

# GSCCCA Update

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February 2015

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

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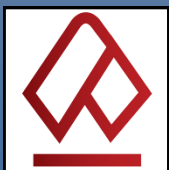
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## Authority celebrates 20 years of service to clerks

In 1993, Superior Court clerks were galvanized by a common goal and came together to fight for the creation of the Georgia Superior Court Clerks' Cooperative Authority. On January 1, 1995, their work came to fruition as the Authority officially opened for business, and today we celebrate 20 years of partnership with and service to Georgia's Superior Court clerks.

As Greg G. Allen, Superior Court clerk of Forsyth County, said when asked about the Authority: "To think that a group of seasoned clerks of this generation, in an elected position, whose duties were codified over two hundred years ago, not only understood the radical change the world was experiencing but were able to see the future and harness technology to the advantage of the citizens of Georgia is nothing short of amazing."

Through challenges and uphill battles, clerks and the Authority staff have worked together to create the amazing success story we know today ... or in the words of Authority Chairman Barry Wilkes,

"a paradigm for how government can and ought to work." From the beginning, the Georgia Superior Court Clerks' Cooperative

Authority has been an innovator within the public records arena, and in so doing, has led our state to the forefront of court technology. Using a mix of old-fashioned

cooperation and state-of-the-art technology, the GSCCCA has made life easier for those who need access to real estate records, financing statements, civil and criminal case data, and other legal documents.

*Continued on Page 3*

# THE CLERKS AUTHORITY



### Message from Chairman Wilkes ...

GSCCCA Chairman F. Barry Wilkes encourages all Superior Court clerks to attend the Superior Court Clerks' Association of Georgia's business meeting on Wednesday, April 29 at St. Simons Island. "There will be a special ceremony honoring David Williams and a very big surprise in store for clerks during the meeting. The Authority will also unveil and provide clerks of Superior Court in attendance its published history, entitled *For the Record: The Unique Success Story of the GSCCCA (Georgia Superior Court Clerks' Cooperative Authority)* which has required over two years of in-depth interviews, research, writing, and editing to create an accurate and detailed history of how the Authority was created, its accomplishments, and its future."

# January Board Meeting Review

The Authority board met on January 14 for its quarterly meeting. Following is a summary of the reports and actions of the meeting.

## General Business

The minutes of the October 8, 2014 scheduled board meeting were approved.

## Board Resolution

On behalf of the Authority Board, Phil Kobierowski presented a resolution to Tim Minors in recognition of his many years of volunteer work in developing and improving the Real Estate Indexing Standards and Real Estate eFiling Standards, providing training to clerks, and promoting the Authority to his fellow attorneys. Mr. Minors is vice president and senior underwriting counsel with Old Republic National Title Insurance Company.



## Accountant's Review of Financials

Jamie McCarron, GSCCCA financial director, reported that the unrestricted net cash balance remains stable despite lower than expected deed fee revenues. All other project revenues and expenses are in line with the FY2015 budget.

## Image Agreement Resolution

The following resolution regarding Image Agreements was approved by the board:  
*Any Superior Court Clerk who has not yet entered into a GSCCCA Image Agreement effective January 1, 2015 and, as approved by the*

*Board of Directors on August 5, 2014, shall not be compensated for real estate images and/or copy fees of such images until such time as the Clerk enters into such Agreement with the GSCCCA. The GSCCCA staff shall continue to accrue, but not pay, image and copy fees on behalf of any such Clerk until such time as the Clerk enters into an Image Agreement. Such accruals shall continue up to March 31, 2015. If an Image Agreement has not been submitted by the Clerk on or before March 31, 2015, all accrued image fee amounts shall not be paid and the accrued amounts shall be retained by the GSCCCA for general operating purposes. Any clerk submitting an Image Agreement after March 31, 2015 shall be compensated only for the images and/or copy fees from that date forward on a pro rata basis, calculated on a month-to-month basis.*

## Fines & Fees Division

FY2015 collections for the Fines & Fees Division are estimated to be \$92M. Collections for the Judicial Operations Fund fee are down in Superior and State Courts. With the commencement of the 2015 legislative session, bills with potential impact on the Fines & Fees Division are being monitored, and regular communication with courts is ongoing to provide updates on legislation. Additionally, audit reviews continue.

## Notary Division

Notary activities remain steady.

## Historical Deed Re-Indexing Project

The project is ongoing with deed records filed prior to the central indexing system going online in 1999.

## Premium Search Account

Premium Accounts were down towards the end of 2014 but this is on trend. Overall, the number of Premium Accounts continues to increase. The board requested that a generic flyer be developed for clerks to disburse in

*Continued on Page 3*



### *Board Meeting — cont. from Page 2*

their offices to promote the Premium account. (See page 6 for more information.)

#### Statewide Trade Name Registry

Trade name legislation was introduced during the 2014 legislative session, passed both houses, but was surprisingly vetoed by the governor in April 2014. The bill is being re-introduced in the 2015 legislative session. The project has been developed and is on hold pending the outcome of the legislation. Some language from the 2014 bill has been modified for clarification and simplicity. Training will be offered to clerks' offices.

#### County Tax Lien eFiling Project

A meeting has been held with the leadership of the Georgia Association of Tax Officials to develop ideas regarding an eFiling process for tax liens. Vendors have been involved in development conversations. County tax FiFas are the only filing being consid-

ered for eFiling at this time. Yet to be resolved is how the eFiling system will receive data from Tax Commissioners as their offices do not have an automated solution.

#### Legislative Update

A legislative update included information on two bills. A notary bill based upon the Revised Uniform Law on Notarial Acts (ULONA) is expected to be introduced in the 2015 session. The bill would strengthen the requirements and require testing and education of notary applicants. The finger print requirement in the current version may be difficult to include in a final version. A custodianship bill would clarify that the only place to file an open records request is with the clerk of Superior Court. The bill would require clerks to maintain a digital backup/archive of records.

#### Other Business

2015 board meeting dates were announced: April 15, July 8, and October 21. ■

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### *20 Years — cont. from Page 1*

Today, the GSCCCA is a very different organization than the one that opened its doors in 1995. Since its establishment, 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 a variety of additional projects at the request of the Georgia General Assembly and other state agencies ... and all this accomplished with zero state dollars.

To honor and celebrate its 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary, the Authority has published a history of the organization. The goal of the book is to permanently record the early battles, the on-going development and implementation of myriad projects, and the ultimate success story of the Authority, and to memorialize the vision, inspiration and actions of individuals who worked tirelessly and collectively to achieve what many believed was not possible. The book will be unveiled and distributed to clerks at their April meeting at St. Simons.

Much has been accomplished since the Authority opened its doors twenty years ago but the challenges of today's business environment are real and the pace of change is accelerating. Each day, we work hard to grow and improve our business, and operate more efficiently and effectively. With the continued support of clerks of Superior Court, the guidance and vision of our Board of Directors, and the dedication of our professional staff, we will remain entrepreneurial and strategic and position the Authority for continued preeminence for decades to come. ■





## If disaster strikes, will your records be protected?

In the early morning hours of August 11, 2014, a blazing fire engulfed the Hancock County Courthouse in Sparta, Georgia. Built in 1883 and listed on the National Register of Historic Places, this building served the citizens of Hancock County for over 130 years, and its impressive architectural presence made it the



focal point of Sparta's Town Square. The fire resulted in a near total loss to the building fabric and its interior contents. Fortunately, the Hancock County Clerk of Superior Court, LeShauna Jackson, had taken



backup technology and monitoring services. Her archive job had run successfully the evening before the fire began. Although the local archive equipment was destroyed in the fire, the clerk's data was still protected because *MyVault* is designed to retain a second copy offsite for added protection.

Ms. Jackson's vendors were also providing nightly backup protection of her software programs and electronic records. So, on the morning of August 11, disaster recovery

communications were already in progress, and a joint effort resulted in restoring resources that could have cost the county enormous amounts of time and money to reproduce.



steps to protect many of the electronic records entrusted to her office. She was proactive in pursuing the services available to her through the GSCCCA, and on that morning, the Clerks' Authority was prepared and positioned to assist in the recovery effort alongside her vendors and other agencies. Despite the enormity of the loss overall, a significant amount of resources were preserved and recovered through her disaster planning efforts.

communications were already in progress, and a joint effort resulted in restoring resources that could have cost the county enormous amounts of time and money to reproduce. *MyVault* is an automated data protection service that is offered to all Superior Court clerks free of charge. There are currently 125 counties taking advantage of this service, which is monitored daily.

*MyVault* is storing and protecting over 52 TB of data, has received 54 restore requests, and has successfully restored over 1 TB of data since 2007. For more information and to get started, please contact Tara Johnson, 678.741.5354 or [tara.johnson@gsccca.org](mailto:tara.johnson@gsccca.org). ■

Ms. Jackson was enrolled in the Authority's statewide archive program, *MyVault*, which had been protecting her real estate images and court data on a nightly basis using automated

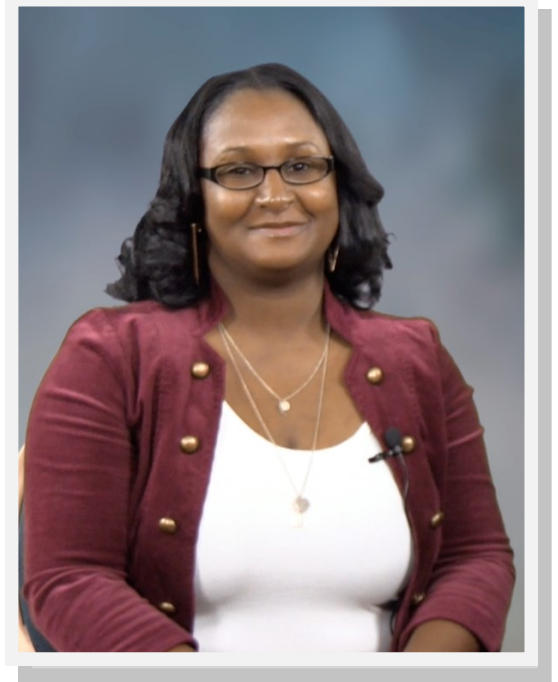


*See message from LeShauna R. Jackson on Page 5*

## A message from LeShauna R. Jackson ...

My name is LeShauna R. Jackson and I am the clerk of Superior Court of Hancock County. Many of you may know that our courthouse burned last year on August 11, 2014. That was the worst thing that has happened to me since becoming clerk in 2013.

I am a new clerk, and many of you may not know that I had a difficult time when first entering office as clerk. Taking over an office where employees were still doing things manually was hard; I needed for them to see how things could be made easier by processing records electronically. As I modernized the office, I took advantage of everything that was FREE, and one of the most important was MyVault!



MyVault was my lifeline when it came to putting the missing pieces of my office back together after the fire. There are no words to describe my feelings of knowing that I was backed up by MyVault. When I was able to see all of my work that was scanned in, it was a blessing from God himself.

**From: "Jackson, Lashauna"**  
**Date: August 11, 2014 at 4:24:46 AM EDT**  
**To: All Clerks**  
**Subject: Fire**

**Please pray for us in Hancock County.  
Our courthouse is on fire.**

**LeShauna R. Jackson, Clerk**

Once I found out what was done, I made sure to let the public know what I had done, which is a great campaign tool. MyVault is an awesome back-up to have because it's always good to have a plan B.

The restoration of my office from MyVault was so helpful. I do have a back-up with my vendors in addition to MyVault, so when the fire happened, my vendors didn't have to work as hard due to MyVault being

in my plans. So with all of that being stated, to all of the clerks who do not have MyVault, PLEASE sign up for it. Your disaster may not be a fire, but it could be a flood, tornado, hurricane, or just a simple system crash! BE PREPARED for the worst.

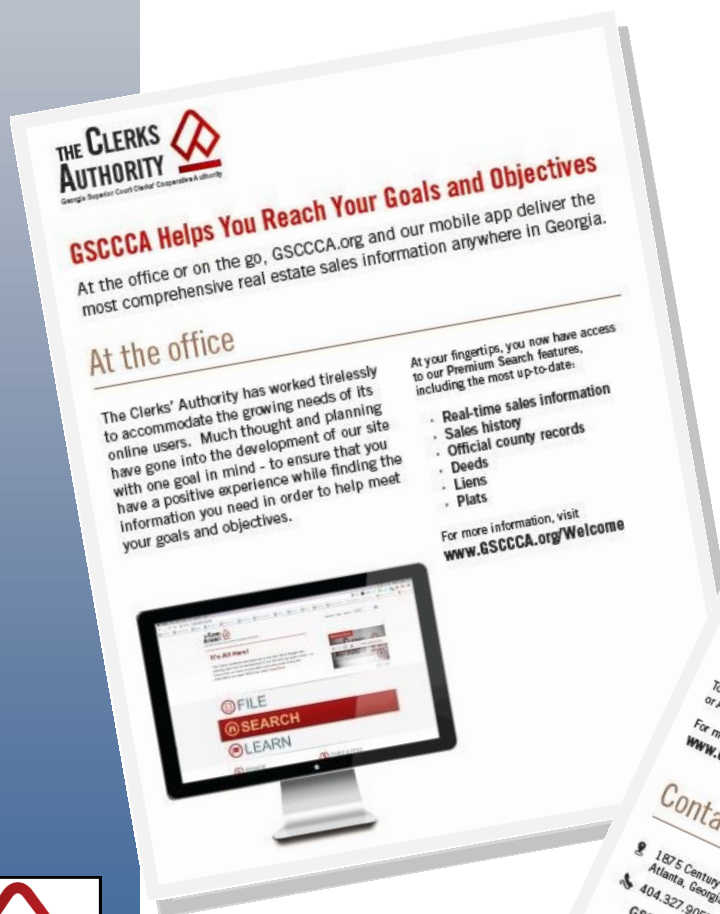


*LeShauna R. Jackson*

## Help promote Authority's mobile app

Through the Authority, consumers have access to the most comprehensive real estate information anywhere in Georgia. And through **The Clerks' Authority Map Search Application**, that information is available right at your fingertips, anytime, anywhere. This mobile app provides the most up-to-date and accurate real estate sales data in the state of Georgia, and is the **ONLY** mobile app that provides real-time sales data based on the official source of property transfer tax data in Georgia. In addition to real-time sales information, the app includes sales history, official county records, deeds, liens and plats. And using the power of your phone or tablet, you can find this information based on your current location.

The Map Search application has received rave reviews from users since launching a few years ago and is available to Premium Search subscribers for free. But many real estate professionals and others who would benefit from this valuable service are not currently aware of its existence. The flyer below was created to help promote this valuable mobile application. Please use it to help us market this product within your counties to expand its user base and deliver this functionality to those professionals who would benefit from having convenient access to real estate sales data. To access the flyer, follow this link [www.GSCCCA.org/2015Flyer](http://www.GSCCCA.org/2015Flyer) or find in the Forms and Links section of the Clerk Resource Center. (The flyer looks best printed on a single front and back page in color.) To learn more about the Authority's mobile app, visit [www.GSCCCA.org/Mobile](http://www.GSCCCA.org/Mobile). With questions, contact GSCCCA Customer Support at 800-304-5174 or [help@gsccca.org](mailto:help@gsccca.org). ■





## Clerks gather around the state



*Authority staff joined clerks around the state as they celebrated the holidays. Above: District 3 clerks; above right: District 2 clerks; bottom right: District 10 clerks.*



## Bart Jackson honored at capitol

Bart W. Jackson, Jones County Superior Court Clerk, was recently honored with a Resolution by the Georgia House of Representatives in recognition of his being named the “Superior Court Clerk of the Year” in 2014. Pictured left to right are Superior Court clerks Cinda Bright (Wilkinson), Sheila Perry (Putnam), LeShauna Jackson (Hancock), Rep. Susan Holmes, Superior Court clerk Dan Jordan (Jasper), and Bart Jackson.



# Let Authority help train your staff

The Authority has kicked off its 2015 training program and is pleased to offer a series of informative webinars in addition to its successful online training classes.

## Webinars:

Webinars are remote training conducted via the internet and phone and allow a clerk to have as many staff members as they wish participate without the time and cost of travel. Webinars will be offered on the following topics:

**Protective Order Registry** — Designed for both new employees and those who need a refresher, this two-hour webinar will cover how to scan and index protective orders and verify reports. The program will also address modifications to the forms and procedures due to 2014 legislative changes.

**Real Estate Indexing Standards** — Suitable for new and experienced indexers, this course includes a review of the GSCCCA Standards for indexing real estate, lien and plat records with an emphasis on the reasoning behind the Standards; a review of the latest changes to the Standards; a review of various deed and lien instrument types and their purpose; indexing difficult instruments such as those from securitization trusts; and a review of the Authority's online Indexing Standards course.

**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 GSCCCA web-based tools available to aid in the calculation of all applicable surcharges and deductions, as well as base fine amounts. A Q&A period will also be held to address any issues not covered in the presentation.

**Authority eFile Projects** — Want to learn more about the Authority's eFiling projects for

## 2015 Webinar Schedule

March 12	Protective Orders
March 24	R.E. Indexing Standards
April 16	Fines & Fees
June 24	Authority eFile Projects
June 25	R.E. Indexing Standards
July 22	Protective Orders
August 11	Fines & Fees
August 20	R.E. Indexing Standards
Sept. 17	Authority eFile Projects
Sept. 29	Protective Orders
October 28	Fines & Fees

UCCs, Child Support, Notary Online, and Real Estate? This one-hour webinar is great for both current participants and those interested in getting started as it will provide insights into the Authority's portal and how to maximize its use. Participants will learn tricks such as how to manage the dashboard, receive email notifications and manage accounts; review the Notary Online instruction page and learn how to get it updated; and examine the real estate eFiling process in depth.

## Online Training

The Authority continues to offer a variety of online training opportunities. Courses are available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, making training completely flexible. Online options include:

- ❖ Introduction to GSCCCA Indexing Standards
- ❖ Extended Real Estate Indexing Standards
- ❖ Fines & Fees Training
- ❖ Notary Public Training

Contact Rachel Rice at 800-304-5175 x1010 or [rachel.rice@gsccca.org](mailto:rachel.rice@gsccca.org) with questions or to inquire about remote training. Register for training at [www.gsccca.org/training](http://www.gsccca.org/training). ■





## Rice honored by ICJE

Congratulations to Authority Project Manager **Rachel Rice**, who was recently presented with a medal for Excellence in Training by the Institute of Continuing Judicial Education (ICJE) at the University of Georgia. The presentation was made by Missy Tolbert, event coordinator for ICJE, and took place during a Fines & Fees annual certification training program for Municipal court personnel. The Authority regularly participates in F&F training with ICJE for Municipal courts as well as Magistrate and Probate courts. Over 100 clerks participated in this training opportunity.



## New GSCCCA Image Agreements now in effect



Happy New Year! I hope your 2015 is off to a great start! I wanted to take a moment to thank each of you for submitting your **GSCCCA Image Agreements** to our office. We have received Image Agreements from all **159** clerks. This

level of cooperation is another prime example of why the Superior Court clerks are so successful in their many united efforts.

I know for several of you this was a difficult decision that required your time and effort before the Board of Commissioners and other county officials. The GSCCCA Board of Directors and the staff are grateful for your efforts. These Agreements help insure that the consideration being provided by the GSCCCA to the clerk's office for the real estate images and website copies allows for:

- ❖ A transparent process to all parties including the clerks, vendors and county officials;
- ❖ A process that is based on sound legal foundation; and
- ❖ A process that provides for and helps insure that the Clerk is in control of helping maximize the benefits to their office and/or to their county.

The GSCCCA Image Agreements became effective January 1, 2015. You should have received on or around February 10 either a cash payment or a Credit Statement, depending on the Agreement you submitted, for the activity occurring during the month of January. If you have any questions, please don't hesitate to contact John Earle, Jamie McCarron or Gary Yates at the Authority.

The GSCCCA Board of Directors and staff look forward to helping you meet all the challenges that 2015 may bring your way.

*John Earle*

