

GSCCCA Update

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

Board of Directors

Chairman:

Tom Lawler
Clerk of Superior Court
Gwinnett County

Vice Chairman:

F. Barry Wilkes
Clerk of Superior Court
Liberty County

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Clerk of Superior Court
Crisp County

Cindy Mason
Clerk of Superior Court
Columbia County

Quintus W. Sibley
Director of Legal Affairs
Georgia College & State
University

Huge W. Stone
Chief Judge
Superior Courts
Enotah Judicial Circuit

Rhett Walker
Clerk of Superior Court
Dodge County

Dave S. Wills, Jr.
Chairman
Webster County
Commission

Dwight S. Wood
Clerk of Superior Court
Hall County



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Wood joins Authority board

The Authority welcomes Dwight S. Wood as its newest member to the board of directors. Dwight was appointed to the board by Governor Sonny Perdue and was given the oath of office at the board's recent meeting. The oath was administered by notary public Mike Smith and Frank Abbott, president of the Council of Superior Court Clerks of Georgia.

Dwight has served as clerk of Superior Court of Hall County since 1985, and served as deputy clerk for over ten years prior to that. Among his many honors, he was named "Clerk of the Year" in 2000 and "County Officer of the Year" in 2001. He is a past president of the Superior

Court Clerks' Association of Georgia, the Council of Superior Court Clerks of Georgia and the County Officers' Association of Georgia.



When he's away from the courthouse, Dwight enjoys spending time with his family and friends and loves the game of golf. He says it's a "no-brainer" when asked his favorite sport. His favorite place is "anywhere quiet, especially home" but when he gets away, he enjoys the Georgia coast.

With his years of experience and thoughtful insight, Dwight will be an asset to the Authority board. Congratulations, Dwight! ■

Kudos! Kudos!

We're proud of the service we provide and want to share some of the positive comments we frequently receive from users of our system. The following comments were recently e-mailed to us.

"I just wanted to write and say thank you for all the ways you have made my job easier with the GSCCCA website. The fact that I can retrieve my previous PT-61 filings and use them to create new filings saves me so much time, I can't even tell you. Being able to look up deeds instantaneously has allowed me to provide information to people on the spot instead of having to retrieve files from storage and call people back days later. It is just awesome! Keep up the good work. I hope you know that we appreciate everything you have done and are continuing to do every single day!"

Cinde Billington — McCalla, Raymer, Padrick, Cobb, Nichols & Clark, LLC — Alpharetta, Georgia

October board meeting review

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

⊕ Oath of Office – Dwight Wood, clerk of Superior Court of Hall County, was given the oath of office to become a member of the Authority board.

⊕ General Business – The minutes for the July 13, 2005, meeting were approved. Greg Morgan, of the accounting firm Mauldin and Jenkins, presented the August 2005 financials of the Authority and the Auditor’s Report which was approved unanimously.

⊕ UCC Project – David Williams presented an update on the UCC Project and reported that UCC filings continue to be consistent with previous years’ totals.



⊕ Historical Deed Project – Chairman Lawler appointed a committee comprised of Rhett Walker, Cindy Mason, Quintus Sibley, and Barry Wilkes at the last board meeting. The purpose of the committee was to review the vendor change policy and form and develop a policy for the Authority on how to help a clerk in the case of a disaster recovery scenario. Mr. Walker reported that the committee would have a report at the next board meeting.

⊕ Resolution Honoring Woodson Daniel – Chairman Lawler asked Mr. Wilkes to read the two proposed board resolutions to honor the Authority’s former chairman, Woodson Daniel. One resolution names the conference room in honor of Mr. Daniel and the other

resolution recognizes the hard work, dedication and contributions of Mr. Daniel in the development of the Authority. After Mr. Wilkes read the resolutions and added personal remarks, both resolutions were unanimously approved by the board. Mr. Daniel was in attendance and thanked the board for the honor.

⊕ Fines and Fees Division – John Earle presented a report on the status of the Fines and Fees Division. Mr. Earle reviewed the Fines and Fees Division balance sheet and income statement. He also reported on the rates of compliance for all the courts and the list of courts that are 60 days delinquent in remitting and reporting. He also reviewed the historical data collections for the funds being sent to the Authority. Mr. Earle reported that the Authority had held over 20 different training

classes around the state this year, in addition to one-on-one training for courts experiencing unique problems. Mr. Earle also reported on the Attorney General’s recent Opinion on SB 226, Joshua’s Law, and how it applied to all traffic cases, unless there was a specific exception. Mr. Earle stated that the opinion would be mailed out to all courts and posted on the courtrax.org website. Finally, Mr. Earle discussed the special performance audit of the Fines and Fees Division that will soon begin. This is a follow-up to the 2001 performance audit on court fees.

At the end of the meeting, the board adjourned to Executive Session to discuss a legal issue. The next scheduled meeting of the Authority board is January 11, 2006. ■

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Encourage notary education

Today, the office of Notary Public is more complex than ever. It is being defined by change in such important fields as real estate, adoption, immigration, international commerce and much more. As ministerial officers, a notary’s role as an impartial witness is vital in fraud prevention, document security and maintaining trust. Notaries have the responsibility to know the intricacies of their role and to protect the public from fraud to the best of their ability. It is incumbent on today’s notaries to go beyond the basic notarial requirements. If not, the notary is simply going through the motions.

Education of the notary public is the most powerful tool in preparing the notary for the responsibilities that he or she is about to undertake. A basic understanding of the powers and duties of a notary are important foundations a notary must learn. These include, but are not limited to, learning the difference between acknowledgements and jurats, how to properly complete and affix a notarial seal, certificate wording, making a proper journal entry and avoiding the unauthorized practice of law.

The Georgia Superior Court Clerks’ Cooperative Authority is committed in its effort to assist Georgia notaries public in the performance of their functions by providing information and assistance with respect to the governing requirements under Georgia state laws and other current guidelines. Each Superior Court clerk and their appointed deputy clerks, as the officers who commission notaries in each jurisdiction, can assist in this effort by informing each commissioned or recommissioned notary of some of these requirements.

Upon commissioning, or recommissioning, a notary should know these basic tenets of a notary:

- Sign his/her name “only and exactly” as the name indicated on the Certificate of Appointment of the notary public commission.
- Include notarial certificate language when performing a notarial act.
- Enter the exact date of the notarial act thereon.
- A notarial seal is required to complete the notarial act.
- The notarial seal shall contain his/her name as it appears on the commission, the words “Notary Public,” the name of the state and county of appointment.
- Any change of name or address should be reported by letter to the appointing clerk within thirty days of the change.

Providing this basic knowledge and encouraging the notary to read Georgia laws {O.C.G.A. 45-17-1 et. seq.} and the guidelines in the Georgia Notary Public Handbook can be of tremendous benefit to the citizens of Georgia requiring the services of a Georgia notary public. ■

Attention Clerks!

Take advantage of the section of our website designed just for you. Visit the Clerk Resource Center at www.gsccca.org/clerkresource/ for clerk-specific information including program status reports, conference materials and links to Notary and PT-61 Online.

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Training update

The Authority's Training Department had a full year in 2005. We visited twelve locations throughout the state from June to October to conduct training classes on Fines and Fees, UCCs, Notary Publics, and Real Estate Indexing Standards. Fines and Fees training was offered at all locations with an average attendance of almost 14 people per class. UCC and Notary training were offered at five locations and had an average attendance of almost nine people per class. Real Estate Indexing Standards training was offered at four locations with an average attendance of over ten people per class. Encouraging numbers!

We have already completed the 2006 schedule and brochures have been mailed to all clerks. Training will be conducted from January to October and is scheduled to be held at 13 locations across the state. In addition to the classes we offered in 2005, we are also offering training on the Protective Order Registry as it relates to SB57! Additionally, we will offer an online training course for Real Estate and Deed Indexing Standards. (See the following article for more information about this exciting new forum for training.)

Take advantage of these many training opportunities and register today by phone, fax, e-mail, or online by visiting www.courttrax.org or the clerk resource center. ■



Online training coming soon

In an effort to increase the ease and availability of training, the Authority has developed an online training course for Real Estate and Deed Indexing Standards. The course provides clerks with the opportunity to become certified in real estate indexing and will be available at the user's convenience.

Recognizing the time constraints of clerks, the course is designed in a way that can be completed on the user's schedule. The course is broken up into multiple modules and each module has multiple lessons. Users are not required to complete the course or modules in a single sitting. Estimated time for course completion is 2-3 hours.

Once a lesson is complete, the user's profile will indicate with a check mark that he or she has successfully completed the lesson. When all lessons are completed within a module, the program will then update the user's status to reflect the completion of the module.

After completion of all modules, users will take a final test with twenty-five questions. After the user completes the test, feedback is provided regarding areas that he or she should review. Users have the freedom to retake any part of the course at anytime.

The Authority is currently working on a certification test for the user to take once they have successfully completed the final test. When a user successfully demonstrates their knowledge of Real Estate Indexing Standards, they will be issued a certificate.

The program is currently being tested and will be ready to launch in early 2006. At that time, more information on how to participate will be provided to all clerks. ■

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