast Georgia and a graduate of Georgia Southern, Barry was an educator for five years before becoming the assistant editor of a newspaper in Liberty County. He became the administrator of the six-

county Atlantic Circuit District of Georgia public defender program before being elected Superior Court clerk of Liberty County in 1985.

He took office at a time when automation for clerks' offices and the courts was virtually nonexistent. It became his mission to automate his office, and over the next decade, he did just that, including the creation in 1994 of one of the state's first pc-based, local-area networks for Georgia's courts. Barry also created and developed one of the nation's first court websites, which he continues to provide and maintain for public convenience.

Barry helped create and served as the inaugural president of the Council of Superior Court Clerks and was one of the architects of the GSCCCA, serving as its inaugural executive director and twice more as interim director. In 2000, he was appointed to the Authority board, was elected vice chairman in 2001 and chairman in 2012, a position he still holds.

Among many other positions he has held, Barry has served as president of the County Officers' Association of Georgia, president of the Superior Court Clerks' Association of Georgia, on the board of the National Association of Court Management, chairman of the Liberty County Records Advisory Board, and chairman of the Mary Lou Fraser Community Support Foundation. Among his many accolades, Barry was the recipient of the prestigious Superior Court Clerk of the Year Award in 1993; was named County Constitutional Officer of the Year of Georgia in 1993; and, in 2013, was presented the first ever Lifetime Achievement Award by the Superior Court Clerks' Associa-

tion of Georgia. The award was conveyed to him for "more than 25 years of service, dedication, inspiration and extraordinary leadership given to the Superior Court clerks of Georgia, for the guidance that allowed his peers to excel in the areas of legislation, education and technology and, most importantly, for providing to Superior Court clerks of Georgia a special vision of the future that must only come from God-given talents."

In 2014, Barry's constituency voted him the county's Best Boss and Best Public Servant and named his office the Best Place to Work in the county. Barry regularly teaches courses to Superior Court clerks, attorneys, bankers, title abstractors, and other professionals. He is a published poet and author and an accomplished self-taught photographer, painter, and woodworker. He and his wife, Janelle, have two children and four grandchildren.

When asked over ten years ago why he enjoyed being clerk, Barry responded: "I realized that being clerk was much more than just a job; it is a position which enables me to help people ... As clerk, I've been able to accomplish a lot for a lot of people, so that's why I enjoy my job so much. I can't imagine doing anything else."

#### **Greg G. Allen**

Georgia's clerks of Superior Court have a tradition of leadership under the Gold Dome, and into that tradition stepped Greg Allen, who took office in 2009. He realized quickly the significance of what his predecessors had done on his—and all clerks'—behalf, and he wanted to be a part of that vaulted tradition and serve the needs of the entire Superior Court clerk community. As part of a new generation of leaders, Greg was appointed Legislative Chair for the Superior Court Clerks' Association of GA in 2011 and, according to any clerk you ask, "provided exemplary, extraordinary leadership" through critical legislative sessions. As one of his clerk colleagues

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stated: “Greg’s leadership ... has been extremely effective the last couple years ... and came at a critical time in our organization.”

In the words of another colleague: “[Greg] is extremely active at the Capitol ... [he’s] there almost daily keeping an ever watchful eye on the legislation that might affect us. He is well received and communicates well with legislators. Therefore, he has been able to continue working for the good of all Superior Court clerks. He is considerate of clerks of the larger counties and the smaller counties in making decisions which will affect us. He is always conscious of the repercussions that some legislation could have on each of us when promoting or lobbying against legislation ... His decisions are always for our benefit as a whole.”

With the passage of SB 135 earlier this year, Greg continued his faithful service to clerks statewide, spending his days at the Capitol shepherding the bill through to its ultimate passage. This monumental piece of legislation protects the future of Superior Court clerks as it puts into code the following: “As the county constitutional officer elected by the citizens of his or her county to protect and preserve their court and land records, the clerk of superior court is the sole custodian of all original filed records that the clerk is required by law to retain in his or her office or permitted to store and archive in another location...”

The importance of this legislation cannot be overstated, and neither can Greg’s role in its passage. In the words of his colleagues: “As Legislative Chair, Greg has been the right person, in the right job, at the right time, doing the right thing. That is a hard combination to find.” “His leadership has been beneficial to all clerks of Superior Court, as well as the citizens of the state of Georgia.” “[Greg] has worked to meet the needs of the day, serve the interests of clerks faithfully, and be himself.”

This year, Greg has taken the position of secretary & treasurer for the Superior Court Clerks’ Association of Georgia. Among other accolades, he was named the 9<sup>th</sup> Judicial Ad-

ministrative District Clerk of the Year and the Stetson E. Bennett Superior Court Clerk of the Year in 2012.

Greg is a devoted husband to his wife, Kim. They have two sons, Chase and Knox, and a daughter, Ansley. Greg is a graduate of Georgia State, and besides spending time with his family, he enjoys reading, history, football and baseball.



Greg worked in marketing and sales for almost two decades prior to being elected clerk of Superior Court. He ran for office because he wanted to serve the Forsyth County community where he was born and raised. He had a strong desire to have a positive impact and continue the good work of the clerk’s office by focusing on long-term needs and efficiency in serving the public.

Those working with Greg in Forsyth County believe he has more than accomplished that goal. According to Chief Judge Jeffrey Bagley: “Greg is truly a public servant. His top priority is to see that the general public has unfettered access to justice through a user-friendly Clerk of Court office.” And in the words of Chief Deputy Clerk James Parks: “I have seen Greg take the clerk’s office to a whole new level. I believe [his] ability to look to the future is one of his strongest assets. He is working daily on ways to improve the clerk’s office, while also looking at ways to serve the citizens of Forsyth County more efficiently. I am excited for what is in store for [our office] under his leadership.”

Clerks are also excited about Greg’s leadership, and in the glowing words of one of them, “[Greg] is a good face for Superior Court clerks and always has our utmost interests at heart. [He] is vital to our organization and our continued growth and success.” ■

