

# GSCCCA Update

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

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## Reviewing MyVault Audit Report vital

Since 2007, Georgia's Superior Court clerks have relied on the Authority's **MyVault Online Archive Program** to reduce their risk of a data loss event. With 156 counties now participating in the program, MyVault currently stores and protects over 1.04 billion files that can be restored back to clerk offices in the event of a disaster. Over the last two years, the Authority has received more than 60 requests to restore data from the online vault with human error, hardware failure, malware, and weather-related events being the most common threats.

To ensure participating counties continue to have the full protection and data recovery services that the program offers, the Authority created the **MyVault Audit Report** as a mechanism for communication, accountability and awareness, and encourages clerks to take advantage of this valuable tool.

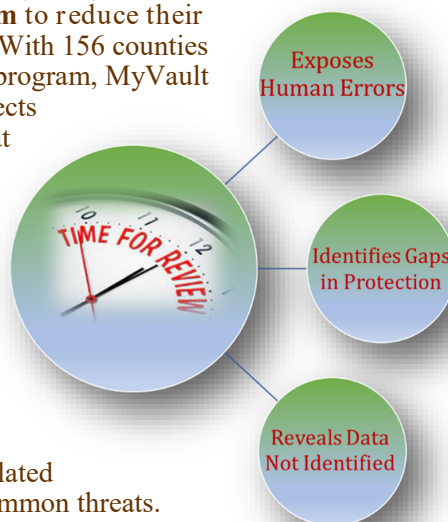
### Promotes Communication

The audit review process is vital to ensuring that the backup job details are accurate and verified with local IT personnel and vendors. Using this time to communicate with others can promote the healthy exchange of information and strengthen relationships, roles and partnerships that are criti-

cal to protecting the records and resources in the clerk's office. The intention is to encourage clerks to pause, reassess, ask questions, and make adjustments as needed.

### Supports Accountability

Undoubtedly, information regarding a clerk's account will change over time. This may include a new vendor, a new server or new contact information. As important changes occur, the audit process helps ensure that the Authority's records are as accurate as possible and align with a clerk's expectations. To aid in this goal, audit reports facilitate transparency and encourage clerks and their partners to work together with a feeling of shared responsibility. The goal of successfully protecting clerks' digital records is one we all share.



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## April Board meeting review

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

### General Business

The minutes of the January 13 scheduled board meeting were approved.

Greg Morgan, with Mauldin & Jenkins, provided the Accountant's Review and reported that the financial health of the Authority is good, with sound business practices by Authority staff keeping the Authority on solid financial footing. Morgan advised the Board of his firm's mandatory age 65 retirement requirement necessitating his retirement in 2022. In

the meantime, he will be transitioning the Authority to a new Mauldin & Jenkins partner, Adam Fralley, who was introduced to the Board.

Following Executive Session, a motion addressing compensation for the Authority executive director was approved by the Board.

*Chairman Greg Allen and Executive Director John Earle address the Board during their April meeting.*

### FY 2022 Budget

The FY 2022 Budget, as amended to allow for the change in the executive director's compensation, was approved by the Board.

### Historical Plat Image Project

It is estimated that 840,000 historical plat images are subject to compensation to clerks. Compensation agreements have been sent to 112 counties; of those, 69 clerks have returned signed agreements. To date, total compensation of \$1.5 million has been returned to clerks. Additionally, four clerks have scanned images internally and the Authority is working to obtain those images. The total cost of the project is estimated to be \$4.5 million.

### 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. Currently, 93 clerks' offices have been sent the software, with 759 software installations complete. 25 installations are ongoing.

### 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 all requests have been fulfilled with 129 laptops deployed to date. Staff will continue to reach out to clerks to ensure they are aware of the Authority's laptop offer.

### Fines & Fees Division

Fines and fees' collections are down overall compared to FY 2020, although there has been a recent increase as courts are transitioning to in-person court sessions. It was also reported that the Authority is currently rewriting the Fines & Fees system. It is estimated that the project will take a year to complete.

### Training Update

The Authority has greatly increased online learning opportunities for Superior Court clerks and the public during the past year. Participation in the classes has increased, as well. Additionally, online training has seen an increase in attendees over the last 12 months. To date, 42,667 individuals have availed themselves of the online notary public course. In total, 149,269 users have registered to use the eLearn site.

### eFiling Project

Interest in eFiling continues to increase. To date, 146 clerks allow UCC eFiling. Of those, 63 clerks mandate eFiling with 45 utilizing the auto-numbering feature offered by the Authority. More than 204,000 UCCs have been eFiled for FY 2021 through the most recent reporting period of March 31, 2021. For Real Estate eFile, all clerks participate at some level with 137 accepting all document types. Additionally, 106 clerks



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***Board meeting review — Cont. from Page 2***

have opted to receive estimated filing fees associated with each real estate eFiling. The online notary application process is being utilized by 148 clerks. Of these, 48 clerks allow mail-in renewal applications. As expected, the number of clerks participating in Child Support eFile continues to decline as more clerks utilize their vendor-provided case management systems.

**Historical Deed Re-Indexing Projects**

Currently, 67 clerks participate in the Voluntary Historical Deed Project which has led to 4,164,519 instruments being published to production. More than 279,000 instruments have been added to production since the January 2021 Board meeting. Currently, 140,000 instruments are in quarantine awaiting review.

**UCC Project**

It was reported that through FY 2021 Q3 (March 2021), more than 241,000 UCCs had been filed. While the average monthly pace projects to more than 321,000 being filed by the end of FY 2021 (June 2021), it is anticipated the pace will slow somewhat during Q4. However, the number of filings for March 2021 showed an “uptick” over the previous few months. The number of UCC Certified Search requests has also been on the rise. At the current pace, more than 9,400 requests are projected to be processed by the end of FY 2021.

**Notary & Authentications Division**

The Authority has seen a record number of notary commissions for March 2021, with 6,084 notary commissions indexed. This represents the highest number of commissions ever indexed in one month. The number of notary commis-

sions and apostille requests are nearing pre-pandemic levels. Staff continues to handle a heavy volume of telephone inquiries and notary handbook orders. Two new countries, Jamaica and Singapore, will join the Apostille Treaty in 2021, bringing the total to 120 participating countries.

**Archival Projects**

Currently, 156 clerks are protecting their digital records through the Authority’s MyVault Online Archive Program, a backup data storage solution offered free-of-charge to clerks. During Q3, the Authority managed ten data restore requests, restoring 98 GB of data back to counties. The restore process makes the clerk’s data “whole” again. Human error and clerk/vendor audits caused the data losses. Storage upgrades on appliances continue as county storage needs grow.

**Next Board Meeting**

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

**GSCCCA Board of Directors**



*Left to right: Jim Weidner, Dana Chastain, Nancy Thrash, Tammie Mosley, Judge Brenda Weaver, Vice Chair Connie Cheatham, Secretary/Treasurer Dena Adams, Charles Baker, Chairman Greg Allen, and Alan Lee*



*MyVault Audit Report — Cont. from Page 1*

**Raises Awareness**

Making assumptions about whether records are protected can be a costly mistake. Too often we are content in telling ourselves that everything is fine and that someone else is taking care of it. We justify our thinking by believing we're too busy to be bothered or by promising ourselves that we'll get to it eventually. These are dangerous assumptions that have backfired on clerks and resulted in devastating consequences in some cases.

Clerks are empowered with the authority and the responsibility to increase awareness among their staff and the partners they rely on for support and services. Proactive planning is a collaborative effort that can strengthen our ability to respond to a crisis, reduce the risk of data loss, and produce more effective results if we make it a priority.

**Questions to ask**

Following are questions to address when reviewing your MyVault Audit Report:

- ❖ Is the contact name, address and phone number accurate?



- ❖ Do the job items listed represent the most critical, essential and important records?
- ❖ Are the IP addresses accurate?
- ❖ Do the root folders listed contain all of the data you wish to have archived?
- ❖ Are you fulfilling the backup requirements as outlined in the Custodianship Bill, Georgia Senate Bill 135, Code Section 15-6-62.1?
- ❖ Are these items duplicated in other places or with vendors?
- ❖ Are you utilizing a backup plan in addition to your MyVault account?

Each January, the Authority's archive staff generates and distributes the MyVault Audit Report to all clerks; however, these valuable reports can be generated at any time. Archive staff can distribute a current report upon request, or clerks can generate the report themselves using the online vault dashboard. Either way, the report reflects current activity at the time of printing.

Regardless of the timing, it is vitally important that each clerk reviews their MyVault Audit

Report at least once a year. Taking time to analyze and question what records are being protected and where they are located is critical to ensuring that those records will be in the vault when disaster strikes. A periodic review of the audit report with archive staff, vendors and IT personnel can expose human errors, gaps in protection, and reveal other data that may be vulnerable. Reviewing this report at least annually should be a priority. It could make a difference in the time and money spent to recover from an unexpected data loss event.

With questions, contact Tara Johnson at [tara.johnson@gsccca.org](mailto:tara.johnson@gsccca.org). ■

## Did you know?

- ❖ 45% of clerk offices have experienced at least one significant data loss event.
- ❖ Ransomware incidents have cost counties hundreds of thousands of dollars.
- ❖ Two clerks have experienced the sudden and permanent loss of their building and contents.
- ❖ Data loss incidents in clerk offices exceeded 30 cases last year, doubling the norm.
- ❖ Several clerks have faced a total loss of records taking months to manually reproduce.
- ❖ Clerks can file and independently store their disaster plan with the Council of Superior Court Clerks.
- ❖ Disaster plans need to be reviewed and updated routinely in order to be effective.

Does your office have an updated disaster plan on file? Please visit the Program Status Report in the Clerk Resource Center to check (<https://apps.gsccca.org/clerkresource/programstatus/>).





## CourtTRAX rewrite underway



In an effort to streamline the fines and fees process, the Authority has begun the process of rewriting [www.courttrax.org](http://www.courttrax.org), its Fines & Fees site. With the completion of a discovery document detailing all system requirements, future requirements, and system enhancements, in addition to a projected plan, the Authority's IT team has begun the active rewrite process. The new site is expected to launch in 2022!

Much thought and planning has gone into the rewrite plans, which will include a new and updated look for [www.courttrax.org](http://www.courttrax.org) providing both visual appeal and enhanced ease-of-use. As importantly, though, the Authority will incorporate into the new site the option to electronically submit the Monthly Remittance, Monthly Disbursement, and Trust Fund Interest reports through CourtTRAX or by utilizing an API. As the 2022 launch date approaches, the Authority will provide detailed information for all courts.

## Coming soon ... eFile payment enhancements

The Authority's electronic filing portal, <https://efile.gsccca.org>, allows for the filing of UCC, real estate, lien, plat, PT-61, and child support documents, and the list will continue to grow. As thousands of documents are now being eFiled annually, the Authority continues to evaluate its site and implement changes in an ongoing effort to provide state-of-the-art services and improve the experience for all involved.

As part of this effort, the Authority is pleased to



announce upcoming payment enhancements to <https://efile.gsccca.org>. Included in these enhancements are auto-retry of payment failures, detailed exception responses, and automatic detection and limiting of errant system use/abuse to protect clerk network bandwidth.

This will empower clerks and their offices to reattempt payment collections increasing processing of real estate eFile instruments. More information on these enhancements will be available soon. ■



## Authority presents at Clerks' Spring Conference

Georgia's Superior Court clerks recently held their Annual Spring Conference at the King & Prince on St. Simons Island. During the week, Authority staff had the opportunity to present to clerks on a wide range of topics to assist clerks in the administration of their offices. Of particular note, the Authority was asked to provide an in-depth look at online meeting processes and software that could assist clerks in the "new world" of conducting business remotely.

John Earle, Andy Wightwick, Mike Smith, Rachel Rice, Richard McPhaul and Will Dunn represented the Clerks' Authority at the conference, and updated clerks on Authority projects. Their presentations covered

up-to-date information on the eFile Project, the Historical Deed Project, the Historical Plat Image Project, the deployment of both software and laptops to clerks, and an update on the MyVault and Virtual Microfilm projects, both of which provide a direct cost savings to clerks and county governments.

The conference also provided Authority staff ample opportunities to meet informally with clerks to discuss how they could better leverage the services and products offered by the Authority for the benefit of their offices. All Authority presentations during the conference are available at the Clerk Resource Center, [www.gsccca.org/clerkresource](http://www.gsccca.org/clerkresource), under Conference Materials. ■



# Take advantage of Authority training

The Authority continues to leverage the Zoom platform to offer an extensive training schedule for 2021. Classes have been well-received and range in length, from 30 minutes to two hours, and cover multiple, much-requested topics. Training is available for Superior Court clerks, their staff, and their vendors. See dates and course descriptions below.

To register for a class, go to [www.gsccca.org/training](http://www.gsccca.org/training), select the registration link, and follow the prompts. All registrations require approval, and upon approval, an email will be sent with a link to the training course. With questions, contact [training@gsccca.org](mailto:training@gsccca.org) or 800.304.5174.

## eFile – Common Questions

The Authority receives questions regarding UCC eFile and Real Estate eFile 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!

## 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.

## 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.

## 2021 Training Schedule

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.

## 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!

*Continued on Page 8*



### *Training — Cont. from Page 7*

## 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.

## 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](mailto:indexing@gsccca.org) including difficult and seldom-seen instruments.

## 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.

UCC

As the filing office for all Uniform Commer-

cial 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.

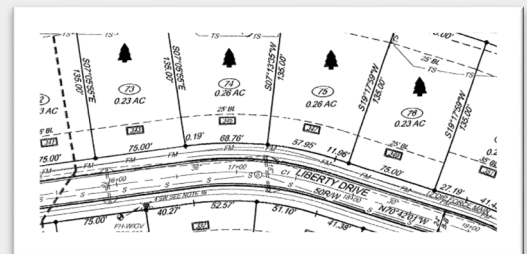
In addition to the nine webinar classes being offered via Zoom, the Authority also provides these online training courses via its eLearn website:

- ❖ GSCCCA Indexing Standards
- ❖ GSCCCA Indexing Standards – Extended
- ❖ GSCCCA Indexing Standards – Common Mistakes
- ❖ Introduction to GSCCCA Fines & Fees
- ❖ Notary Online (NOL)
- ❖ 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>! With questions, contact [training@gsccca.org](mailto:training@gsccca.org) or 800.304.5174. ■

## Historical Plat Image Project progressing

The Historical Plat Image Project continues to progress. Thus far, compensation agreements have been sent to 113 counties encompassing more than 836,000 images for approximately \$2.51 million. Signed agreements have been received from 83 counties and payments to those clerks' offices total approximately \$2 million. The total cost to complete the project is estimated to be \$4.5 million.



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.

With questions, contact the project coordinator, Gary Yates, at [gary.yates@gsccca.org](mailto:gary.yates@gsccca.org).

