



# SHEBOYGAN COUNTY

## Register of Deeds

Ellen R. Schleicher  
*Register of Deeds*

Nila Born  
*Office Supervisor*

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

Greetings:

I am pleased to present the 2010 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 2010, but not without great time and effort.

2010 brought us many challenges and changes, we lost a valuable staff member, and with that loss we needed to re-assess our office and determine how to move forward with less people. We implemented a updated land records program that will in time enable us to eliminate some steps in our old process. While new software is great, it requires a lot of training in order to utilize it properly. Staff members stepped up to the plate and embraced the training, some were very excited, some not to crazy about it but all did well. In order to utilize the upgraded Microsoft Office 2007 software the entire staff attended at least 2 of the 5 training programs offered. The reduction of recordings allowed the staff to do some back indexing and to focus on learning not only the Office programs but also the new land records software. It would have been a challenge to accomplish this training if recordings were as high as in the past, especially with the reduction of one person in the office. Keeping in tune with new technology is very important and proper education of staff members is vital. It helps them accept and understand new procedures and concepts, and makes the transition much smoother.

Our regular customers who come to our office on a daily basis and our on-line customers also had to be informed about the new processes and procedures of the office. As updates were needed we helped them and for the most part the transition went smoothly.

Cost containment due to budget cutbacks again posed a challenge this year, we continue to look for ways to reduce costs. We again delayed replacing items in the office hoping that they will hold up until revenues return

With all the new procedures and updates happening this year my staff once again did a great job, helping each other with problems, voicing their opinions and helping solve problems as they came up. They make a great team working together towards a greater goal; to make things better for the customer. I wish to thank them for their help, support, enthusiasm and hard work, their dedication to their positions, the office and Sheboygan County make our accomplishments possible.

Respectfully submitted,

Ellen R. Schleicher  
Register of Deeds

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# ELLEN R. SCHLEICHER - REGISTER OF DEEDS

## SUMMARY OF ANNUAL REPORT

2010

### 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 \$9.0 billion dollars in real estate lying within the borders of Sheboygan County.

### Goals and Objectives Achieved in 2010

Total value of real estate recorded and conveyed in Sheboygan County in 2010 was \$226,405, 210 a decrease from 2009 of \$58,678,066.

Our turn around time for real estate documents in 2010 has continued to be between three to five days. We processed 2555 transfer returns, 1423 had fees included the remaining 1132 did not include any fees, 21 less than in 2009. Of the 2729 deeds recorded last year 312 of them were Sheriff's Deeds, up from the 247 Sheriff's Deeds in 2009.

Our back indexing project has been a little slower than planned because we work on this project as time allows, of the 141,000 images back scanned we were able to index about 8500 images in 2010.

Getting the legal descriptions applied to the scanned Certified Survey Maps (CSM's) so they can be tracked into the computer was accomplished in 2010. The public now has easier access to these records; we can now work on getting plats into the system for the same purpose.

This past summer we created a computer indexing system for military discharge's. Again this is a project that will take time to complete, as work on it depends on the daily workload.

In fall of 2010, we implemented the "next generation" land record software system. The staff handled the new system and training very well. Some were excited about learning a new way to do our records, some were very unsure of how things would go. My thanks to the staff for embracing the new software and working with it to get out the kinks that spring up whenever new ideas are implemented. This software is completely different from what they are used to and despite the many changes things are going well.

Our remote access contracts are continuing to provide steady revenue to our office, at the present time we have nineteen Laredo 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 presented to the County Board.

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.

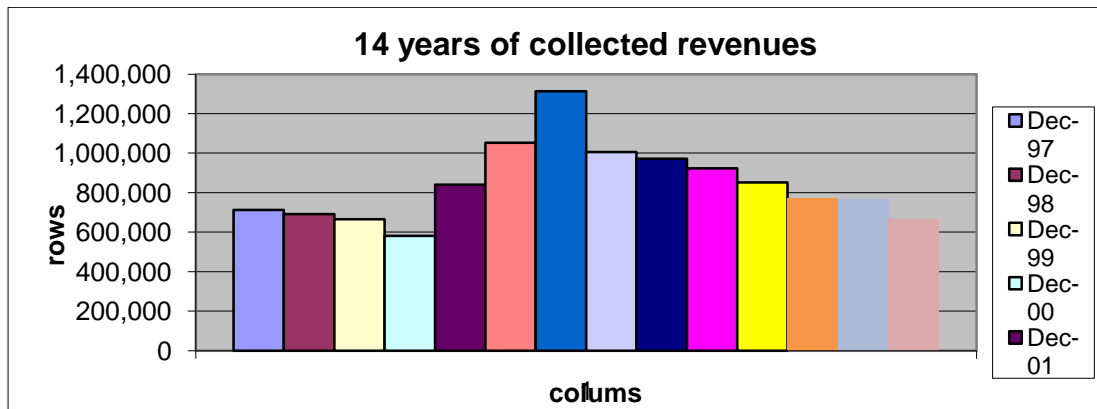
The ongoing objective for this office is to provide up-to-date practical information for our customers including real estate and uniform commercial code customers, vital record customers, researchers, and genealogists. To accomplish this goal handouts are provided, including pamphlets and flyers on various subjects related to the Register of Deeds office. This timely information can be 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 2010 exceeded \$1.4 million dollars. Of the \$1,492,291 of revenue collected in the Register of Deeds office, \$667,064 was appropriated to the State of Wisconsin, and \$825,227 was retained as county revenue. On the county side in 2010, the Register of Deeds office collected \$187,049 in revenues over and above expenses, of which \$132,800 was placed in the Land Records Modernization fund, with the remaining \$32,337 going into Sheboygan County's general fund to offset property taxes. While we generated enough revenue to cover our expenses we again were unable to meet the budget given to us by finance, a \$99,628 shortage to the general fund. This is due to the current real estate market. Even though our anticipated budget was not met these figures could have been worse. Lower interest rates offered by banks led many folks to refinance their current mortgages, thus causing more searching of our records, as a result, we exceeded our anticipated budget in the remote/imaging fees area, which helped offset the reduced revenue. In an effort to reduce expenditures we cancelled some maintenance contracts on our older machines, did not replace a retired employee, or any badly needed hardware. As a result we further reduced our expenditures helping to offset the budget deficit by an additional \$38,835. Soon however we will have to look at replacing older machines as they are not as efficient or reliable as new ones would be.

### **Issues, Concerns, and/or Challenges Ahead**

The Real Estate Market is in a slump, we had a re-finance rush around June, but that was short lived. The amount of documents we recorded and filed in 2010 was 6663 less than in 2009. Sadly, 312 of those documents were Sheriff's Deeds, this was up from 2009 where 247 Sheriff's Deeds were recorded. Hopefully that is one increase we won't repeat in 2011. Transfer fee revenues were \$33,422 dollars less than 2009, showing that the real estate economic impact is affecting the housing market in Sheboygan County. According to the Department of Revenue Sheboygan County's Growth in Equalized Value dropped by 3.32%. If this trend continues, it will be hard to predict what our transfer fee revenues will be in 2011. If we look back at the last 14 years of revenue received we still are not as low as the December 2000 fees were. 2010 hopefully, will be the lowest and revenue will again begin to climb.



Financial predictions for 2011 are difficult to make. Unless the economy picks up folks will not purchase homes and we need that to get things moving again. On a positive note our remote imaging fees were 5.71% higher than estimated in the 2010 budget, which is good as all that revenue stays in the county and helps to reduce our tax levy. These are revenues we do not share with the state. Another positive that helped our revenues was the increase in recording fees; from January to June 2010 (prior to fee increase) our revenues were \$159,586, from July to December (after fee increase) our revenue was \$241,218 a 33.5% increase over the first 6 months.

### **Goals and Objectives for 2011**

We will 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.

Back indexing of the converted microfilm cards will continue to 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. When this project is complete it will be a tremendous help to our customers that use our system.

As part of the fee increase, a mandate was implemented to redact Social Security numbers on any documents that can be viewed on-line. To achieve this goal an additional \$5.00 is collected (with recording fee) to help offset the cost of the mandate. We also hope to increase our number of documents available on-line by scanning them into the computer from our older books. This will save wear & tear on the books and free up

staff time. When the documents are available via computer copy requests can be processed in a timely manner.

As the Certified Survey Map project is now complete, we will turn our focus to Plats, making it easier for the public to search and view them.

2010 was a year of many challenges and changes and I anticipate the same for 2011. The state will be implementing their new on-line Vital Records (SVRIS) system and the staff will again have to embrace changes and be trained to work on an entirely new vital records system. Beginning February 1, 2011, we will be required to issue birth records from the state system. The possibility of us issuing records from both the old and new system is very high. Rumor has it that there have been many glitches with the system and we are not sure they will be worked out. The state records prior to 1993 are not complete in this system, so double searching may have to be done for quite sometime. Training for the new system will be offered in January. Death and Marriage records will continue to be issued from the old system.

The Department of Transportation is looking at the ability to electronically record Transportation Plats (TPP's), we will be working with them to achieve this goal throughout the year.

In order to help us identify and find military discharges in a timely manner we will continue to work on and update the computer index for these records.

We are constantly striving to find the proper technology to help improve our productivity and efficiency, without compromising our customer service. 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**

