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Authority offers remote Notary Public classes

For nearly a decade, the Authority has been helping educate Georgia's notaries through classes offered free-of-charge and hosted by Superior Court clerks. Like many of the Authority's successful programs, the idea for the training began at the request of a clerk. Former Muscogee County Superior Court Clerk Linda Pierce asked Mike Smith, the Authority's communications director & compliance officer, to conduct notary training for the constituents of her county.

The first class was well received, so several more were offered in Muscogee County over the next few years. After fine-tuning the material and continuing to receive positive feedback, Mike notified all Superior Court clerks about the class, and the training began in earnest in 2014. Since that first class in Muscogee County nearly a decade ago, 216 Notary Public classes have been held with over 11,000 Georgians being educated on the role and responsibilities of a notary public. Hosted by Superior Court clerks, these classes provide tremendous exposure for clerks and a valuable service to their constituents.

When the pandemic halted in-person classes in the spring of 2020, the Authority knew the need for training was still present and quickly pivoted to offering the class as a webinar which allowed Superior Court clerks to continue meeting the needs of their constituents. Since the pandemic began, 12 Notary Public Training classes have been held remotely, hosted by the following clerks:

- ❖ Chatham County Superior Court Clerk Tammie Mosley
- ❖ Cherokee County Superior Court Clerk Patty Baker
- ❖ DeKalb County Superior Court Clerk Debra DeBerry
- ❖ Fulton County Superior Court Clerk Cathelene Robinson
- ❖ Richmond County Superior Court Clerk Hattie Sullivan

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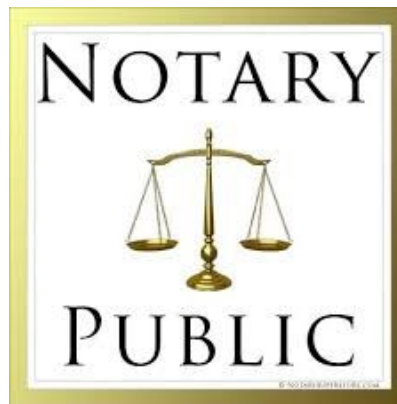


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October Board meeting review

The Authority Board met on October 20 for its quarterly meeting. Following is a summary of the reports and actions of the meeting.

General Business

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

Adam Fraley, with Mauldin & Jenkins, provided the Accountant's Review, and reported that the Authority received an unqualified "clean" opinion from Mauldin & Jenkins for the fiscal year ending June 30, 2021 audit with no audit adjustments proposed by the auditors. Fraley reported that Authority staff is following generally accepted accounting principles, was forthcoming with requested information and was easy to work with, and that the financial health of the Authority is good. A motion to accept the FYE June 30, 2021 Audit Report as presented was approved by the Board.

Fraley also provided an overview of the current financials and reported that the Authority's net position as of 9/30/21 was \$15.8M, an increase in net position of \$1.1M for Q1 FY 2022.

Historical Plat Image Project

The imaging of historical plats continues, and to date, third party imaging of 22 counties has been completed. It is anticipated that Kofile will ramp up the scanning and transmission of the additional 60 +/- counties in the near future. Staff anticipates the project to be completed sometime before CY 2022. Approximately \$2.5M has been paid to 110 counties for historical plat images that had already been scanned. There are 8 counties that have not yet returned their Authority historical plat image agreements totaling approximately \$300,000 in compensation.

Fines & Fees Division

A motion to adopt the Fines & Fees forms, revised October 20, 2021, as presented, was approved by the Board. For Q1 FY 2022, the Fines & Fees Division saw an increase in col-

lections when compared to Q1 FY 2021. Approximately \$22M was collected and accounted for from all courts.

Training Update

The Authority's online educational platform, eLearn, continues to prove popular with clerks' offices and the general public. Currently, there are nine different courses available. To date, there have been approximately 61,000 users register to access eLearn.org. Additionally, the Authority had several webinars scheduled for fall 2021, encompassing real estate indexing standards, protective orders, UCC, Fines & Fees and Notary Public content. To date, 69 clerks of Superior Court and deputy clerks have successfully completed the Indexing Certification Exam for real and personal property records.

eFiling Project

All eFiling methods continue to show increased access by clerks of Superior Court and users/filers. Currently, 147 clerks participate in UCC eFile. Of those, 74 mandate eFiling as the only method of filing UCC documents. Oconee and McDuffie counties will join the group of clerks' offices that

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Board members review the Authority's financials during a report by Adam Fraley with Mauldin & Jenkins.



Board meeting review — Cont. from Page 2

mandate UCC eFiling in the next three months. A total of 59 clerks' offices utilize the auto-numbering feature.

For Real Estate eFile, all 159 clerks participate at varying levels. Of those, 138 allow all document types to be eFiled. Currently, 106 clerks have chosen to allow estimated filing fees to be included via the eFile portal.

The Authority's Child Support eFile process has ended and was removed from the Authority's portal effective October 1, 2021. For Notary Online, the Authority's online notary application process, 150 clerks participate. Finally, all clerks participate in the ACH payment method.

TPO Index

The Board was updated on changes to the TPO (Temporary Protective Order) Index. Authority staff has been providing training to Superior Court clerks and staff regarding the change in indexing TPO forms from "condition" based to "PCO Code." The Authority Board approved the change in indexing during their July 14 quarterly board meeting. The indexing change has been widely accepted by all stakeholders and is scheduled to become effective on December 1, 2021.

It was also reported that there are proposed changes to three Family Violence forms as provided by the Judicial Council and are currently in the approval process by the Authority and GCIC. Once suggested edits by the Authority and GCIC are incorporated into the Judicial Council's proposed forms, the Georgia Supreme Court will adopt.

Electronic Document Certification

The eCert Program is currently live in Forsyth County and being tested in Chatham County. A measured, statewide roll-out will occur through the rest of the fiscal year. Feedback has been very positive from users of the process. The eCert Program will enable easier access to certified documents within the clerk's office. Each clerk of Superior Court determines which documents are available for electronic certification.

Historical Deed Re-Indexing Projects

Currently, 72 clerks participate in the Voluntary Historical Deed Project. The statewide good-through date is January 1, 1990. There are approximately 82,000 instruments in quarantine awaiting review. For Q1 FY 2022, 119,000 instruments were added to production. In total, 4.3M instruments are in production and available to searchers. To date, the Authority has received 140 docket surveys from clerks.

UCC Project

For Q1 FY 2022, more than 3,000 UCC Certified Search requests have been received, which projects to more than 12,000 for FY 2022. The number of UCCs filed for FY 2022 is on pace for approximately 300,000 for the fiscal year.

Notary & Authentications Division

The number of notary commissions indexed by Authority staff has increased 31% compared to the same period of the previous year. Notary handbook sales have increased 93%, reflecting sales of approximately 2,400 handbooks. The number of apostilles processed has increased 17% when compared to the previous year. Korea, Mexico and the Russian Federation are the top three destinations for apostille requests. Foreign language, birth certificates and Spanish language documents are the three most popular document types.

Archival Projects

To date, there are 206 terabytes (TB), representing 1.1B files, contained in MyVault. This reflects a 98% participation rate among clerks of Superior Court. The VMF (Virtual Microfilm) program continues to serve as an important resource for giving clerks direct access to their real estate records online. However, only 55% of clerks have activated their VMF accounts. For Q1 FY 2022, 4.3M deed images and 300,000 lien images were added to the VMF system.

Next Board Meeting

The next scheduled board meeting will be held on January 12, 2022. ■



Notary Public classes — Cont. from Page 1

- ❖ Rockdale County Superior Court Clerk Janice Morris

The classes are now conducted via the Zoom platform which allows for up to 300 people to participate in the training. As before, each session is hosted by a Superior Court clerk who provides a link to the training on their website for public registration. Over Zoom, Mike conducts the training, while Authority Project Director Rachel Rice helps moderate the chat feature which enables a multi-level training approach.

Just like the in-person class, the 90-minute webinar covers the duties of a notary public, best practices, Georgia notary law, and real-life examples of the “dos and don’ts” of being a competent Georgia notary. The training is open to all members of the public whether they are a veteran notary, newly commissioned, or just thinking about becoming a notary public.



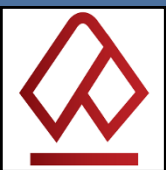
Mike Smith teaches a Notary Public webinar from the Authority office. The November class was hosted by Rockdale County Superior Court Clerk Janice Morris and had a full registration of 300 participants.

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Educating Georgia’s notaries

In addition to offering in-person and now remote Notary Public Training classes, the Authority helps educate Georgia’s notaries on their role and responsibilities in other significant ways as well, including:

- ❖ Offering an online course, **Notary Public**, via the Authority’s eLearn educational platform. During the past fiscal year, nearly 24,000 Georgians took advantage of this online class and, of those participants, over 16,000 took the Notary Public Final Exam. Some Superior Court clerks now require constituents to pass this exam to receive their notary commissions. Online courses are available 24/7 making training completely flexible. For more information on all the Authority’s online classes, refer to <https://eLearn.gsccca.org> or contact Rachel Rice at rachel.rice@gsccca.org.
- ❖ Providing a **Notary Handbook** which includes forms and definitions and is an excellent reference for Georgia notary law, notary procedures and best practices. Handbook sales have soared over the past 15 months, with 3,000 handbooks sold in FY 2021, a 180% increase from the previous year, and an incredible 2,400 sold in the first quarter of FY 2022 alone. In addition to direct sales, the Authority continues to provide notary handbooks at a discounted rate to Superior Court clerk offices. The goal is to provide point-of-sale education materials to Georgia notaries public. If interested in participating in this program, which allows handbooks to be sold at the local level, contact Mike Smith at mike.smith@gsccca.org.



Protective order indexing changes

In an effort to create greater flexibility for future protective order form changes and create a more consistent product, the Authority will be making the following changes to our protective order indexing site:

- ❖ Change from indexing “Condition” codes to indexing “PCO” codes
- ❖ Remove 6-month Family Violence and Stalking order types from indexing option

The PCO codes are found within the official protective orders underneath the Condition code to which they apply. By indexing PCO codes instead of Condition codes, the system will be more uniform and provide greater flexibility when indexing standard and non-standard orders.

Additionally, the Authority is removing the ability to index an order as a 6-month Family

Violence or 6-month Stalking order as these orders were removed from the officially issued protective orders years ago. The protective order system will now match the current set of official orders as issued by the Council of Superior Court Judges, listed on the Georgia Supreme Court website and approved by GCIC, the GSCCCA, and the Georgia Supreme Court as required by Georgia Code.

The changes are scheduled to take effect **December 1, 2021**. The Authority is offering multiple 30-minute webinars to review the changes. To register for a class, click this [link](#) and follow the prompts:

For questions or concerns, contact HelpDesk at 1-800-304-5174 or help@gsccca.org. ■

Notary Public classes — Cont. from Page 4

The remote classes have been no less successful than the in-person classes with lots of positive feedback, including the following comments from attendees at a recent class hosted by Cherokee County:

“Thank you! This course was excellent and very much worthwhile to attend!” – Kathleen Arthur

“Very informative. Thank you for sharing.” – Serina Bolton

“This was the most valuable training I have attended in quite some time. Thanks Mike and Rachel!”
– Bonnie Johnson

“Thank you for the recent presentation you and Mike Smith did for Cherokee County notaries. I especially liked it was virtual so I didn't have to take time off work to attend.” – Jeannine Jones

When it's safe for all involved, probably sometime in 2022, the Authority will again offer in-person Notary Public Training classes. Until then, and even after, remote training offered over the Zoom platform is a great option for Superior Court clerks to meet the needs of the citizens of their respective counties.

If interested in hosting the Notary Public Training webinar, please contact Mike Smith (mike.smith@gsccca.org) or Rachel Rice (rachel.rice@gsccca.org) to get your class scheduled. ■



New protective order forms

Passed during the 2021 legislative session, House Bill 231 expanded protective orders to include dating relationships. In response to this, the Authority worked in conjunction with the Georgia Crime Information Center, GCIC, and the Council of Superior Court Judges in the development of new protective order forms for Dating Violence. The three proposed forms include:

- ❖ Petition for Dating Violence Temporary Protective Order
- ❖ Dating Violence Ex Parte Protective Order
- ❖ Dating Violence Twelve Month Protective Order

Upon approval by the Georgia Supreme Court, the Authority will add the new forms to our website, www.gsccca.org, and to the Authority's protective order indexing system equipping Superior Court Clerks with the tools needed to index and transmit these forms to GCIC.

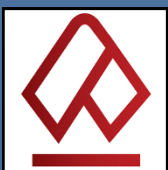
To support clerks with this change, the Authority will offer training on where to retrieve and how to index the new forms. For questions or concerns regarding the training or new forms, contact HelpDesk at help@gsccca.org. ■

Child Support eFile ends

After a decade-plus of providing the program, the Authority has removed its Child Support process from its eFile portal effective October 1, 2021. As reported to clerks in August, the Authority received notification from AOC that the Department of Human Services Child Support Division was terminating its contract with AOC effective October 1. As a result, the AOC eFiling portal no longer functions to provide for child support eFilings, and therefore the Child Support eFiling system through the Authority is no longer available.

In 2010, as a service to Superior Court clerks who were seeking a trusted partner to help participate in a voluntary Child Support eFiling program, the Authority added Child Support eFile to its portal. Using the GSCCCA portal, clerks were able to conveniently receive and process child support cases initiated by the Department of Human Services for the last decade-plus. Over the life of the program, 137 counties took advantage of the service with over 690,000 cases submitted through the Authority system.

It has been the Authority's privilege to support Superior Court clerks in their child support eFiling efforts, and we thank you for entrusting us to be part of this program for the last decade. As part of our portal deactivation process, we will continue to archive and retain all previous portal filings and transactions should they be needed by your office in the future. If you have any questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to contact us.



Authority provides training at COAG meeting

The COAG Fall Conference was held recently in Savannah, and the Authority had the opportunity to participate in training, as well as meet and answer questions from clerks.

During the conference, Connie Cheatham, McDuffie County Superior Court clerk, and Kelli Paradise Smith, Oglethorpe County Superior Court clerk, conducted a 6-hour training certification course on Real and Personal Property and asked the Authority to participate. As part of this, Authority staff provided the following:

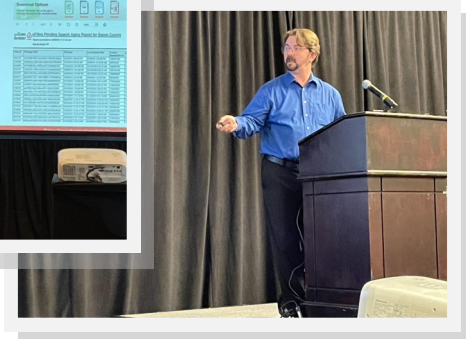
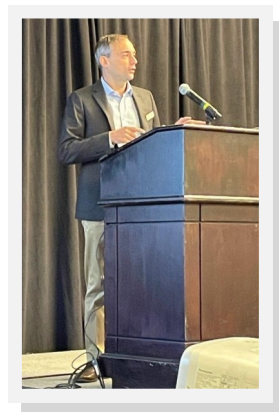
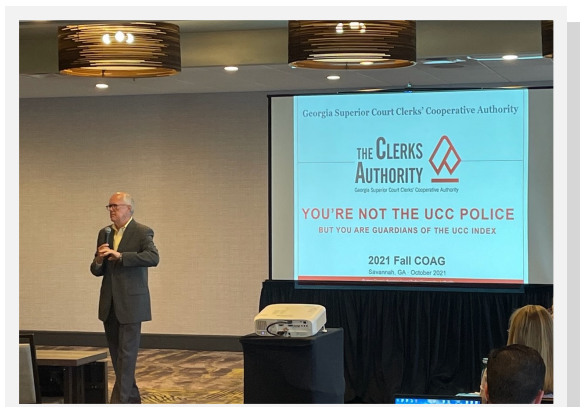
- ❖ An overview of the Real Estate Indexing Standards and their purpose, along with a review of common mistakes found in index data;
- ❖ Training on UCCs as these relate to personal property, concentrating on the codified grounds for refusal as set forth in O.C.G.A. § 11-9-516(b); and

- ❖ Training on the pending lien search, including reasons an item may remain on the pending lien search and how to re-search and resolve any outstanding items.

Additionally, Authority staff presented on a variety of other topics including:

- ❖ eCertification
- ❖ eFile Initiatives
- ❖ F&F Changes
- ❖ F&F Rewrite
- ❖ IT & Technology Updates
- ❖ Notary Online and Mail-In Renewal ACH
- ❖ Plat Image Initiative Update
- ❖ Protective Order Indexing Changes
- ❖ System Evolutions
- ❖ Training

Presentations are now available in the Authority's Clerk Resource Center. ■



2022 training schedule coming soon!

The Authority is looking ahead to next year and actively preparing its 2022 training schedule. Training will include a combination of in-person classes, webinar programs, and online courses, and will be full of opportunities to learn about Authority projects and a variety of other subjects.

In-person classes

In-person, classroom training will be held throughout the state on the **Real Estate Indexing Standards**. The three-hour class will be hosted by Superior Court clerks and will be suitable for both new and experienced indexers. Course content will include:

- ❖ A general review of the GSCCCA statewide indexing standards;
- ❖ A review of dockets and instruments;
- ❖ Extracting and indexing instrument types, party names, property data, cross indexing, and use of the general description field in accordance with the GSCCCA Indexing Standards;
- ❖ A review of indexing questions submitted by clerks' offices which may include difficult or seldom seen instruments and content, including GSCCCA guidance on indexing HUD instruments; and
- ❖ Examining indexing transmission errors.

Full details will be announced soon, but, at present, the following classes are scheduled:

- ❖ Jackson County Superior Court Clerk's Office, Jefferson – January 25
- ❖ Richmond County Superior Court Clerk's Office, Augusta – March 23
- ❖ Carroll County Superior Court Clerk's Office, Carrollton – May 9
- ❖ Dougherty County Superior Court Clerk's Office, Albany – August (date to be determined)
- ❖ Chatham County Superior Court Clerk's Office, Savannah – September 15

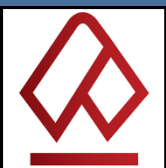
Webinars

Webinars became an even more important training tool during the pandemic when in-person classes were no longer an option. For this reason, the Authority converted its

classroom training to webinars to meet clerks' ongoing training needs. A variety of programs in this convenient and popular format will continue to be offered in 2022, including:

- ❖ **Protective Order Exception Report (NEW)** – Working with GCIC, the Authority recently developed a Protective Order Exception Report to support clerks and help eliminate errors that occur as GCIC processes the transmitted orders into the Registry. Clerks receive this report daily by email detailing exceptions generated by GCIC. This 30-minute webinar will explain what each exception means, what action the clerk's office needs to take to resolve each exception, who to contact with questions, and how to add or remove people from the email notification.
- ❖ **Authority ACH 101 (NEW)** – Did you know the Authority offers ACH payments for Notary Online Mail-in-Renewals and will allow this for Fines & Fees soon? This 30-minute webinar will cover how to update or change Authority ACH information, how to track multiple ACH deposits received daily, as well as provide suggested practices for tracking ACH deposits and payments.
- ❖ **New Fines & Fees System (NEW)** – The Authority is launching a new Fines & Fees platform in 2022 which will allow users to submit reports and payments via ACH. This 1-hour webinar will cover creating an account, navigating www.courttrax.org, submitting Fines & Fees reports and more!
- ❖ **PT-61 Transmission Errors (NEW)** – This 30-minute webinar will cover critical and non-critical errors made when transmitting PT-61 cross references in deed index data files, a mechanism that can be used by land management systems to prevent the majority of non-critical errors, and how to research non-critical errors utilizing the PT-61 online correction module.

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2022 training — Cont. from Page 8

- ❖ **Authority Websites** – Did you know the Authority has multiple websites covering everything from Fines & Fees to processing notary applications? Need to know where to go to index a protective order or how to check a participant ID? Get answers to these questions and more during this 1-hour webinar which will provide information on the Authority's many websites, their multiple functions, and how each site can be used by a Superior Court clerk's office.
- ❖ **Get to Know the Authority** – Want to put a face to the name? This 30-minute webinar will introduce the staff of the Authority! We will cover each department in the Authority, the department's role, how to contact members, the Authority's history and much more. Join us and get to know the Authority staff!
- ❖ **Pending Lien Search** – When the Department of Revenue files a state tax lien, it becomes part of the pending lien search. As state tax liens are filed and index data transmitted, the liens are removed from the pending lien search and become part of the statewide lien index. Instances occur where required parameters are not met causing state tax liens to remain on the pending lien search. This

30-minute webinar addresses how to find and remove state tax lien eFilings that should no longer be on the pending lien search.

Registration for classroom training and webinars will be available at www.gsccca.org/training once the schedule is finalized. For questions regarding the Authority's 2022 training, email training@gsccca.org.

Online courses

In addition to in-person classes on the Real Estate Indexing Standards and the seven webinars to be offered via Zoom, the Authority will continue to provide the following 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
- ❖ Notary Online – Mail-In Renewal
- ❖ Notary Public Training
- ❖ Notary Public Final Exam
- ❖ UCC Training

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

New Fines & Fees forms

During their October meeting, the Authority Board adopted updated Fines & Fees forms for all courts. The purpose of the changes was to provide consistent nomenclature, so that the forms follow the recently adopted standardized naming of funds as is now consistently defined in the Rules & Regulations. There were no modifications to form layouts and no new funds added. The only changes made were for the purpose of updating fund names.

The Authority has notified all courts and requested that the new forms, which have an effective date of October 20, 2021, be utilized within 30 days. The newly adopted forms are available on www.courttrax.org. If you have any questions or concerns, contact the Authority's Fines & Fees Division at finesandfees@gsccca.org or 1-866-847-4105.

