

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

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Wightwick critical to Authority success

Staff Feature:
Andrew Wightwick
Director of Information Technology



In addition to being responsible for the upkeep of our computer and data systems, the Authority's IT Department has the essential job of turning legislative mandates and project "dreams" into technological realities. Simply put, technology is the backbone of the Clerks' Authority. For over two decades, the Authority's IT staff has developed, implemented and maintained cutting-edge programs that offer unique services to Georgia's counties and citizens. Technology has been and continues to be at the core of what the Authority does, and no one is more connected to that core than Authority IT Director Andy Wightwick.

Early on, the Authority partnered with Georgia Tech's Economic Development Institute (EDI) to build the systems necessary to make the Real Estate Deed Project both a reality and a success. Then EDI research scientist John Myers (now MIT president and CEO) brought Andy on board as an independent contractor in 1996 to help design several information systems and develop components of the Authority website, including the software that allows for document image viewing and retrieval. If success is described by some as having the right people in the right place at the right time, then the Authority hit the jackpot by recognizing Andy's talent very early on and hiring him as a full-fledged member of the team.

In 2002, Andy assumed the position of IT Di-

rector, overseeing every aspect of information technology including the operation of two data centers, a dedicated helpdesk, hundreds of servers, thousands of desktop systems, over 100 terabytes of managed data, a statewide private network, scores of in-house developed and maintained systems, and a public website that receives over 2.2 billion hits a year.

Andy holds a B.S. degree in Computer Science from the Georgia Institute of Technology, and has obtained several technical certifications ranging from Cisco CCNA to Microsoft development certifications. Andy also holds the Project Management Profes-

sional (PMP) credential from the Project Management Institute. In a continuing effort to stay out front of IT issues and trends, Andy is active in industry groups and recently served as chair of the Information Technology Section of the International Association of Commercial Administrators. He and his wife, Andrea, live in Atlanta with their children, Jane and Jack.

Throughout the process of developing and implementing the Authority's many successful projects, Andy has always made protecting the autonomy of Superior Court clerks a priority. As importantly, Andy understands and embraces his IT team's critical role as the go-to technical resource for clerks across the state. When interviewed for the Authority's history, *For the Rec-*

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April Board Meeting Review

The Authority Board met on April 12 for its quarterly meeting. Following is a summary of the reports and actions of the meeting.

General Business:

The minutes of the January 18, 2017 board meeting were approved by the Board.

Greg Morgan, with Mauldin & Jenkins, provided the Accountant's Review and reported that the Authority's overall financial health is good. He commended Authority staff for closely monitoring expenses and practicing sound accounting principles.



Introduction of Staff:

Senior Authority team members introduced members of their respective staffs. These staff members are vital to the successful operation of the

Authority but may be unknown to board members and to the clerks, in general.

FY 2018 Budget:

A motion to approve the FY 2018 Budget as presented was approved by the board.

Fines & Fees Division:

Collections for FY 2017 are down, but compliance rates remain very high with over 99 percent of courts in compliance. Fees collected are simply "passed through" the Authority. The Authority has no influence over the amounts collected.

Training Update:

The Authority's 2017 training program is proceeding with much success, including notary training classes for the public which continue to receive tremendous positive feedback. Additionally, the Authority hosted a Clerks' Winter Meeting in February, and provided presentations on the Authori-

ty's projects and processes. The Authority staff also presented in March at the clerks' stand-alone training in Athens, and will offer special training sessions, in addition to presenting formally, at the Clerks' Spring Conference in April at St. Simon's Island.

eFiling Project:

To date, 104 counties are participating in UCC eFile. More than 10,000 UCCs were eFiled in March, which is a record high for a single month. This could be due to a large, national filer reinstating UCC eFiling in March. One hundred twenty-two clerks' offices now offer Child Support eFiling. More than 30,000 cases were processed in the past year. Only one clerk's office is not compliant with the legislative mandate requiring the eFiling of plats.

UCC Project:

There was an "uptick" in UCC filings for the third quarter compared to the first and second quarters. The yearly pace is slightly behind FY 2016. Certified Search Report requests remain strong with more than 7,000 anticipated for FY 2017.

Notary Division:

The Notary Division has seen a double-digit increase in apostille requests. Specifically, the number of birth certificates destined for Mexico has tripled. Requests are related to applying for dual citizenship for children born in the U.S. to Mexican parents.

Equipment Replacement Project:

Windows XP has not been supported by Microsoft since April 2014, and third-party vendors have stopped supporting Windows XP as well. This made it necessary to replace Windows XP running on GSCCCA-provided computers residing in clerks' offices with Windows 7 O/S. To date, 167 Windows 7 search terminals have been deployed, and of the 106 counties needing upgrades, 67 are completely updated. The Windows XP footprint continues to be reduced; however, there are still 199 Windows XP computers in use. The Authority is actively working with remaining counties to finish replacement, but has contingency plans in place

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Board Meeting Review — Cont. from Page 2

to handle any issues that arise from an old Windows XP computer.

Historical Deed Re-Indexing Projects:

It was reported that 19,600 deed instruments have been added to production since January, with 1,600 plats added. The 1992 Historical Project has only one county remaining to complete the entire project. For the 1991-1990 Historical Project, data from ninety counties is scheduled for completion over the next couple years.

Legislative Update:

The board was updated on the following bills:

HB 337 – State Tax Execution Modernization Act – The bill passed unanimously in the House and Senate during the 2017 legislative session with an effective date of January 1, 2018. All state tax liens, as of January 1, 2018, will be eFiled through the Authority portal to clerks' of-

fices and will have statewide perfection at filing. Currently filed state tax liens will become ineffective as of January 1, 2018. It is anticipated that a large volume of state tax liens will be "renewed/refiled" as of January 1, 2018. A planning meeting involving all stakeholders is scheduled for May 2, 2017.

SB 132 – Effective January 1, 2018, the Authority will no longer be involved in the transmission of civil case disposition data/forms. Clerks will be required to transmit directly to AOC, but this is already occurring.

HB 176 – The Plat eFiling "clean up" bill has no direct effect on the Authority or clerks of Superior Court.

Next Board Meeting:

The next quarterly board meeting will be held on July 11-12, 2017 at the Authority office. ■



A Message from GSCCCA Executive Director John Earle

Dear Clerks,

On behalf of the GSCCCA staff, I wanted to take this opportunity to reiterate just how much we enjoyed being with you last month during your annual spring conference at the King and Prince Resort in St. Simons. We are always so appreciative of your support, hospitality and kindness to include us on your training agendas, as well as your after-hour social functions. As many have noted in the past, the "GSCCCA was created by the clerks to help serve the clerks," and I can assure you that the Authority staff and our Board of Directors are committed to that belief every day as we strive to provide you with the highest level of service that you've come to expect and that you deserve. As you turn the pages of this edition of the GSCCCA's quarterly newsletter, it is my hope that you will find the information insightful and informative as you plan how best to leverage our services for the benefit of your office.

Kindest regards,

John Earle





ord, Andy said: “We want to help the clerks every single time they call. We wouldn’t be here without them. We understand how important this work is, and we take it seriously.”

Andy appreciates the many challenges the Authority has faced, including securing the support of all Superior Court clerks and other involved parties early on, and, for that reason, is famous for saying, “The technology’s the easy part.” Few involved would agree with that comment understanding the significant technological mastery required to make all of these projects come to fruition. Setting modesty aside, the reality is that Andy has played a major role for over two decades in keeping the Authority and Superior Court

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“It’s difficult to fully express what Andy Wightwick truly means to the Authority and the clerks of Superior Court in Georgia; simply put, though, his leadership and expertise have been instrumental in our success. Andy began working on Authority projects while he attended Georgia Tech, and it has been an amazing journey to watch him grow both personally and professionally through the years. Andy understands the big picture, as well as the intricate details; and of his many gifts, he has the unique ability to take the most detailed technology project and simplify it to terms that a non-technical person can understand and embrace. Years ago, a group of clerks of Superior Court recognized that technology was the future, and they had a vision that would revolutionize Superior Court clerks’ offices throughout the state of Georgia. Andy grasped that vision and led the team that built the technology infrastructure of what is now the Georgia Superior Court Clerks’ Cooperative Authority. Today, he continues fine-tuning existing projects and developing new ones in order to help clerks stay on the cutting edge of technology and serve our communities better. Andy Wightwick is so special, and his value to the Authority and clerks is simply immeasurable. I truly cannot express how proud I am of him and what he has accomplished, and look forward to seeing what the future holds.” — Jean Rogers, Crisp County Clerk of Superior Court & GSCCCA Chair

“I’ve worked with Andy at the GSCCCA for 13 years and have always appreciated his fervent commitment and dedication to helping ensure the success of the GSCCCA and all of those that we serve, especially our Superior Court clerk family. Adjectives that come to mind when describing Andy include: professional, excellence, problem solver, leader, partner, intelligent, loyal, fun, quick-witted, personable, charismatic, articulate, kind, thoughtful, team player, advocate, committed father and husband, and friend. Andy’s many contributions over the past 20 years to the GSCCCA and the customers that we serve cannot be overemphasized. Quite frankly, Andy is, in large part, the driving force behind most of the technical solutions to complex problems that have helped the Authority meet the needs of our customers in the most optimal fashion. In summary, the GSCCCA is exceptionally fortunate to have Andy on the team. Thank you, Andy!” — John Earle, GSCCCA Executive Director

“Andy joined the team fifteen years ago, and he came to the table with remarkable energy, intellect and commitment. Over the years he has matured with the program, retained all those initial characteristics and added experience to his considerable assets. Today he is a seasoned and committed leader with a penchant for detail, a wealth of historical knowledge of the people and programs of GSCCCA, and an eye on the future.” — John Myers, Millennium Information Tek (MIT) President & CEO



“What can I say about Andy ... there is so much to be said. We all know how intelligent he is, but I think what is more impressive is how he uses that intelligence. He is down-to-earth and very personable. No matter what task or problem he is presented with, he always has that “Andy grin” on his face. And, he always follows through with a solution and great results. He does not ever seem to be fazed or burdened with anything he is asked to do. It’s been great fun to watch him mature from the ‘kid’ that could flip the ladies on the dance floor to the more settled (that might be stretching it) adult with a lovely wife and two beautiful children.” — Connie Cheatham, McDuffie County Clerk of Superior Court & GSCCCA Vice Chair

“When Andy came on board at the Authority, my initial impression of him was that he was cocky, overly self-assured and a know-it-all. My suspicions were confirmed in time—and thank God they were! Those three personality traits have served us well and kept us at the forefront of technological innovation. Without Andy's knowledge and drive, I am confident that many of our successes would not have come to fruition, not just because we wouldn't have had his extraordinary brainpower but, even more so, because we would've lacked his unique and superlative ability to understand the issues while concurrently dealing with them in a logical, systematic, scientific and common-sensical manner.

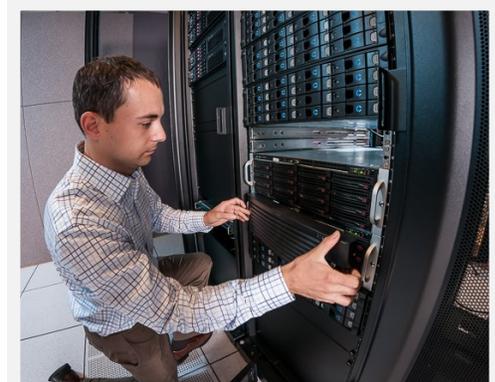
“He is chief of the ‘little geniuses,’ which former Authority chair Tom Lawler dubbed him and the other members of the Authority's technology staff. He, working with former Authority director David Williams and current executive director John Earle, has assembled a one-of-a-kind small ensemble of technological savants who have accomplished—and continue to accomplish—more than is imaginable. Others can't understand how such a small technology staff can do all that they do or how adeptly and brilliantly they do everything they do. If they knew Andy as I do, they would understand. Ultimately, he loves being the best, works hard to be the best, does everything he does in the best, yet simplest, way possible, and he is at his best when he's doing what he believes is in the best interests of everyone—especially Superior Court clerks, his family away from his family.

“What makes me admire Andy most, however, is his genuine compassion and altruism. Few know all that he has done—and continues to do—to help those who need someone to pull alongside them to help them carry their load. He gives and gives and never asks for anything in return, volunteering his time, money, and, without solicitation, he takes the time to offer words of love and support via a phone call, personal note, text or e-mail message—even when he's knee-deep in projects and doesn't have time to spare. He does so because he has a big heart. He loves using his talents in service to others. Andy may be cocky, overly self-assured and a know-it-all but, in my opinion, that's a good thing. He's a blessing and, because of him, our lives have been enriched. I'm honored to be his friend.” — F. Barry Wilkes, Former Liberty County Clerk of Superior Court & Former GSCCCA Chair

“My single word for Andy Wightwick is “savvy.” Andy has the superior technical knowledge and skills that we have come to rely on, but that is not all. He has the ability to weave those technical skills with astute assessments of the law and the complicated political environment that we operate in. The Authority and the clerks are certainly fortunate to have Andy on board.” — Gary Yates

clerks on the cutting edge of technology, both responding to current technological demands and anticipating future needs. His role in the Authority's success has been invaluable, and his contributions toward moving Superior Court clerks into a new era of technology will have a profound and lasting impact.

Enjoy reading the comments from those who have worked closest with Andy through the years which have been included to highlight his significant achievements and contributions to the Authority and Superior Court clerks. ■



Historical Deed Indexing Moves Forward

In April 2016, the Authority Board of Directors adopted a resolution to begin an Authority-sponsored historical indexing project for deed instruments to include in the Authority's online system all deeds filed in the calendar years 1991 and 1990. The Board also voted to compensate the offices of those clerks of Superior Court who had previously completed their 1991 and 1990 historical deed imaging and indexing pursuant to a Clerk Funded Historical Indexing Agreement.

The official commencement of this project began with the ability to transmit historical index data and images to the Authority on January 2, 2017. Some data has now been received and is being reviewed by Authority staff prior to it being released to the statewide system.

“For those counties who have not completed 1991 and 1990 historical imaging and indexing, there are several steps necessary for the process to continue to move forward. The Authority would like to complete this project promptly so that additional projects may be considered for the future.”

Several clerks had already completed historical indexing inclusive of 1990 and have been compensated for doing so under a Clerk Funded Agreement. Otherwise, this project does not directly affect those counties.

For those counties who have not completed 1991 and 1990 historical imaging and indexing, there are several steps necessary for the process to continue to move forward. The Authority would like to complete this project promptly so that additional projects may be considered for the future.

Here are two critical steps required for indexing to begin:

1. The clerk needs to select an authorized vendor to perform the imaging and indexing services. Currently, there are two approved vendors to perform this work. Prior to making your vendor selection, please check with the Authority for authorized vendors. Eleven counties have not yet selected a vendor to perform their work. Each county is encouraged to make this selection promptly.
2. A completed docket survey must be submitted to the Authority and indexing directions issued for each county before any imaging or indexing begins. This is a very important part of the process and clerks should prevent any work from beginning until after receipt of the indexing directions. Twenty-two counties have not yet submitted a docket survey for review. If you have not submitted your survey, you are urged to do so as soon as possible so that the project may progress without unnecessary delay.

The Authority would like to see this project move forward at a quicker pace than previous projects as budgeted funds have been approved for this project in the current fiscal year. Please look for more information on this project in the coming weeks and months, and do not hesitate to ask for additional information.

The primary Authority contacts for this project include:

- ❖ John Earle: john.earle@gsccca.org
- ❖ Gary Yates: gary.yates@gsccca.org
- ❖ Phil Kobierowski:
phil.kobierowski@gsccca.org
- ❖ Jamie McCarron:
jamie.mccarron@gsccca.org

Please reach out to any of these contacts with questions or for additional information. ■



Authority Adds More R.E. Indexing Classes

With two successful classes already held, the Authority has added more Real Estate Indexing Standards classes to the schedule, providing clerks and their staff with three more opportunities to get this training! Jody Moss, clerk of Superior Court of Morgan County, will host a class on July 27 in Madison; April Garrett, clerk of Superior Court of Cook County, will host a class on September 19 in Adel; and Stacy Haralson, clerk of Superior Court of Harris County, and Kye Gibson, clerk of Superior Court of Meriwether County, will host a class on September 22 in Hamilton. All classes will be held from 9:00 am to 12:00 noon, and are offered free-of-charge.

Suitable for new and experienced indexers, the **Real Estate Indexing Standards** class will include a review of the GSCCCA Standards for indexing real estate, lien and plat records with an emphasis on underlying concepts behind the



In addition to its other training, the Authority continues to offer notary classes to the public hosted by Superior Court clerks across the state. Pictured above are Authority Communications Director Mike Smith, DeKalb County Superior Court Clerk Debra DeBerry, and Authority Project Manager Rachel Rice leading a notary class hosted by Ms. DeBerry in March. The class was attended by over 300 people.

Standards, common errors, difficult parties and instruments, and the indexing certification test.

In addition to classroom training, the Authority has three more webinars scheduled and plans to add more to the calendar soon. Webinars are re-

2017 Training Schedule

Classroom Training:

Real Estate Indexing Standards:

July 27	Madison
Sept. 19	Adel
September 22	Hamilton

Webinars:

June 6	UCC Training
June 13	Fines & Fees
July 25	Bulk Lien eFiling

More webinars to be announced soon!

mote training conducted via the internet and phone and allow a clerk to have as many staff members as they wish participate. Below is a description of the webinars currently scheduled.

UCC Training — This 1.5-hour webinar will provide an overview of processing UCCs in accordance with Georgia law and procedures. The training will cover UCC forms, grounds for refusing to accept a UCC, UCC eFiling, and administrative procedures.

Fines & Fees — This two-hour webinar will cover many facets of the court fee system including the proper assessment, collection and distribution of state and local surcharges and deductions relative to fines, court costs and bond forfeitures; recent legislative changes; an overview of the Georgia statutes and the GSCCCA Rules and Regulations; and sample breakdowns of civil and criminal fines and fees.

Bulk Lien eFiling — This one-hour webinar will provide the necessary steps to getting started with bulk lien eFiling. From participating vendors to how to register and file, this class is suitable for clerks and filers alike. Is your tax commissioner's office interested in participating in bulk lien eFiling? Invite them to join you!

Register for classes or webinars online at www.gsccca.org/training. Have questions? Contact Rachel Rice at 404-227-0724 or [@gsccca.org](mailto:rachel.rice@gsccca.org). ■



State Tax Lien Filings to Remain with Clerks

After an effort in 2016 to entirely remove the filing of state tax liens from Superior Court clerks' offices, the 2017 legislature revised the state tax lien laws as to preserve state tax lien filing with the clerks while granting the Department of Revenue some of their objectives.

The new law, HB 337, effective January 1, 2018, continues to require that state tax liens be filed with Superior Court clerks to be effective against the interests of purchasers and third parties. Revenue Department objectives in the bill include statewide attachment of liens and immediate attachment upon eFiling.

The bill has important implications for both clerks of Superior Court and the Authority. Primarily, it requires that all state tax liens be eFiled with the clerk. Once submitted via eFiling, the lien becomes effective in every county of the state. The Revenue Department will continue to pay the regular filing fees to clerks' offices.

The bill's comprehensive revision is complicated. Here are some of the highlights:

- ❖ All state tax liens must be eFiled after January 1, 2018.
- ❖ Statewide attachment of state tax lien by single filing.
- ❖ Filing to be in county of taxpayer residence.
- ❖ Department continues to pay filing fees.
- ❖ All existing state tax liens on record prior to

January 1, 2018 become ineffective and outstanding liens must be refiled in order to have effect.

- ❖ State tax liens to have one-time 10-year life.
- ❖ GSCCCA must revise system to allow for statewide searches for state tax liens.
- ❖ Releases of state tax liens continue to be filed with clerk.
- ❖ Specific indexing directions to clerks.

All Superior Court clerks and their local software vendors need to be prepared for lien eFiling on January 1, 2018. Some changes to vendor systems other than eFiling will be necessary. Stakeholder representatives, including the clerks, the Authority, the Revenue Department, and the legal and title business community, continue to meet in an effort to ensure that the stakeholders' agreed-upon provisions are subsequently implemented as originally envisioned. Technical details and system tests are scheduled for early August. Additional information will be coming as the details are developed and agreed upon. The Authority will be available throughout the year to assist clerks and their vendors to become compliant with the new provisions.

For additional information, check the Spring Conference presentation slides which are located on the Clerk Resource Center website. The text of the bill itself may be found at <http://www.legis.ga.gov/legislation/en-US/Display/20172018/HB/337>. ■

UCC Filings: Keeping it Simple

"Stop, in the name of the UCC Police!" Ok, so that's a silly thing we will never hear in the clerk's office. No one in your office is expected to make the world a safer place by being "UCC Law Enforcement." However, as the designated filing office for Uniform Commercial Code filings in the state of Georgia, clerks of Superior Court *should* be reviewing UCC filings for the presence of minimum filing requirements.

According to Georgia law, O.C.G.A. § 11-9-516, certain elements must be present for acceptance and filing of a UCC. Filings should be refused if:

- ❖ The UCC is not communicated to your office by a method or medium authorized. For example, a UCC may not be accepted for filing if faxed. Only walk-in, mail or eFile are acceptable methods of filing.

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Authority's eFile Project Continues to Grow

Before launching UCC eFile in 2010, the Authority spent years researching, planning, programming, and testing their eFiling program. Essential to the project was developing a platform that was flexible enough for clerks, bankers, attorneys, and the general public to use. From the beginning, the Authority's goal has been to protect the autonomy of Superior Court clerks, improve the technology within their offices, streamline the document-filing process, and give the public access to convenient and effective tools—all at no cost to state or local government.

Today, the Authority's electronic filing portal, efile.gscca.org, allows for the filing of numerous document types, and the list will continue to grow. As thousands of documents are now being eFiled annually, the Authority continues to assess, improve, and streamline the user experience in its ongoing efforts to stay ahead of the curve and provide state-of-the-art services.

UCC eFile

- ❖ 104 participating counties
- ❖ Almost 93,000 UCCs eFiled in 2016; averaging over 7,700 UCCs eFiled per month – over 1,000 more per month than in 2015
- ❖ Almost 33,000 UCCs already eFiled in 2017; record number of UCCs eFiled in March 2017—over 10,000

Real Estate eFile

- ❖ 158 participating counties: 61 allow only plat document types; 97 allow plats plus deed

and/or lien document types

- ❖ Approved vendors: Conduent, Cott, Kofile, MicroPact, Icon and TeamIA
- ❖ Approved value-added submitters: CSC, eDocs Solutions, eRecording Partners Network, Indecomm Global Services, and Simplifile

Child Support eFile

- ❖ 122 participating counties
- ❖ Almost 111,000 cases processed thus far in 2016 with over 108,000 accepted
- ❖ Almost 44,000 cases processed in 2017 with over 42,000 accepted

Notary Online

- ❖ 133 participating counties
- ❖ Program created for online applications for public. Allows for clerks to have immediate access to data upon issuance of notary public commission and immediate availability of commission images upon scanning in the Clerk Resource Center.

ACH Payment

- ❖ 157 participating counties
- ❖ Created monthly summary ACH report which lists all ACH deposits for the month, in addition to UCC and Real Estate filings along with the collected fees per filing

If you're interested in participating in one of these eFile projects, contact Rachel Rice at 404-227-0724 or rachel.rice@gscca.org. ■

UCC Filings — Continued from Page 8

- ❖ An amount equal to or greater than the applicable filing fee is not tendered.
- ❖ In the case of an initial filing (UCC-1), the record does not provide a debtor name.
- ❖ In the case of an amendment (UCC-3), the filing does not identify the initial financing statement number in box 1a.
- ❖ In the case of an amendment (UCC-3), the filing indicates the amendment is presented to accomplish more than one action. Georgia only allows one action per amendment.
- ❖ In the case of an amendment (UCC-3), the filing identifies more than one initial financing statement in box 1a.
- ❖ In the case of an amendment (UCC-3), the filing identifies an initial financing statement whose effectiveness has lapsed.

Just follow the statutory requirements placed upon your office and don't over-think it. If you or anyone in your office needs UCC training, consider the Authority's UCC webinar on Tuesday, June 6, from 10:00 – 11:30 am. Simply register online at <http://apps.gscca.org/training/>.

