

GSCCCA Update

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February 2021

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

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Authority provides software & laptops to clerks

Always mindful of its critical role of supporting Superior Court clerks in the operation of their offices, the Authority continues progress on two important initiatives: providing Microsoft Office/Adobe Acrobat software and laptop computers to clerks of Superior Court. Both initiatives were born from clerk feedback on how the Authority could provide additional support to clerk offices.

Following is a summary and progress report on each project.

Software Distribution Project

As part of a strategic planning session a couple years ago, the Authority requested feedback and learned that clerks now routinely use various pieces of productivity software in their office that the GSCCCA was not providing. Specifically, the Authority received several requests for Microsoft Office and the full version of Adobe Acrobat (allowing a clerk to edit or modify PDF documents directly), as these items have become essential for doing business.

With this need in mind, the Authority began an initiative to provide these two software packages to clerks and launched the project in February 2020. For a variety of reasons, including licensing issues, deployment of the software needed to be methodical necessitating that the Authority's customer support staff work one-on-one with clerk offices to determine and place orders. Soon after the launch, however, COVID-19 erupted changing everyone's focus and temporarily delaying progression of the project. By March 2020, most members of the Authority staff had pivoted to a "work-from-home" environment and were then able to continue reaching out to clerks to solicit



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January Board meeting review

The Authority Board met on January 13 for its quarterly meeting. Following is a summary of the reports and actions of the meeting.

Swearing in of New Board Member

The Honorable Nancy Thrash, Lamar County Commissioner, was sworn in as a member of the Authority Board of Directors. She was appointed by Georgia Governor Brian Kemp for a three-year term. Authority Communications Director & Compliance Officer



Mike Smith, who is a notary public, administered the oath of office.

General Business

The minutes of the October 14 scheduled board meeting were approved.

Greg Morgan, with Mauldin & Jenkins, provided the Accountant's Review and reported that internal financial reports show the Authority's cash position to be positive. Overall, the Authority is on good financial footing and is meeting its financial obligations. A motion to approve the financials as presented was approved by the Board.

Historical Plat Image Project

The Board was briefed on the Historical Plat Image Project which is progressing better than anticipated. The project includes images of plats filed on or before December 31, 2003 in all counties statewide. The project does not include indexing or plats contained in deed books. It is estimated that there are approximately 1.3 million additional plat images to be collected.

The Authority Board has authorized payment to those counties that have already scanned and

submitted historical plats. It was reported that compensation agreements have been sent to 55 counties encompassing 527,000 images for approximately \$1.583 million. Agreements have been received from 18 counties and payments to the clerks' offices are currently underway.

The Authority's imaging vendor is currently onsite or completed a number of counties where additional imaging is necessary.

Software Initiative

The Board was updated on the Authority's initiative to provide Microsoft Office/Adobe Acrobat software to all clerks of Superior Court and their staffs. The Authority began receiving orders in May 2020; to date, 477 Microsoft Office copies and 532 Adobe copies have been requested. Installation of the software is fully underway with a majority of the installations already completed. Going forward, software will be installed on new computers before shipment to clerks' offices.

Laptop Computer Initiative

The Board was briefed on the Authority's initiative to provide laptop computers to clerks of Superior Court, and it was reported that the ordering process has begun. The Board authorized staff to provide a laptop computer to any elected clerk of Superior Court who requested one. The Authority has received 65 formal requests since accepting requests in the last week. The Authority's goal is to deliver the laptop within two weeks of when a request is made.

Fines & Fees Division

Overall collections are down because courts are not in session due to COVID-19 restrictions. Severe non-compliance remains very low, with only 4-5 severe non-compliance letters, on average, sent monthly.

Training Update

The Authority continues to offer a robust training schedule. Currently, there are 36 webinars, covering 9 subjects, scheduled for



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Board meeting review — Cont. from Page 2

2021. The Authority has leveraged Zoom in order to reach a wide audience; as a result, webinar registrations are up, even with COVID-related restrictions.

The Authority's eLearn website continues to see increased activity as well. To date, more than 38,000 users have registered to use the eLearn platform. Virtual notary training classes continue to see record attendance. Classes held in December for the Fulton County clerk of Superior Court had more than 300 in attendance. Classes are scheduled for February 4 for Chatham County.

eFiling Project

It was reported that eFiling across all document types continues to increase. Currently, 144

counties participate in UCC eFile, with 62 of those counties mandating the electronic filing of UCCs. More than 260,000 UCCs were eFiled in 2020. All 159 clerks of Superior Court participate in Real Estate eFile to some degree. Of those, 136 allow all document types to be eFiled. Currently, 96 clerks have opted to allow estimated filing fees to be passed through to the filer. With this option, the clerk has the authority to change the estimated fee.

Historical Deed Re-Indexing Projects

Since the October Board meeting,

three more counties are now participating in the Voluntary Historical Deed Project, bringing the total to 66 counties. There are approximately 3.8 million instruments in production, with more than 236,000 of those instruments added since the last Board meeting. Currently, 222,000 instruments are in quarantine undergo-

ing review. The project continues to progress as intended.

UCC Project

The number of UCCs filed statewide continues on a record pace, although the previous three months has seen a "slow down" in the number of filings to a more historical pace. Based upon the first six months of FY 2021, the year would see 345,000 UCCs filed, which would be the most since FY 1999. However, as noted, the trend in the last three months projects to approximately 300,000 to be filed this fiscal year if recent pace is maintained. This would be the most UCCs filed since FY 2001. Certified Search requests are on pace to reach approximately 9,000 for FY 2021.

Archival Projects

It was reported that 156 clerks are currently protecting their digital records through the Authority's MyVault Online Archive Program. MyVault has now surpassed 1 billion files which are protected in multiple locations. Nine restore requests were managed, restoring more than 143 GB of data back to counties. Human error, hardware failure, and clerk/vendor audits were the reasons for the data restore requests. For the Virtual Microfilm (VMF) Program, more than 2.5 million new deed images and more than 300,000 lien images were added in the past quarter.

Notary & Authentications Division

The number of notary commissions granted for the year is nearly identical to the previous year. The number of apostille requests for FY 2021 Q2 was the second highest ever. All requests and transactions are done through the mail or the Authority's on-site drop box, as walk-in service continues to be suspended due to the pandemic.

Notary handbook sales continue at a record pace. FY 2021 has seen a 198% increase in sales compared to the same period of FY 2020.

Next Board Meeting

The next scheduled board meeting will be held on April 14, 2021. ■



Jamie McCarron provides a financial report to the Board during their work session.

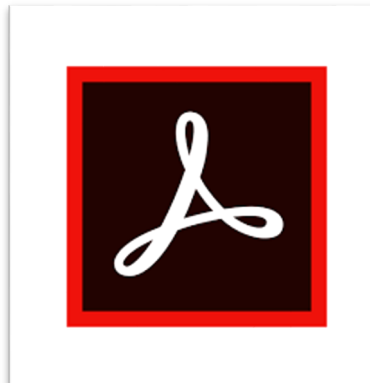


Software & laptops — Cont. from Page 1

orders, and by late spring, the first USB drives were being shipped.

One year from launching the project, here is where we are today:

- ❖ All clerk offices have been contacted and software orders solicited.
- ❖ 110 orders have been received from counties.
- ❖ Of those orders, the formal acquisition form was sent to those counties, and 89 have been returned. In these forms, clerks have requested:
 - 482 Microsoft Office licenses
 - 534 Adobe Acrobat licenses
- ❖ Installation software has been shipped to 89 clerks' offices.
- ❖ The Authority's Customer Support team has facilitated 685 installs, with 71 additional installs scheduled or in progress.



Although the initiative to distribute this software to clerks started well before the pandemic, it's important to note that in the new eFiling world brought about by COVID shut-downs and courthouse closures, PDFs have taken center stage and the ability to manipulate them — allowed only in the full version of Adobe Acrobat — is more important than ever making this initiative and the timing of it even more critical to supporting clerks and the operation of their offices. Going forward, software will be installed on new computers before shipment to clerks' offices.

Laptop Project

During a clerk leadership meeting last August, the challenges of the pandemic, including working remotely, were discussed. Following this conversation, Authority staff researched the idea of providing all clerks of Superior Court with a laptop computer in an effort to further enable them with the tools to

fulfill their duties even when working remotely. At its October meeting, the Authority Board voted to purchase and distribute a laptop computer to each elected clerk of Superior Court.

With the Board's approval, staff evaluated several laptop options and chose to continue leveraging the Authority's long-standing relationship with Lenovo to provide clerks a choice between two different laptop models. Both models are essentially the same with regard to power, memory, speed, and other specifications (512GB solid state hard drive, 16GB of RAM, and an i7 processor), and all will be preloaded with Microsoft Office, Adobe Acrobat and the GSCCCA VPN software.

Based on feedback, clerks are being given an option on their laptop's screen size as some have requested a larger screen, while others prefer the greater portability of a smaller screen.

The two options include:

- ❖ 14" screen model which weighs 3.2 pounds and does not have a number pad on the keyboard
- ❖ 15.6" screen model which weighs 3.9 pounds and does have a number pad on the keyboard

Additionally, the Authority will provide a docking station and wireless keyboard/mouse for each laptop upon request. Laptop distribution is intended only for clerks of Superior Court, and is not available to clerk staff.

In order to avoid an expected supply chain interruption due to COVID cases surging globally, the Authority staff quickly surveyed

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Authority welcomes Thrash to Board

Congratulations and welcome to Lamar County Commissioner Nancy Thrash who recently joined the Authority Board of Directors. Nancy was appointed by Governor Brian Kemp and will serve a three-year term.

Nancy was elected commissioner in 2009 and currently serves in the role of vice chair. Since elected, she has served in many leadership roles including on the Executive Board of Managers for the Association County Commissioners of Georgia (ACCG) and chair of ACCG's

Federal Policy Committee. She was awarded ACCG's *Legislative Advocate of the Year* award in 2017.

Nancy is a member of the Board of Directors for the National Association of Counties where she serves as vice chair of the Telecommunications and Technology Committee, vice chair of the Communications Committee, and a member of the Membership Policy Committee.

Awarded *Citizen of the Year* by her local fire department, Nancy is very involved within her community where she serves on the Board of Directors for the Lamar County Solid Waste Authority, Towaliga Accountability Courts, and The Haven House Domestic Violence Shelter. She is also an active member of Rock Springs Church in Milner. Nancy attended Mercer University and Clayton State College. She has two sons and eight grandchildren.

"On behalf of the Authority and our Board of Directors, I'd like to offer a warm welcome to Nancy," said Executive Director John Earle. "We're thrilled to have the benefit of her talent, experience and passion, and appreciate her commitment to ensuring the success of the Authority and those we serve."

Software & laptops — Cont. from Page 4

clerks regarding screen size, verified an immediate supply line for the laptops, and secured an adequate inventory of both models to avoid the anticipated supply delays.

The laptop initiative has been well received by clerks of Superior Court with 109 formal requests submitted since the Authority began the formal order process in January. At present, all requests have been processed, and all 109 laptops have been configured and shipped, along with docking stations,

wireless keyboards, mice, and external monitors.

For clerks who have not yet ordered their laptop, the official request form should be returned to inventory@gsccca.org. The Authority's goal is to ship laptops within two weeks of receiving the order. Contact HelpDesk at 800.304.5174 or help@gsccca.org with questions about any part of this process. ■

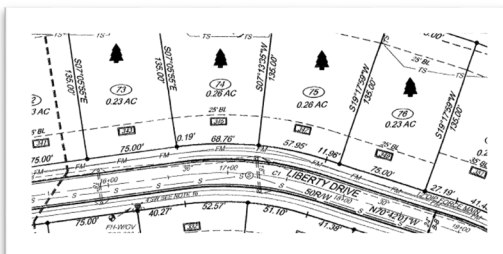


Historical Plat Image Project progressing

The Historical Plat Image Project has been well received and is progressing better than anticipated. As stated before, the project includes images of plats filed on or before December 31, 2003 in all counties statewide.

The project does not include indexing or plats contained in deed books. It is estimated that there are approximately 1.3 million additional plat images to be collected.

The Authority Board has authorized payment to those counties that have already scanned and submitted historical plats. Compensation agreements have been sent to 89 counties encompassing 713,000 images for approximately \$2.141 million. Agreements have



been received from 48 counties and payments to the clerks' offices are currently underway.

The Authority's imaging vendor is currently onsite or completed a number of counties

where additional imaging is necessary. It is estimated that it will cost \$3.8 to \$4.4 million to complete the project. Authority IT staff has developed a new image API and web service to support the project.

The Authority is excited by the enthusiasm from clerks and the progress on the project thus far, and encourages clerks to contact Gary Yates, the project coordinator, at gary.yates@gsccca.org, with questions. ■

Authority helps train Georgia's new clerks

Training was recently conducted for Georgia's newly elected clerks of Superior Court. The program was coordinated by the Georgia Superior Court Clerks' Training Council, and the Authority was given the opportunity to share who we are, our history, and a brief overview of our many important projects, programs and services. The Authority also participated in critical training on records management. This training was intended to provide new clerks with the tools needed to help ensure the security of their data by alerting them to common threats and the ever-present danger of losing data, the resources available for managing records, the importance of maintaining multiple backups, in addition to sharing disaster planning exercises.

Along with providing important training, the program was also an opportunity for Authority management and new clerks to begin building a relationship and for staff to reinforce the Authority's number-one priority of supporting clerks in the operation of their offices.



Zoom training a big hit

Leveraging the Zoom platform, the Authority has kicked off a robust training schedule for 2021 covering multiple topics. Training is available for Superior Court clerks, their staff, and their vendors. Content has been well received, and even with COVID-related restrictions, registrations are up.

See dates and course descriptions below. To attend, click on the links provided to register. With questions, contact training@gsccca.org or 800.304.5174.

eFile – Common Questions

The Authority receives questions regarding UCC and Real Estate eFiling on a regular basis. This 30-minute program will review common questions as well as scenarios a clerk's office may face when handling eFilings. This is a great opportunity to learn more about the eFile process and system behavior, and where to go for support! To register, click on [this link](#).

eFile Portal

The Authority's eFile portal, <https://efile.gsccca.org>, is the site through which UCCs and real estate documents are eFiled. Designed to cover the ins and outs of the portal, this 30-minute program will review how to register, account management, dashboard features, processing UCCs, email notifications, and much more. To register, click on [this link](#).

eLearn 101

Designed to cover the Authority's new online training site, <https://eLearn.gsccca.org>, this 30-minute training program will review how to register on the site, account management, available courses, and accessing the Notary Final Exam Certificates of Completion for notaries within your county. To register, click on [this link](#).

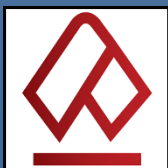
2021 Training Schedule

February 24	eFile – Common Questions (<i>New</i>)
February 26	R.E. Indexing Standards – Sample Index
March 5	eFile Portal (<i>New</i>)
March 11	eLearn 101 (<i>New</i>)
March 24	Fines & Fees
March 29	R.E. Indexing Standards – Clerk Questions
April 1	R.E. Indexing Standards – Overview
April 20	eFile Portal (<i>New</i>)
May 4	Protective Orders
May 11	UCC
May 14	eFile – Common Questions (<i>New</i>)
May 18	eLearn 101 (<i>New</i>)
May 20	Fines & Fees
June 10	R.E. Indexing Standards – Sample Index
June 16	R.E. Indexing Standards – Clerk Questions
July 1	eFile Portal (<i>New</i>)
July 20	R.E. Indexing Standards – Overview
July 23	eLearn 101 (<i>New</i>)
July 29	Protective Orders
August 5	R.E. Indexing Standards – Sample Index
August 11	UCC
August 20	Fines & Fees
August 24	eFile – Common Questions (<i>New</i>)
September 2	eFile Portal (<i>New</i>)
September 9	R.E. Indexing Standards – Clerk Questions
September 20	Fines & Fees
September 22	eFile – Common Questions (<i>New</i>)
October 5	R.E. Indexing Standards – Overview
October 19	eLearn 101 (<i>New</i>)
October 26	R.E. Indexing Standards – Sample Index
October 28	UCC
November 3	Protective Orders

Fines & Fees

This two-hour class will cover many facets of the court fines and fees system including: the proper assessment, collection and distribution of state and local surcharges and deductions relative to fines, court costs and bond forfeitures; an overview of the Georgia statutes and the GSCCCA Rules and Regulations, in support of how court fees should be processed; legislative changes; and sample breakdowns of civil and criminal fines and fees. To register, click on [this link](#).

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Zoom training — Cont. from Page 7

Protective Orders

This 90-minute session will provide training on how to scan and index Protective Orders and is appropriate for new or existing employees who have never been trained to index Protective Orders and for those who would like a refresher course. The class will cover scanning the Protective Order, indexing the order, and verifying user reports. If you currently index Protective Orders and would like formal training, this class is for you! To register, click on [this link](#).

Real Estate Indexing Standards – Overview

Suitable for new and experienced indexers, this one-hour program includes a general overview of the GSCCCA indexing standards, a review of dockets and instrument types, and information on indexing party names, property data, cross references, and much more. To register, click on [this link](#).

Real Estate Indexing Standards – Clerk Questions

Also suitable for both new and experienced indexers, this one-hour webinar will review indexing questions submitted by clerk offices to indexing@gsccca.org including difficult and seldom-seen instruments. To register, click on [this link](#).

Real Estate Indexing Standards – Sample Index

This one-hour webinar will show the indexing process from start to finish using sample images. Course content includes determining dockets and instrument types, extracting and indexing instrument types, party names, property data, cross indexing, and understanding general description fields in accordance with the GSCCCA Indexing Standards. To register, click on [this link](#).

UCC

As the filing office for all Uniform Commercial Code documents, Superior Court clerk offices play a vital role in the UCC/secured transaction world. To help ensure that UCCs are being processed in accordance with Georgia's laws and procedures, this 90-minute training session will examine and review UCC forms, grounds for refusing to accept a UCC, UCC eFiling, and the UCC Administrative Procedures. To register, click on [this link](#).

In addition to the nine webinars being offered via Zoom, the Authority also provides these online training courses via its eLearn website:

- ❖ GSCCCA Indexing Standards
- ❖ GSCCCA Indexing Standards – Extended
- ❖ GSCCCA Indexing Standards – Common Mistakes
- ❖ Introduction to GSCCCA Fines & Fees
- ❖ Notary Online (NOL) - *New course; see more information below*
- ❖ Notary Online – Mail-In Renewal
- ❖ Notary Public Training
- ❖ UCC Training

Courses are available 24/7 making training completely flexible. Check out online training on <https://eLearn.gsccca.org>! ■

Authority adds new eLearn course: Notary Online

The Authority has launched a new online training course, Notary Online (NOL), available to Superior Court Clerks and their employees. Suitable for new and existing employees, the course will cover:

- ❖ Submitting, processing & deleting applications
- ❖ Processing name and address changes
- ❖ Editing unscanned commissions
- ❖ Setting preferences
- ❖ Reviewing notary files, forms, reports & Certificates of Authority

To access the training, log in to <https://eLearn.gsccca.org>. Once logged in, click “Notary Online” training which will be located in the “Not Started” section. Click the eye below “Not Started” to view this and all other training courses not yet begun. The Authority is actively working on additional online training courses, so look for more announcements soon!

