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Forsyth County

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Allen elected Authority chairman

Congratulations to Forsyth County Clerk of Superior and State Courts **Greg G. Allen** who was elected Authority chairman at the Board's recent meeting. Greg has served on the Board for over three years, and becomes the fifth chairman in the GSCCCA's 25-year history.

Allen has served as clerk of Superior and State Courts of Forsyth County since 2009. Active in clerk activities statewide, Greg currently serves as president of the Superior Court Clerks' Association of Georgia, and has previously served as secretary/treasurer and legislative chair for the group. In 2018 he was voted *Clerk of the Year for the State of Georgia*, becoming only the second clerk ever to receive the award in his first year of eligibility from his fellow elected clerks.

Due to his modernization efforts at the Forsyth County Clerk of Courts office and his ability to work with all three branches of state government, Allen has received recognition and several state appointments, including:

- Appointed by the Judicial Council of Georgia in 2011 to the *Next Generation Courts Commission* to determine the future of court operations;
- Voted *9th District Clerk of the Year* in 2012;
- Appointed to board of directors of the 9th Judicial Admin-



GSCCCA Chairman
Greg G. Allen
Forsyth County Clerk of
Superior, State & Juvenile Courts

istrative District Office of Dispute Resolution in 2014;

- Received *ÉCLAT Award* in 2015 from the Superior Court Clerks' Association of Georgia for his work in shepherding through a monumental piece of legislation that protects the future of Superior Court clerks;
- Appointed in 2016 to *State Bar of Georgia Justice For All Working Group* tasked with improving access to the courts for citizens in underserved areas and groups;
- Appointed by Governor Nathan Deal in 2017 to work with the Attorney General's Office to investigate possible nonfeasance in an elected office in another county; and
- Appointed by Governor Nathan Deal in 2018 as the Superior Court Clerk repre-

nonfeasance in an elected office in another county; and

- Appointed by Governor Nathan Deal in 2018 as the Superior Court Clerk repre-

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July Board meeting review

The Authority Board met on July 8 for its quarterly meeting. Following is a summary of the reports and actions of the meeting.

Election of Authority Board Officers

Greg Allen was elected Authority chairman, and Dena Adams was elected secretary/treasurer, both by a majority. Connie Cheatham will continue as vice chairman.



In order to allow for proper social distancing, the Board met at the Marriott Century Center in Atlanta.

General Business

The minutes of the June 9 teleconference board meeting were approved. Greg Morgan, with Mauldin & Jenkins, provided the Accountant's Review and reported that the overall financial health of the Clerks' Authority is very good. Fines and fees collections are down due to court closures brought about by the pandemic shut-down. However, the funds collected by the Fines and Fees Division are a "pass-through," so lower collection amounts do not adversely affect the Authority's financials.

2019-2020 Accomplishments & Year-end Report

The 2019-2020 Accomplishments & Year-end Report was presented to the Board. The annual publication highlights the Authority's efforts to assist clerks of Superior Court and the public by documenting specific goals achieved. The report touches on every facet of the organization's operation, and, this year, captured the Authority's ability to adapt to change, and, with the support of the Superior Court clerks, thrive in doing so.

New Fines & Fees Priority Schedules

Due to changes brought about by HB 576, a motion was approved to adopt a new partial payment priority schedule for Superior & State Courts and a separate partial payment priority schedule for all courts other than Superior & State Courts and updated Rules and Regulations reflecting the new priority schedules. The new schedules, which become effective upon HB 576's approval by the Governor or upon it becoming law without such approval, are listed on Page 6 in a Fines & Fees article.

Fines & Fees Division

Compared to previous years, collections are drastically down due to the pandemic shutting down courts. For example, a typical month has \$7 million in collections, but May 2020 had only \$4 million in collections.

Training Update

Training efforts across all subject matters continue to attract large numbers of attendees. As of July 1, 2020, the Authority's eLearn platform had 24,382 total users registered. It was noted that the Authority webinar training platform could help clerks meet their Council educational requirement. The Authority has been responsive during the pandemic by quickly scheduling training to help clerks continue to meet the needs of their constituents.

eFiling Project

144 clerks participate in UCC eFile and 43 of those mandate electronic UCC filing. Almost 195,000 UCCs were eFiled in FY 2020, a record high. June 2020 alone saw more than 40,000 UCCs eFiled. For real estate eFile, all 159 clerks participate to some degree. 136 allow all documents types while the other 23 allow variations. The estimated filing fee feature added by the Authority has proven to be very helpful. Regarding other eFiling initiatives, 64 clerks participate in Child Support eFile, 144 participate in the Notary Online

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July Board meeting review — Cont. from Page 2

application process, and 159 participate in the ACH Payment process.

Historical Deed Re-Indexing Projects

With the completion of the 1991-1990 Historical Project, the statewide “good-from” date for real estate deeds is now January 1, 1990. To date, the Authority has received 136 docket surveys from clerks. Additionally, 60 clerks are now participating in the Voluntary Historical Deed Project, which is 5 more than last reported in January 2020. There are approximately 3.2 million instruments in production and available to the public while more than 260,000 instruments are in quarantine awaiting review. Of those in quarantine, approximately 150,000 are expected to be released within the week.

UCC Project

As expected, due to COVID-19, UCC filing activity was less in April and May 2020 when compared to the same months of 2019. However, June 2020 saw a dramatic increase in UCC filings with more than 40,000 UCCs eFiled, not counting paper filings. This appears to be attributable to UCCs filed by the Small Business Administration (SBA) pertaining to the Payment Protection Plan authorized by the United States Congress. UCC filing volume is an indicator of overall economic activity. For UCC Certified Search requests, the overall number will be down for FY 2020 once numbers for June 2020 are calculated.

Archival Programs

MyVault, which has 156 of the 159 clerks participating, is a free, data back-up, storage and retrieval system; it protects clerks’ data while providing a substantial cost savings to counties. Since last report, 120 million new files have been added to MyVault, bringing the total to 950 million files which equals 157 terabytes of data. Additionally, there have been 6 requests from clerks to restore data while 11 appliances were replaced in the last month due to upgrade needs. The Virtual Microfilm Program (VMF) has seen 3 million deed and 2 million lien images added over the last three months.

Notary & Authentications Division

The division has seen great change in the last quarter due to the pandemic shutdown. As of March 17, the Authority closed public access to

its office. However, to meet the needs of customers, the Authority installed a drop box just outside the Authority office entrance. Customers requesting apostilles can either drop off their documents for processing or mail them to the Authority, an option that has always been available. The Authority is pleased to report that the public has readily adapted to the new process and has received positive feedback.

As expected, notary commissions indexed were down for Q4 due to the pandemic-related shut-down. However, the months of May and June saw an uptick and movement toward recovery. Apostille requests remain high for the country of Spain, which leads as the top requested country. South Korea, Mexico, Russia and India round out the top five.

Other Business

The Board discussed the promo codes provided by the Authority to Superior Court clerks to help bridge the gap for search-site customers who normally access the search terminals in clerks’ offices to search records on www.gsccca.org. With most offices closed or partially closed for all or portions of the pandemic, clerks were seeking alternative ways to serve customers who do not have a search account with the Authority. Clerks have discretion for distribution of the promo codes, which provide 30 days of free access to the Authority site.

The Board also discussed exploration of employing technology to address the need for meeting remotely/online. Staff assured the Board that the Authority has the capability to leverage such technology if needed.

The Board expects there to be continued interest in a remote notary bill in the 2021 legislative session, and requested that Authority staff be prepared if and when such legislation comes.

Next Board Meeting

The next quarterly board meeting will be held October 13-14, 2020. ■



Allen elected chairman — Cont. from Page 1

sentative to the newly formed *Criminal Case Data Exchange Board*.

Allen is a life-long resident of Forsyth County and a graduate of Georgia State University. He and his wife, Kim, have two sons, Chase and Knox, and one daughter, Ansley Kate. He and his family are longtime members of Cumming First United Methodist Church.

“On behalf of the Clerks’ Authority, I welcome Greg’s election as chairman,” said GSCCCA Executive Director John Earle. “Greg is part of a new generation of leaders and his extraordinary work on our behalf at the Capitol and his leadership within various clerk organizations make him uniquely qualified to lead the Authority and build on our successes. Having worked closely with Greg for the past decade, I have no doubt that he will be an outstanding chairman for our organization. His leadership style includes a pos-

itive, can-do attitude, an ever-present vision to the future, a collaborative spirit, and a keen awareness on always protecting the interests of the Authority and Superior Court clerks.”

The Board also elected White County Superior Court Clerk **Dena Adams** to the position of secretary/treasurer. Adams has served as a member of the Board since January 2019. McDuffie County Superior Court Clerk **Connie Cheatham** will remain as vice chairman of the Board, a position she has held since January 2017.

“Greg, Connie and Dena have been leaders within the clerks’ community and integral members of our board,” continued Earle. “I am personally grateful that they are willing to serve and give of their time and talents, and know they will continue to play a key role in our growth and success. The Authority staff and I look forward to serving them whenever and however necessary.” ■

June Board meeting review

The Authority Board convened for its quarterly meeting via conference call on June 9, 2020. The meeting was originally scheduled for April 8, but had to be rescheduled due to the COVID-19 emergency.

Swearing in of New Board Member

The Honorable Alan J. Lee, Carroll County Superior Court clerk, was sworn in as a member of the Authority Board of Directors. Mr. Lee was appointed by Lt Gov. Geoff Duncan for a three-year term.

General Business

A motion to approve the January 8, 2020 Board minutes as presented was approved.

Executive Director John Earle gave an operational update on the Authority, and reported that since the middle of March 2020, the Authority staff had been working in a primarily tele-work environment. Some staff members still come into the office daily and some semi-weekly to conduct certain aspects of business that cannot be done from home. Senior staff holds a weekly conference call which includes conversations about re-opening the office. Because staff is performing at a high level in the new work-from-home environment and all work is continuing seamlessly, it was agreed that there was no compelling reason at present to have all staff return to the office that outweighed the potential health risk to them. There are currently no definitive metrics for the reopening, but guidelines have been prepared and Mr. Earle expects flexible scheduling and a potential A/B team approach. Additionally, the guidelines suggest the front door remain closed to the public until a later date to be determined.

FY 2021 Operating Budget

A motion to approve the Authority’s FY 2021 operating budget as presented was approved.



Mosley & Lee join Authority Board

Congratulations and welcome to Chatham County Superior Court Clerk **Tammie Mosley** and Carroll County Superior Court Clerk **Alan J. Lee** who recently joined the Authority Board of Directors. Tammie was appointed by the Council of Superior Court Clerks of Georgia and Alan was appointed by Lt Gov. Geoff Duncan. Both will serve three-year terms.

Tammie Mosley

Tammie was elected clerk in 2016 becoming the first attorney elected as Superior Court clerk of Chatham County. She received her law degree from Drake University and her undergraduate degree from Morris Brown College. Prior to becoming clerk, Tammie worked as senior staff attorney to Superior Court Judge John E. Morse, Jr, for over 13 years.

Tammie's private practice experience includes work with Georgia Legal Services, the Democratic National Committee, and State Farm Insurance Company. Dedicated to giving back to the community that she loves, Tammie volunteers with Susan G. Komen Race for the Cure and is a Trustee of the Savannah Country Day School. She recently joined the Deep Center Board. She enjoys running and recently completed her 17th half-marathon.

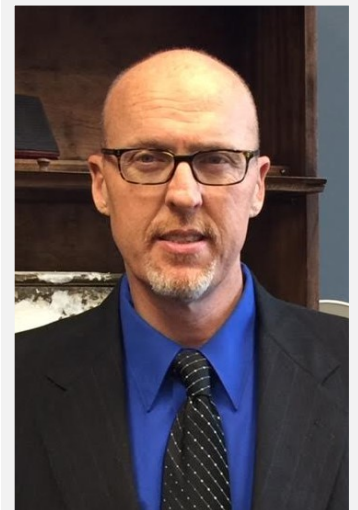
Since becoming Superior Court clerk, Tammie has initiated many new programs in her office which include the office becoming a Passport Application Acceptance Facility, and initiation and funding of VISIX public information/wayfinding monitors in the courthouse, Forever Hearts Adoption Program, and an Employee Wellness Initiative.

Alan J. Lee

Alan took office as Superior Court clerk in 2009. He is a military veteran and spent 14 years as an investigator in the Carroll County Sheriff's Department prior to being elected clerk.



Tammie Mosley
Chatham County
Superior Court Clerk



Alan J. Lee
Carroll County
Superior Court Clerk

Alan was born and reared in Carroll County, and is a graduate of Central High School of Carrollton. He, and his wife, Terry, have three sons, one daughter, and six grandchildren. When not at the courthouse, Alan enjoys spending time with his family, especially his grandchildren, and loves to hunt and fish. He is an avid "do-it-yourselfer" at home and at the office. He is a member and deacon at Bethesda Baptist Church and lifelong member of the Gospel Group Heaven's Echoes founded by his father, Joe Lee.

Active within the clerk community, Alan serves as chairman of the 4th, 5th and 6th Districts and as a member of the Superior Court Clerk's Training Council. Through his vision and planning, he has molded the Carroll County clerk's office into an efficient, technologically updated, and ideal work environment.

"On behalf of the Authority and our Board of Directors, I'd like to offer a warm welcome to Tammie and Alan," said Executive Director John Earle. "We know they come to the table with remarkable energy, intellect and commitment, and we appreciate their dedication to helping ensure the success of the Authority and all of those that we serve, especially our Superior Court clerk family." ■



Fines & Fees legislative changes

During the 2020 legislative session, the General Assembly passed two bills, SB 249 and HB 576, affecting fines and fees.

Senate Bill 249

SB 249 modified O.C.G.A. § 47-17-60 changing the calculation and assessment of the Peace Officer's Annuity and Benefit Fund (POAB) for fines and the calculation for bonds and pretrial diversion fees. With an effective date of 7/1/2020, POAB became a *surcharge* for fines but continued to be a deduction for bond forfeitures and pretrial diversion fees. The new assessment and calculations for fines, bond forfeitures, and pretrial diversion fees are as follows:

Fines:

- Assessment: **Surcharge** to the fine
- Calculation: Greater of \$10 or 10%
- Effective Date: Any violations with an offense date of 7/1/2020 or later

Bond Forfeitures:

- Assessment: **Deduction** from the bond
- Calculation: Greater of \$10 or 10%
- Effective Date: Any bond forfeited on or after 7/1/2020. Offense date is irrelevant.

Pretrial Diversion:

- Assessment: **Deduction** from the pretrial diversion fee
- Calculation: Greater of \$5 or 5%
- Effective Date: Any pretrial diversion fee collected on or after 7/1/2020

House Bill 576

HB 576 modified O.C.G.A. § 15-6-95 by changing the priority schedule for Superior Courts. The bill also modified O.C.G.A. § 15-21A-7 noting the Authority shall follow the priority schedule in Code Section 15-6-95 insofar as practicable for all other courts. The Authority Board adopted updated Rules & Regulations and priority schedules for **all** courts.

The new priority schedules are as follows:

Superior & State Courts:

(Note: Restitution is always first.)

1. Peace Officers' Annuity and Benefit Fund (POAB)
2. Clerks' Retirement Fund (CRF)

3. Sheriffs' Retirement Fund (SRF)
4. Brain and Spinal Injury Trust Fund (BSITF)
5. County Governing Authority (COUNTY)
6. Jail Construction and Staffing Fund (JAIL)
7. Peace Officer, Prosecutor, and Indigent Defense Fund (POPIDF-A)
8. Peace Officer, Prosecutor, and Indigent Defense Fund (POPIDF-B)
9. Local Victims Assistance Program (LVAP)
10. Law Library (LL)
11. Georgia Crime Victims Emergency Fund (CVEF)
12. Drug Abuse Treatment and Education Fund (DATE)
13. Safe Harbor Fund (SHF)
14. Crime Lab Fee (CLF)
15. Application Fee (IDAF)
16. Driver Education and Training Fund (DETF)

All other courts:

(Note: Restitution is always first.)

1. Peace Officers' Annuity and Benefit Fund (POAB)
2. Clerks' Retirement Fund (CRF)
3. Probate Judges' Retirement Fund (PRF)
4. Sheriffs' Retirement Fund (SRF)
5. Brain and Spinal Injury Trust Fund (BSITF)
6. City/County Governing Authority (CITY/COUNTY)
7. Jail Construction and Staffing Fund (JAIL)
8. Peace Officer, Prosecutor, and Indigent Defense Fund (POPIDF-A)
9. Peace Officer, Prosecutor, and Indigent Defense Fund (POPIDF-B)
10. Local Victims Assistance Program (LVAP)
11. Law Library (LL)
12. Georgia Crime Victims Emergency Fund (CVEF)
13. Drug Abuse Treatment and Education Fund (DATE)
14. Safe Harbor Fund (SHF)
15. Crime Lab Fee (CLF)
16. Application Fee (IDAF)
17. Driver Education and Training Fund (DETF)

The Rules & Regulations and priority schedules became effective on August 3 when Governor Kemp signed HB 576 into law. All courts were notified of the legislative changes, and the bills are available on the Fines and Fees website, www.courttrax.org. ■



Take advantage of remote learning

Due to COVID-19, the Authority has temporarily suspended its classroom training and focused its efforts on offering additional remote learning opportunities. As a replacement for the Real Estate Indexing Standards classroom training, two new webinars have been added to the schedule:

- ❖ “Real Estate Indexing Standards – Introduction” on October 6, and
- ❖ “Real Estate Indexing Standards – Clerk Questions & Sample Index” on October 8

Suitable for both new and experienced indexers, these one-hour webinars provide an overview of the standards, examples of extracting data from sample images, and review indexing questions submitted by Superior Court clerk offices.

To register for either of these or any of the other webinars on the schedule listed above, go to <https://gsccca.webex.com>, click “Upcoming,” and then “Register.”

In addition to the webinars, the Authority has also launched two new online training courses available on <https://eLearn.gsccca.org>:

- ❖ “Notary Online – Mail-In Renewal” – This online course was created in conjunction with

Remaining 2020 webinars

August 20	RE Indexing Certification Exam
August 25	Pending Lien Search
September 3	Authority Email & Mimecast
September 15	Virtual Microfilm
October 6	RE Indexing Standards – Introduction
October 7	Clerk Resource Center & Program Status Report
October 8	RE Indexing Standards – Clerk Questions & Sample Index
October 22	RE Indexing Certification Exam

our Notary Division in response to increased requests for notary application mail-in renewal training. Comprised of four lessons, the course provides an overview of the notary public mail-in renewal application process, the steps taken by an applicant, how to process a mail-in renewal, and multiple accounting tips.

- ❖ “GSCCCA Indexing Standards – Common Mistakes” – This is the Authority’s third Indexing Standards online course; it was created with guidance from our Quality Control & Compliance Department to address common indexing mistakes. Comprised of nine lessons, the course covers the most common mistakes seen in indexing and examples of how to properly index.

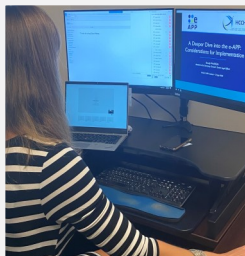
In addition to the new courses, the Authority continues to offer the following online training opportunities:

- ❖ GSCCCA Indexing Standards
- ❖ GSCCCA Indexing Standards – Extended
- ❖ Introduction to GSCCCA Fines & Fees
- ❖ Notary Public Training
- ❖ UCC Training

Courses are available 24/7 making training completely flexible. Check out new and existing online training on <https://eLearn.gsccca.org>! With questions, contact training@gsccca.org or 800-304-5174. ■

Authority hosts NPA webinars

The Authority hosted webinars presented by the Notary Public Administrators (NPA), a staff section of the National Association of Secretaries of State (NASS), for the 2020 Summer NASS Virtual Conference. As NPA president, Mike Smith, the Authority’s communications director & compliance officer, presided over the webinars. Authority Project Director Rachel Rice is shown here moderating.



Authority adapts & continues to thrive

Following is the Executive Summary from the Authority's 2019-2020 Accomplishments & Year-end Report. Numbers reflect fiscal year-end (June 30) totals unless otherwise stated. Contact Communications Director & Compliance Officer Mike Smith at mike.smith@gsccca.org with questions.

“There is only one way to survive and thrive when faced with circumstances out of our control ... ADAPT.”

—Charles F. Glassman, MD

The Georgia Superior Court Clerks' Cooperative Authority, in concert with Georgia's Superior Court clerks, has been adapting since opening its doors 25 years ago—often initiated by our own innovation and critical goal of ushering clerks into the technology-driven 21st century. Sometimes, however, adapting to change is necessary due to circumstances out of our control—like addressing the challenges brought about by a global pandemic and the ensuing shelter-in-place orders.

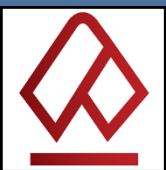
When COVID-19 erupted earlier this year, the world was forced to adapt, as the virus—in an unprecedented manner and practically overnight—changed the way we operate. It was no longer business-as-usual and many approaches to serving customers and collaborating with colleagues—or just getting anything done—had to change.

Always mindful of its critical role of supporting Superior Court clerks in the operation of their offices—it has been, and always will be, our number-one priority—the Authority understood the pandemic's impact on clerks' office operations and how the unprecedented situation dramatically altered how clerks were able to serve the public. With an all-hands-on-deck approach, the Authority committed to a single mission of helping clerks and their staff continue to meet the public's needs during the current state of emergency. While the Authority was also forced to alter its normal office operations during the pandemic, the goal throughout was to provide a seamless level of service to Superior Court clerks and all others that we serve.

Through flexibility, ingenuity, tireless efforts and a thoughtful approach on how best to help our counties and to continue offering much-needed services, the following are a few of the actions quickly taken to respond to the extraordinary and unprecedented situation:

- ❖ Provided **work-from-home capabilities** to clerks, their staff, and the Authority team by deploying phones, wireless adapters, laptops, desktops, and VPN software to accommodate shelter-in-place orders. Over 100 VPN accounts were created for clerks and their staff in the weeks following the COVID-19 outbreak.
- ❖ Offered clerks the option of providing **promo codes** to their constituents to allow temporary, free access to the Authority's statewide search site, www.gsccca.org. In light of the COVID-19 state of emergency causing the closing of clerk offices to walk-in traffic, the promo codes were an effort to help clerks bridge the gap for their search-site customers who normally access the search terminals available in all Superior Court clerk offices. To continue supporting clerks in their effort to meet the expectations of their constituents, the Authority has extended the deadline for offering promo codes as Georgia's Statewide Judicial Emergency was extended. The promo code offer was met with tremendous response by clerks and, as of June 30, over 1,100 promo codes have been issued.

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Authority adapts—Cont. from Page 8

- ❖ Handled an **increase in support needs** from counties and website customers as everyone adjusted to the changes and challenges brought about by the pandemic. The Helpdesk staff, along with other members of the Authority team, fielded questions and fixed a myriad of problems to help counties and customers navigate the “new normal.” Many issues involved the eFile Project as COVID-19 brought about a tremendous increase in usage. The increased participation in electronic filing has been one of the few silver linings of the pandemic, and the Authority staff has been right there ready to walk clerks through the set-up, help new filers understand the system, and work out any other kinks that popped up.
- ❖ Assisted counties with training on the Authority’s **Notary Online Mail-In Renewal (MIR) program**. This program allows a notary who holds an active commission to mail-in their renewal application, pay with a credit card, thus foregoing a trip to the clerk’s office. This feature became even more important when clerks’ offices were forced to close. Since the Governor’s State of Emergency took effect on March 14, 2020, 28 additional counties have signed up and been trained on this program.
- ❖ Responded to the increased need for remote learning due to social distancing requirements by adding **two new online classes** for a total of seven, along with adding **14 additional webinars** to the training calendar. The “Notary Online – Mail-in Renewals” course was developed quickly and added in direct response to the COVID-19 crisis. However, the “GSCCCA Indexing Standards – Common Mistakes” online course had been in the works for the past year in response to one of the priority initiatives—to improve current indexing data quality—set by the Authority Board during their 2019 strategic planning session. To this end, the new course was an opportunity to provide clerks with convenient access to areas where the most common mistakes occur, but was completed and published in the spring to increase the remote training available to clerks and their staff allowing them to continue receiving training while working from home.
- ❖ Provided **drop box service** for apostille and authentication requests. Due to the public health concern regarding COVID-19, the

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Authority adds new feature to UCC eFile

In an effort to increase efficiency and ease of use, the Authority has added a new feature to its eFiling portal. UCC Final Transmit notifications for one or more days may now be sent directly from its portal, <https://efile.gsccca.org>. This feature is available to all who participate in UCC eFile.

UCC Final Transmit notifications are required to be submitted daily indicating a court has transmitted all UCC filings with a file date for the designated date. Even if an office does not have any UCC filings, a Final Transmit notification should still be submitted. This notification is critical in allowing the Authority to advance the “good-thru” date in our statewide UCC index.

Since its recent launch, the new feature has been well received. One deputy clerk sent this comment: “I have just tried it out and I love it! E-filed ucc's have made my day much easier! Thank you.”

With questions about the new feature, please contact customer support at help@gsccca.org or 1-800-304-5174.



Authority adapts—Cont. from Page 9

Authority suspended all walk-in service effective March 17, 2020. In an effort to provide an additional option to the public, besides its mail-in service, the Authority quickly created a drop box service that would allow people

(or couriers) to place their documents in a drop box located just outside the Authority's suite. Notary & Authentications staff then process and mail the documents back, often with a turn-around time of only one day. Additionally, the Authority incorporated a compassionate service" option providing

immediate turn-around for those under severe time constraints. This option allows a customer to call from their car when the documents have been placed in the drop box; staff immediately picks up and authenticates the documents while the customer waits outside.

There have been many compelling stories to support the request for compassionate service. The first request came from a woman who was trying to get to Costa Rica to care for her ailing father before the country closed its borders the next day. With the Authority's help, she ended up on the last flight with her apostille in tow. Another compelling story involved the ex-president of Honduras, Rafael Callejas, who died in Atlanta on April 4. A funeral home called with a need for an apostille as Honduras had a plane landing at Hartsfield-Jackson airport in a few hours, and the Authority was able to provide immediate service.

The Authority's actions—including its response to the pandemic—are always fueled by its core commitments: a constant drive to anticipate and meet the needs of Superior Court clerks and its other constituencies, a desire to constantly improve its products, and a commitment to provide unmatched customer service across the board. Below are a few recent comments from Superior Court clerks about the Authority and the importance of its support, particularly its COVID-19 actions including the promo code offer:

"I just want to take a moment to thank you and the amazing staff of the Clerks' Authority! This has been a rough time for all of us...yet you guys keep stepping up to the plate to make it work for me and all Clerks around this Great State! You all are truly wonderful! Thank you for all you do...[and] please pass this to all [staff] that are not listed! There are so many in the background that do amazing tasks! They have not been forgotten!!"

— Sheila Studdard, Clerk
Fayette Co. Superior Court

"AMEN!!! I have always said without the Authority I would not want to be a CLERK!!!"
— Cindy G. Brown, Clerk
Coweta Co. Superior Court

"I absolutely agree and I don't say it often enough. Clerks' Authority ROCKS my world ... and I am grateful to [them] every day!!!!"
— Nancy F. Ross, Clerk
Irwin Co. Superior Court

"THANK YOU, Authority!!! Without you, my office would not function as effectively as it does today. The Authority works for the best interest of each clerk's office—no matter how big or how small. Words cannot express how genuinely thankful I am for each and every member of the Authority staff."

— Nora L. Rogers, Clerk
Echols Co. Superior Court

"A bright spot in a dark time. Thank you Authority!!!! I should say it more often. The Authority rocks!"

— Beverly Logan, Clerk
Clarke Co. Superior Court

“

... the Authority

committed to a

single mission of

helping clerks and their staff

continue to meet the

public's needs during the

current state of emergency.”



Continued on Page 11

Authority adapts—Cont. from Page 10

“Thank you Clerks’ Authority! This will make a very positive effect for our office!”

*– Kathy D. Page, Clerk
Dade Co. Superior Court*

“Thank you guys so much. You are the BEST!!!”

*– Brenda W. Hicks, Clerk
Worth Co. Superior Court*

“Awesome!!!! Thank you!

*– Jody M. Higdon, Clerk
Morgan Co. Superior Court*

COVID-19 made it even more obvious that agile organizations have an edge in adapting to change because they already have processes and structures available to them. From its very beginnings, the Authority has embraced technology, reinvented core processes, and adopted new collaborative tools. That framework was built, not for the pandemic, but for the future...to keep Superior Court clerks relevant and ahead of the curve in meeting their constituents’ needs. But that framework which was already in place allowed for a more seamless transition for both Authority staff and Superior Court clerks as we all navigated through uncharted territory. Offices operated remotely and services continued uninterrupted. Using technology and data in new ways and accelerating the scope and scale of innovation is at the heart of what the Authority is all about, and this recent emergency has further highlighted the importance of the 25-year partnership between the Authority and Superior Court clerks and the profound and lasting impact of revolutionizing Superior Court clerks’ offices by ushering in a new era of technology.

Background

From the beginning and rooted to its core, innovation, collaboration and vision have defined the Authority. Although the culture remains the same, the GSCCCA is a very differ-

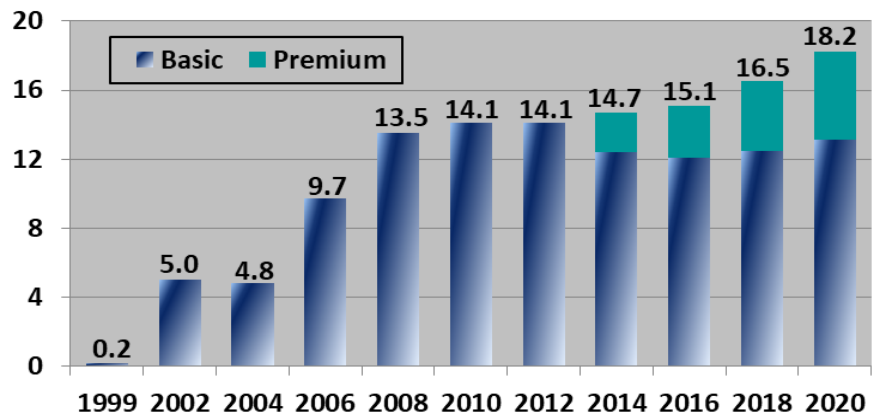
ent organization today than the one that opened its doors in 1995. Since its inception, the Authority has not only fulfilled its original purpose of establishing a statewide system for the indexing of UCC documents, but has successfully developed and implemented, at no cost to the state, a variety of additional projects. Effective collaboration with other state agencies and numerous not-for-profit groups for the benefit of the State of Georgia and its citizens has become one of the hallmarks of the Authority’s success and why it is respected both locally and nationally for its progressive, innovative and effective approach to problem solving.

For two and half decades, the Authority has been an innovator within the public records arena and has led the State of Georgia to the forefront of court technology. Using a mix of old-fashioned cooperation and state-of-the-art technology, the GSCCCA has taken abstract ideas, that many believed were not possible, to the concrete world of implementation, and, in so doing, has changed the way many do business and made life easier for those accessing real estate records, financing statements, criminal case data, and other legal documents.

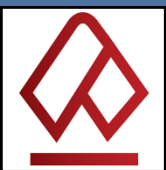
Today the Clerks’ Authority is a diverse entity that oversees the following:

- ❖ Notary & Authentications Division

Website Subscribers (in thousands) by Fiscal Year



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Authority adapts—Cont. from Page 11

- ❖ Fines & Fees Division
- ❖ UCC Project
- ❖ Real Estate Deed Project
- ❖ Historical Deed Re-Indexing Project
- ❖ County-Funded Historical Deed, Lien and Plat Re-Indexing Project
- ❖ eFile Project
- ❖ Lien, Plat & Map Project
- ❖ State Tax Lien eFiling Project
- ❖ PT-61 Project
- ❖ Premium Search Account
- ❖ Clerks' Authority Map Search Application (Mobile App)
- ❖ Protective Order Registry
- ❖ Criminal Case Data Project (Offender-Based Tracking System)
- ❖ Carbon Sequestration Registry
- ❖ MyVault Online Archive Program
- ❖ Georgia Archives Initiative
- ❖ Notary Scanning Project
- ❖ Virtual Microfilm (VMF) Program

In successfully developing and implementing these projects, the Authority helped modernize Superior Court clerk offices and created several one-of-a-kind systems that integrated and standardized information from each of Georgia's 159 counties on a central website, www.gsccca.org. The Authority databases provide accountability, uniformity, efficiencies and cost-savings by affording:

- ❖ Unprecedented access to valuable information—free access through search terminals installed in all Superior Court clerk offices, and convenient internet access, by subscription, for those desiring 24-hour, 7-day-a-week access.
- ❖ Additional funding and new equipment for clerks' offices—nearly \$87 million and over 29,000 pieces of new equipment in total.
- ❖ Information that allows lawmakers to more effectively set public policy.
- ❖ Critical and timely crime data to protect the safety of the public and law enforcement officers throughout Georgia.

Governed by a board of ten members whose meetings are open to the public, the GSCCCA was created, implemented and continues to operate without receiving any funds through local, state or federal taxes. The Authority has been continually praised for its wise use of available resources, and has proven to be a resounding

success for offering unique services to Georgia counties and citizens.

Highlights from FY 2020

In addition to the COVID-19-related actions stated earlier, following are other highlights or major accomplishments from the past fiscal year:

- ❖ **Compensated clerks' offices** nearly \$6 million this fiscal year for prints off the Authority website (\$68 million for prints since the Authority was established), and nearly \$1 million this fiscal year for deed images (\$18.8 million for deed images since inception of the project).
- ❖ Achieved important milestone in October 2019 by completing the import of all real estate records ever received by the Authority into the **Virtual Microfilm (VMF) system**. Now, for the first time, all deeds, including all deeds from voluntary or sponsored historical projects, liens and plats ever received by the Authority are directly available to clerks without the clerk having to make a records' request or having to search the GSCCCA search system. The VMF image archive program not only provides an alternative to the traditional microfilm process, but provides clerks with easier access to their archived digital records and further protects them consistent with the law. With over **270 million** deed, lien and plat images loaded and available for viewing online, the initial VMF Program goals have exceeded expectations. Every month, new images are imported into the system and are available for viewing through the online portal at <https://vmf.gsccca.org>.
- ❖ Completed the **1991-90 Historical Project** in October of 2019 with 90 counties participating. The project concluded with the Authority adding over 820,000 deed records to its publicly searchable website, and moving the statewide "good-from" date to 1/1/1990.
- ❖ Launched program to provide **Microsoft Office** and **Adobe Acrobat** to Superior Court clerk offices. Met with tremendous

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success, this initiative was born from the Authority’s strategic planning efforts in 2019. Through that process, the Authority sought feedback from clerks which reflected the need for various pieces of productivity software that had become essential for doing business in the clerk’s office. This past spring, the Authority’s customer support team proactively reached out to every county on a one-on-one basis to solicit information about their software needs, and then scheduled a plan to acquire and deploy the software packages.

ened its outreach by offering all clerks the opportunity to obtain a full list of their media holdings at the Georgia Archives. Archive staff facilitated this effort by working with the Georgia Archives to retrieve and deliver the lists to 140 participating counties. Phase two of this initiative is underway to begin transcribing this information for further review and comparative analysis. The goal is to produce a meaningful report that will help identify what records may or may not be protected

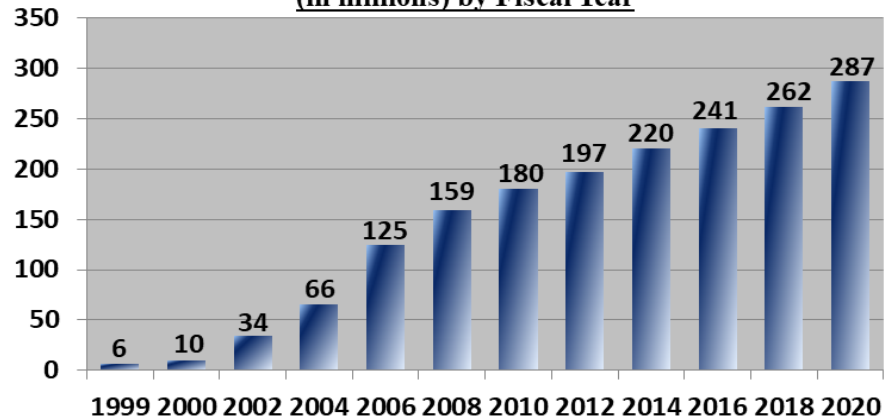
- ❖ Honored with the **2019 Award for Excellence in Archival Program Development by a State Agency.**

The award was sponsored by the Georgia Historical Records Advisory Council, an advisory body for historical records planning in the state.

The Authority and the Council of Superior Court Clerks of Georgia were nominated together for their joint work in promoting disaster planning awareness and, specifically, for the development of the Authority’s statewide **MyVault Online Archive Program**, which protects the digital records of Georgia’s Superior Court clerks. MyVault is currently storing and protecting over 950 million files totaling more than 157 TBs of live data, available for recovery in the event of a disaster. Since 2007, MyVault has responded to 153 data loss requests and has restored over 3.5 TBs of data back to county systems. In FY 2020, the Authority received 30 requests to restore data, resulting in over 1 TB of data successfully restored.

- ❖ Advanced the **Georgia Archives Initiative**. In an ongoing effort to promote the importance of disaster planning, Authority staff broad-

**Images in GSCCCA Search System
(in millions) by Fiscal Year**



in the clerk’s office and reveal any gaps that may exist in their data protection plans. Equipped with this information, clerks can begin to make more informed decisions about how best to protect those records in the future.

- ❖ Completed the **Notary Scanning Project**, a short-term project that was initiated in FY 2019 and involved the digital scanning of over 260,000 notary certificates for long-term protection. These images will now be loaded into the Virtual Microfilm (VMF) system and will be available for viewing.
- ❖ Continued to grow **Real Estate eRecording** – All 159 counties participate to some

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degree, with 135 counties accepting all document types, 25 more than last fiscal year. Since the launch of Real Estate eRecord in 2011, over 2.1 million real estate documents have been electronically filed with nearly 908,000 of those during FY 2020. The tremendous growth of Real Estate eRecording—a 60.5% increase in usage this year compared to the previous fiscal year—is one of the few silver linings of the coronavirus.

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- ❖ Continued to grow **UCC eFile** – 13 new counties were activated this fiscal year for a current total of 144 participating counties. As of June 30, 43 of those counties only allow the electronic filing of UCCs, 33 more than last year. Since the launch of UCC eFile in 2009, nearly 934,000 UCCs have been electronically filed with over 216,000 of those eFiled in FY 2020. A record number of

40,400 UCC eFilings were accepted in June 2020, and usage was up by 57% compared to the previous fiscal year.

- ❖ Published the **UCC eFile API** (application programming interface). This new web API allows filers to submit and pay the Authority directly through their own proprietary software, increasing the efficiency of UCC submission. Additionally, county vendors can utilize the API to accept and reject submitted UCCs, giving counties more flexibility in how they process UCCs.
- ❖ Added **UCC auto-numbering** feature which allows the system to automatically assign the next available UCC financing statement number for counties who participate in UCC eFile. This allows a clerk’s office to have multiple users processing UCC eFilings simultaneously while preventing duplicate file numbers. The auto-numbering feature also streamlines the process, particularly for high-volume filers who may utilize bulk receipts, and allows these counties to process 1,000 filings on one receipt and be assured that the numbers are all accounted for. Currently, 21 counties have implemented UCC auto-numbering.
- ❖ Increased **Premium Search accounts** by over 12% for a fiscal year-end total of 5,051 accounts. Launched in 2012, the Premium account includes the Clerks’ Authority Map Search Application and allows users to search by property address as well as land lot making it attractive to realtors, bankers, attorneys, surveyors, appraisers, and other members of the business community.
- ❖ Added additional instruments to our website through the **County-Funded Historical Deed, Lien and Plat Re-Indexing Project** for a total of over 3.1 million instruments in production since the program was implemented in 2013. As a result of this project, the public has access to additional real estate information at no additional cost to the Authority, and clerks’ offices have access to additional resources through print image

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fees initiated through the Authority's website. Fifty-five counties are now participating in the program.

- ❖ Implemented **Mimecast**, a cloud-based email security solution, in a continuing effort to protect the Authority and Superior Court clerks against cyberattacks. The program gives users more control over their email; adds anti-spoofing protections; adds URL/link re-writing and scanning to check destination against known bad actors; greatly improves spam detection; moves the bulk of email processing to the cloud; and speeds up automated email processing by 50%. Since implementation, the Authority has processed 10.8 million emails. Out of 3.4 million inbound emails, the Authority has stopped 800,000 pieces of spam and virus-laden emails.
- ❖ Maintained a compliance rate of close to **100%** for all courts through a dedicated and consistent notification process by the **Fines & Fees Division**.

Program Stats from FY 2020

In addition to the many enhancements and new features that were added over the last twelve months, the Authority continued to successfully manage its many existing programs. Numbers don't tell the full story but the following statistics show the volume of work handled by the Authority and its importance to Superior Court clerk offices and our other constituencies across the state and beyond.

Following are some of the highlights from the past fiscal year:

- ❖ Added over **15 million** images to the GSCCCA search system for a fiscal year-end total of over **287 million** images accessible to the public through www.gscca.org.
- ❖ Had **475 million** page views and **1.2 million** unique visitors on www.gscca.org. The public accessed the Authority's invaluable data via the internet nearly **5.5 million times** from **218 countries** this past fiscal year.
- ❖ Ordered, processed and shipped nearly **2,100 pieces of new equipment** to clerks' offices including CPUs, monitors, servers, laptops and scanners. Of this total, the Authority de-

ployed **1,512** pieces of new equipment (922 computers, 232 monitors and 275 scanners) to 50 Superior Court clerk offices to replace depreciated equipment as part of the Authority's Statewide Computer Replacement Project for all 159 counties. The Authority has provided over **29,000** pieces of new equipment to clerks' offices since opening its doors in 1995.

- ❖ Supported Superior Court clerks and staff, website users and other customers by handling nearly **19,000 phone calls** and over **10,300 emails** to HelpDesk, the Authority's customer support team.
- ❖ Conducted **85** classroom training sessions, webinars and one-on-one programs on various subjects for over **900** participants at **21** different locations around the state. The Authority also trained nearly **14,000** people through its seven online courses. Over **107,000 users** have benefited from accessing the Authority's Learning Management System (LMS) since its inception in 2006.
- ❖ Indexed approximately **246,000 UCCs** and conducted approximately **8,000 Certified Searches** for FY 2020. Since the project's inception in 1995, the Authority has indexed nearly **6.6 million UCCs** and conducted nearly **272,000 Certified Searches**.
- ❖ Increased participation in **Notary Online** to **144 counties**. **96%** of notary applications in Georgia were submitted electronically via the Authority's Notary Online application system.
- ❖ Maintained the statewide notary database. A statewide total of approximately **40,600 notary commissions** were issued by clerks of Superior Court and then submitted to the Authority for inclusion in the statewide database.
- ❖ Issued approximately **35,300 apostilles** this past fiscal year. In FY 2020, the Notary & Authentications Division served

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over **6,700 walk-in customers**, processed approximately **4,800 mail-in orders**, answered nearly **9,100 phone calls**, and sold approximately **1,000 Notary Handbooks**.

- ❖ Collected and disbursed approximately **\$79 million** in court fees; performed annual court reviews on approximately **1,100 courts** to help ensure the accuracy of the data being reported to the Authority; and processed nearly **31,000 monthly reports** submitted by reporting entities.
- ❖ Electronically transmitted to the Georgia Crime Information Center (GCIC), a division of the GBI, over **45,000 Protective Orders** indexed by clerks.
- ❖ Electronically transmitted to GCIC over **252,000 records of criminal court dispositions** from various courts in Georgia for the purpose of compiling criminal histories and background checks.
- ❖ Upgraded **26 county connections**. With the proliferation of eFiling and the recent increased need for remote access and VPN, network bandwidth demands continue to increase. With the rise of fiber availability, the Authority can work with any service provider to facilitate the needs of the location.
- ❖ Backed up an aggregated **942 TBs of data** during FY 2020. If this data were transferred to Ultra HD 4K Blu-rays, it would require 9,420 disks, and the resulting stack would be over 40 feet tall.

Adapting to Change & Looking Ahead

Fostering and embracing a symbiotic relationship for over a quarter century, the Authority and Superior Court clerks have successfully worked together to innovate, adapt to change, and continue to move the technology needle. This year was no different ... although the circumstances were unprecedented, the results were the same: we entered uncharted territory, identified needs and new ways to operate, and then responded with solutions to adapt and help navigate our new normal with success.

Even before COVID-19 struck, the Authority had experienced a year of change and a passing

of the guard, so to speak, with two significant retirements. Authority Chair Jean Rogers retired as Crisp County Superior Court clerk and stepped away from the Authority board after serving on it for nearly two decades, the last three as chair. Serving as the Authority's first female chair and only the fourth chair in the Authority's history, Jean had been a tremendous advocate for the GSCCCA since its inception in 1993. Her willingness to embrace and leverage technological change for the benefit of her office and those that she served was a shining example for all Superior Court clerks and other governmental offices.

In addition to Jean, long-time Authority consultant John Myers retired after a lengthy and fruitful career as a principal research scientist at Georgia Tech and then many successful years heading his own tech company, MIT, which has overseen the Authority's project planning, development and other technology needs for nearly two decades. By bringing this critical function in-house, the Authority was able to set its own destiny, have total control of its systems, and effect change more quickly and efficiently. Having control and flexibility is even more important in times of adversity as we have clearly seen during the recent challenge of operating amidst a global pandemic.

The importance of the nearly 30-year, prolific and highly successful partnership with John and his talented team of software architects and engineers cannot be overstated. Without question, his quiet, behind-the-scenes guidance, technological savvy, and sage advice will be sorely missed. In another example of a seamless and successful transition, however, the reins of MIT have been turned over to a very familiar face to all clerks, Authority IT Director Andy Wightwick.

Andy has played a major role for over two decades in keeping the Authority and Superior Court clerks on the cutting edge of technology, both responding to current technological demands and anticipating future needs. With his remarkable energy and intellect, seasoned and committed leadership

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skills, and wealth of historical knowledge of the people and programs of the Authority, Andy is the perfect person for the job and the Authority and Superior Court clerks are certainly fortunate to have him on our team. As always, Andy remains completely committed to the operation of the GSCCCA IT Department and the Superior Court clerks of Georgia.

Along with adjusting to the well-deserved retirements of Jean and John, the Authority also mourned the loss of its first chairman and longtime Pulaski County Superior Court clerk, Woodson Daniel, who passed away on September 26, 2019. Woodson exhibited an unwavering support for Georgia's Superior Court clerks and fought for the creation of the Georgia Superior Court Clerks' Cooperative Authority. He served as Authority chairman for 12 years and has been called the "godfather" and "heart and soul" of the Authority.

Jean, John and Woodson were part of the leadership teams that guided the Authority to the organization we know today: a successful, diverse entity that oversees 20+ projects including an invaluable website that currently holds over 287 million images and was accessed by over 1.2 million people this past year. Their extraordinary leadership, guidance and vision, in an unprecedented time of technological growth, allowed the Authority to flourish and maximize a variety of products and services for the benefit of Superior Court clerks and the citizens of Georgia.

The Authority has faced uncertainty throughout its history, but has always found ways to adapt, advance and thrive. The COVID-19 pandemic could prove to be a decisive turning point and will likely present more challenges that will require more changes and more pivots.

We may have to rethink—not retweak—plans and models, but will continue to monitor the rapidly changing situation and stand ready to do whatever necessary to support the needs of Superior Court clerks and our other customers.

On the other side of every challenge is an opportunity. Nurturing a next normal that will

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... although the circumstances were unprecedented, the results were the same: we entered uncharted territory, identified needs and new ways to operate, and then responded with solutions to adapt and help navigate our new normal with success.”

be better than what it replaced will be a long-term test for all institutions. As always, instead of looking to the past, it will be critical to seize the moment, reimagine and reinvent the future, and build new muscle and capabilities. This will prepare and position us to capitalize on future opportunities as the economy begins to recover and the world begins to look normal again. ■

