



SHEBOYGAN COUNTY

Register of Deeds

Ellen R. Schleicher
Register of Deeds

Nila Born
Office Supervisor

February 13, 2009

County Administrator Adam Payne
Honorable Members of the County Board of Supervisors

Greetings:

I am pleased to present the 2008 Register of Deeds Annual Report. In it, you will find a mission statement for the Register of Deeds office that summarizes our goals and responsibilities.

As you review the report, you will see that much was achieved in 2008, but not without great time and effort.

This year our goal was to implement new technology in our department, by accepting debit and credit cards we give our customers another option to purchase their documents. We began accepting mortgages, satisfactions and assignments electronically, in time we will also accept deeds which should result in reduction of postage costs. Attempting to help our customers find information in a more timely manner, we contracted with a vendor to convert our microfilm cards to images in the computer. When this project is complete we will have records and the images on the computer dating back to May 1980. We will continue to find ways to improve the efficiency of the office and continue to work on being fiscally responsible.

I am very impressed with my staff, their ideas and input help make the office run smooth. I wish to thank them for their help, support, enthusiasm and hard work, their dedication to their positions make our accomplishments possible.

Respectfully submitted,

Ellen R. Schleicher
Register of Deeds

SUMMARY OF ANNUAL REPORT

2008

Mission Statement

To be fiscally responsible while serving the public in a courteous and friendly manner, following and enforcing the state statutes that dictate our office along with preserving and protecting real estate records, vital records and miscellaneous documents.

Summary of Responsibilities

The Register of Deeds office is the primary source of legal documents, which affect virtually every individual living in Sheboygan County. This includes personal and real estate ownership and encumbrance records in addition to financing instruments that are the basis of individual and business credit ratings. This office executes the final acceptance and filing of new subdivision plats and Certified Survey Maps, administers the Vital Records Registration system, which includes registration of all births, marriages and deaths of county residents, probate instruments, and business documents such as corporate filings.

Other duties include registration, preparation, and issuance of copies of military records, administration of the Wisconsin Rental Weatherization Program, informal probate procedures, and registration of US Treasury Federal Tax IRS Liens. Other statutory responsibilities include the collection of taxes and fees, which are divided between Sheboygan County and the State of Wisconsin.

Required reports are given to the following governmental agencies: US Treasury (Federal IRS Tax Liens), Wisconsin Department of Revenue (transfer fee tax collection and property valuation for tax equalization), the Wisconsin Department of Administration (plat review and the Wisconsin Land Information Program), the Wisconsin Department of Commerce (Rental Weatherization) and the Wisconsin Department of Health and Social Services (Vital Records).

Sheboygan County offices that depend upon us for information and services include the County Veteran's Service Office, Planning, Clerk of Courts, County Treasurer/Real Property and the County Highway Department.

Recorded land records are the basis of the real estate property tax. Translated into monetary terms the land records in the Register of Deeds office represent \$9.2 billion dollars in real estate lying within the borders of Sheboygan County.

Goals and Objectives Achieved in 2008

Total value of real estate recorded and conveyed in Sheboygan County in 2008 was

\$420,633,000 a decrease from 2007 of \$54,196,300.

Our turn around time for real estate documents in 2008 was between five to ten days. We processed 2959 transfer returns, of those 1786 were accepted electronically versus 1173 paper transfer returns. The usage of electronic returns has increased, and this trend will continue, as by July 1, 2009 the Department of Revenue is requiring that all real estate transfer returns be submitted electronically. Few exceptions to this rule will be made special requests have to be sent to the Department of Revenue for review.

Our “bulletin” type newsletter allows us to communicate with our customers making them aware of any changes in laws, statues, or office procedures. It is distributed via email or the in-office pick up boxes. This has proved to be very helpful in communicating changes.

In the 1st quarter of this year our office started accepting credit/debit payments. This has been a benefit for customers who come in the office without enough funds to pay for services rendered, previously they had to leave and find an ATM get the funds and then come back to receive their documents, this is much more convenient for them.

In June a user informational meeting was held at the UW Sheboygan Campus. At that meeting a demonstration on eRecording was done by a representative from our software company. It was a very helpful and informative meeting. We currently have two customers participating in eRecording and it is working well. Note: eRecording is where we accept and record documents electronically instead of the traditional paper form.

In July we contracted with a vendor to convert our microfilm cards to computer images. I am happy to report that we completed the conversion part in a few months, the images are very good and the cost came in under the anticipated budget amount. We are currently working on indexing the scanned documents we anticipate this to take several years to complete.

We continue to work on back scanning vital records as time allows. Our remote access contracts are continuing to provide steady revenue to our office, at the present time we have sixteen Larado customers. We continue to encourage customers to utilize this service. In conjunction with the Land Records Modernization Committee, we continue to work on the five-year plan that was drawn up and presented to the County Board in 2005.

We continue to provide public access to child support liens. In order to keep the public informed of any changes that happen in our office we put the current information on our web page.

The ongoing objective for this office is to provide up-to-date practical information for our customers including real estate and uniform commercial code customers, vital record customers, researchers, and genealogists. To accomplish this goal handouts are provided, including pamphlets and flyers on various subjects related to the Register of Deeds office.

This timely information is found at the Information Center located at the public counter in our office. Along with the physical information found in our office, we continue to update the Register of Deeds web page for our electronic customers, supplying them with the most current information available.

Budget Status

Revenue collections in 2008 exceeded \$1.9 million dollars. Of the \$1,916,183 of revenue collected in the Register of Deeds office, \$1,142,028 was appropriated to the State of Wisconsin, and \$774,154 was retained as county revenue. On the county side in 2008, the Register of Deeds office collected \$254,202 in revenues over and above expenses, of which \$119,425 was placed in the Land Records Modernization fund, with the remaining \$134,777 going into Sheboygan County's general fund to offset property taxes. I am happy to report that we met our budget expectations.

Issues, Concerns, or Constraints

While we were able to meet our budget goals this year our transfer fees revenues were \$30,402 dollars less than 2007, showing that the real estate economic impact is affecting the housing market in Sheboygan County. If this trend continues, our revenues will be reduced in 2009 also. It is anticipated that the market will bounce back, but we have no way of predicting when that may occur.

We were unable to upgrade our vital records program as time constraints from our Information Systems department did not allow them to work on our project. We hope that this program will become a reality in early 2009. In order to be effective in our respective jobs we need to work and support each other, so that all our goals can be achieved. We will continue to work with the state on improving the e-RETR (electronic transfer forms) system and other areas of concern.

Goals and Objectives for 2009

We need to continue to keep our focus on the turn-around time of real estate documents. The needs of banks and lenders must be met in order to keep the local financial market and economy healthy. This is an ongoing objective for our office.

The indexing of the converted microfilm cards will be our main priority for the next few years as 141,000 images were added to the system and it takes time to get them indexed and verified. I would like to thank the IS department for their help and support in getting these documents into the system, it will be a tremendous help to our customers that use our system for their purposes.

From 1992 through 1996 Certified Survey Maps (CSM) were scanned into the computers but never had legal descriptions applied to them. We will be working on getting these

maps tracted in the system so that the public can utilize the images.

In the records vault we are looking at moving one of the computers to an area where we can allow customers to sit. Currently we have four computers that are standing only and two computers that can be used sitting down.

Available floor space for plat cabinets may soon become a problem, we continue to get plats and cabinets are getting full, if more need to be added there is no room. We will have to look at some innovative ways to rectify this problem.

As technology is always changing in the near future we need to look at a new scanning system. Our current scanner is over five years old and this year we began experiencing problems with it. We were in fact unable to scan any documents for almost one week, this not only affected our department, but other departments and users as well.

As always customer service is our main goal and we keep looking for ways to improve the technology in our office in order to provide the public with information in a timely manner. In order to maintain and improve our customer service I will continue to empower the staff by communicating the information they need to meet our customer's questions and concerns.

**SHEBOYGAN COUNTY
REGISTER OF DEEDS**

