

CLERK ANNUAL REPORT



THE HONORABLE ROGER D. EATON
Clerk of the Circuit Court and County Comptroller

2017

CHARLOTTE COUNTY, FLORIDA

TABLE OF CONTENTS

MESSAGE FROM YOUR CLERK AND COUNTY COMPTROLLER	3
THE CLERK’S ROLE AS A PUBLIC TRUSTEE	6
ONLINE SERVICES & E-FILING PORTALS	8
CRIMINAL COURT SERVICES	9
CIVIL AND CRIMINAL TRAFFIC COURT RECORDS	10
JUVENILE COURT RECORDS	12
CIVIL COURT SERVICES	13
CHILD SUPPORT SERVICES	14
PROBATE, GUARDIANSHIP AND BAKER ACTS	15
JURY SERVICES	16
APPEALS	18
DOMESTIC VIOLENCE SERVICES	19
FORECLOSURE SERVICES	20
HIGHLIGHTS OF COURT OPERATIONS	21
OFFICIAL RECORDS SERVICES	22
MARRIAGE SERVICES & PASSPORT SERVICES	23
TAX DEED SERVICES	24
ANNEX SERVICES	24
RECORDS MANAGEMENT	25
COMPTROLLER DIVISION	27
COMMISSION MINUTES SERVICES	31
VALUE ADJUSTMENT BOARD	32
INTERNAL AUDIT	33
CLERK INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY	34
COURT AUTOMATION SYSTEMS	35
EMPLOYEE RELATIONS	36

MESSAGE FROM YOUR CLERK AND COUNTY COMPTROLLER



TO THE CITIZENS OF CHARLOTTE COUNTY:

When I ran for Charlotte County Clerk of Court in 2016, I promised to immediately construct and implement office improvements which would make the Clerk's Office more user-friendly for local citizens while at the same time saving money for our local taxpayers. Since taking office as Charlotte County Clerk of the Court in January 2017, I have worked tirelessly to fulfill these promises. I am proud to report the following new programs and efficiencies in our office.

Your Clerk's Office developed a state of the art online Jury Management System which provides convenience and efficiency for citizens who receive a jury service summons in the mail. In addition, our team developed the myJuryServices app which is the first app in the State of Florida available at both the Apple App Store and Google Play. Prospective jurors can now check-in online after receiving a jury summons notice. For those who may need to seek excusal from jury service, we have provided a new online juror excusal request program which is quick and easy to use. Finally, for those who do serve on a local jury, we now offer same day pay – you receive your daily juror service stipend the same day you serve, in cash. Not only do our jurors receive payment the same day rather than waiting for

a check to arrive in a few weeks, but our office saves substantial taxpayer money by eliminating staff time in cutting checks, as well as postage and envelopes for thousands of jurors per year.

Your Clerk's Office established a FREE Property Fraud Alert Program which informs Charlotte County property owners of any official record transaction filed against their name via an email notification program. This new online services tool is a fraud prevention program designed to better protect an individual's property from fraudulent activity. This program, which takes only seconds to sign up for and is completely free of charge, compliments our vision for enhanced communication for property owners in Charlotte County.

Our office also updated our official records public website to allow citizens to print copies of recorded documents without a watermark from their home or business computers free of charge.

As reported in the May 3rd, 2017 edition of the Charlotte Sun, your Clerk's Office was singled out as the primary reason the planned \$36 million Justice

Center expansion construction project was reduced to a \$16.8 million rearrangement of existing space project, saving local taxpayers approximately \$19.2 million. As a result of your Clerk's Office's advances in our digital document program, our office was able to give up physical space to other court agencies which were in need of additional space in the Justice Center, thereby eliminating the need to expand. Charlotte County Commissioner Christopher Constance kindly stated "I don't think that enough focus has been placed on (Clerk of Courts) Roger Eaton, the fact that he has given up space to make this happen."

Our budget request for 2017-2018 to fund Board Services decreased by \$62,000 or 1.9% as compared with FY 2016-2017's request; even with health care costs rising by 5% and rising Florida Retirement System (FRS) rates. Additionally, at year end 2017, I was able to return \$363,416 to the Board of County Commissioners. This was only the second year since the 2008 recession that our office returned funds to the Board and to the taxpayers of Charlotte County.

On the Comptroller side of our office, our team analyzed the current structure of investments, while continuing to provide security, safety and liquidity of the County's investments. Coupled with rising interest rates in general, we were able to shift a sizable portion of very liquid funds into more US Government agency securities and instruments earning a much better yield. Over \$4.9 million was earned on investments controlled by your Clerk's Office in 2017, as compared with \$3.6 million earned in 2016, an increase of 37%. In addition we further diversified our liquid assets by shifting some funds into a different investment trust pool, further minimizing risk.

I am also proud to report that your Clerk of Court's Office was awarded the Certificate of Achievement for Excellence in Financial Reporting from the Government

Finance Officers Association for the fiscal year ending September 30, 2016. This is the thirty-first consecutive year your Clerk's Office has received this prestigious recognition in government accounting and financial reporting.

My office will continue developing new and innovative ways to provide a better service experience for local citizens, while at the same time reducing the burden to local taxpayers. While I am very proud of our accomplishments in 2017, I will not rest on them. As I continually tell my children, there is always room for improvement. Throughout my term as your Clerk of Court, our office will always strive to find new, unique techniques which make our office easy to use, convenient, efficient, and at less cost to our local taxpayers. I look forward to reporting to you this time next year on our 2018 calendar year improvements.

For more information about our office and to access all of our new features, please visit us at CharlotteClerk.com.

Sincerely,



Honorable, Roger D. Eaton
Clerk of the Circuit Court and County Comptroller

The **Clerk of the Circuit Court and County Comptroller** is elected by the voters of Charlotte County to serve a four-year term. The Florida Constitution and Statutes prescribe authority and responsibilities of the Office.

Honorable, Roger D. Eaton, Clerk of the Circuit Court and County Comptroller for Charlotte County started his first term in office on January 03, 2017.

As an **Officer of the Court**, the Clerk is a member of the judicial branch of government and is responsible for the custody and integrity of Circuit and County Court records, including the receipt of related fees and fines.

As **County Recorder**, he is responsible for maintaining and safeguarding the County's Official Records and operates branch offices in Port Charlotte and Punta Gorda to assist him in the delivery of these services to the residents of Charlotte County. He is responsible for the certification and research of land ownership records, passport application processing; issuing

marriage licenses, tax deed applications, liens and supports the enforcement of our County's Juror Services judicial administration and compliance provisions .

As **Clerk to the Board of County Commissioners, County Finance Officer and County Auditor**, he fulfills a checks-and-balance function for county government to assure funds are expended only for public purposes and for the benefit of the citizens of Charlotte County.

In addition to serving the duties of Clerk of the Circuit Court and County Comptroller, the Clerk takes great pride in being an active community leader, volunteer, and athletic coach. His philanthropic activities include serving on the Board of the United Way of Charlotte County, C.A.R.E, Boys & Girls Club, and participating in several Charlotte County Educational and Youth Athletic organizations.



THE CLERK'S ROLE AS A PUBLIC TRUSTEE

Provisions of the Florida Constitutions of 1838, established the Clerk of the Circuit Court as an elected public trustee and set in place at the county level a system of “checks and balances” which has been proven to serve the public for over 175 years. The role as Public Trustee is evidenced as follows:

COUNTY GOVERNMENT

- Accountant and Auditor for the Board of County Commissioners
- Collector and Distributor of Statutory Assessments
- Guardian of the Public Records, Public Funds and Public Property

COURTS

- Ensures that the Court's Orders, Judgments or Directives are carried out within the parameters allowed by Law.
- Maintains the Court's Records.
- Collects and disburses the Court Fines, Fees and Assessments.
- Collects and disburses Court Ordered Child Support and Alimony Payments.

STATE GOVERNMENT

- Collects and disburses Documentary Fees and Intangible Taxes for the Department of Revenue.
- Collects and disburses numerous fees and assessments for the Benefit of State Trust Funds.
- Provides informational, financial, and statistical data to the State Legislature, Supreme Court, Florida Department of Law Enforcement, Auditor General, Department of Health and Rehabilitative Services, and Other State Agencies.

CITIZENS' PROTECTION

- As Custodian of County funds, the Clerk ensures that the taxpayer's money is managed according to Law.
- Provides Internal Audits of County government to assure compliance and internal controls.

- Provides Access to Public Records.
- Audits reports of guardians in Guardianship cases.
- Provides assistance to citizens in accessing the courts.
- Processes, maintains and preserves court documents to ensure that litigant's court cases are handled in a timely manner.

ACCOUNTABILITY AS A PUBLIC TRUSTEE

- The Office of the Clerk is a complex organization that performs a wide range of record keeping, information management and financial management in the judicial system and county government.
- In a study conducted by the Joint Select Committee on Judicial Personnel of the Legislature, it was calculated that the Clerk's office performs over 1,000 constitutional and statutory functions or duties.
- With the magnitude of the impact that the Clerk's duties has on the peoples' rights and property, it is essential that the Clerk be accountable for his/her actions.

Thus, the Constitution and Statutes decree that:

- The Clerk is governed by statutory authority in carrying out the duties and functions of the office.
- As auditor and custodian of all county funds, the Clerk is subject to State Auditor general rules and regulations.
- The Clerk is subject to annual audits by an independent audit firm.

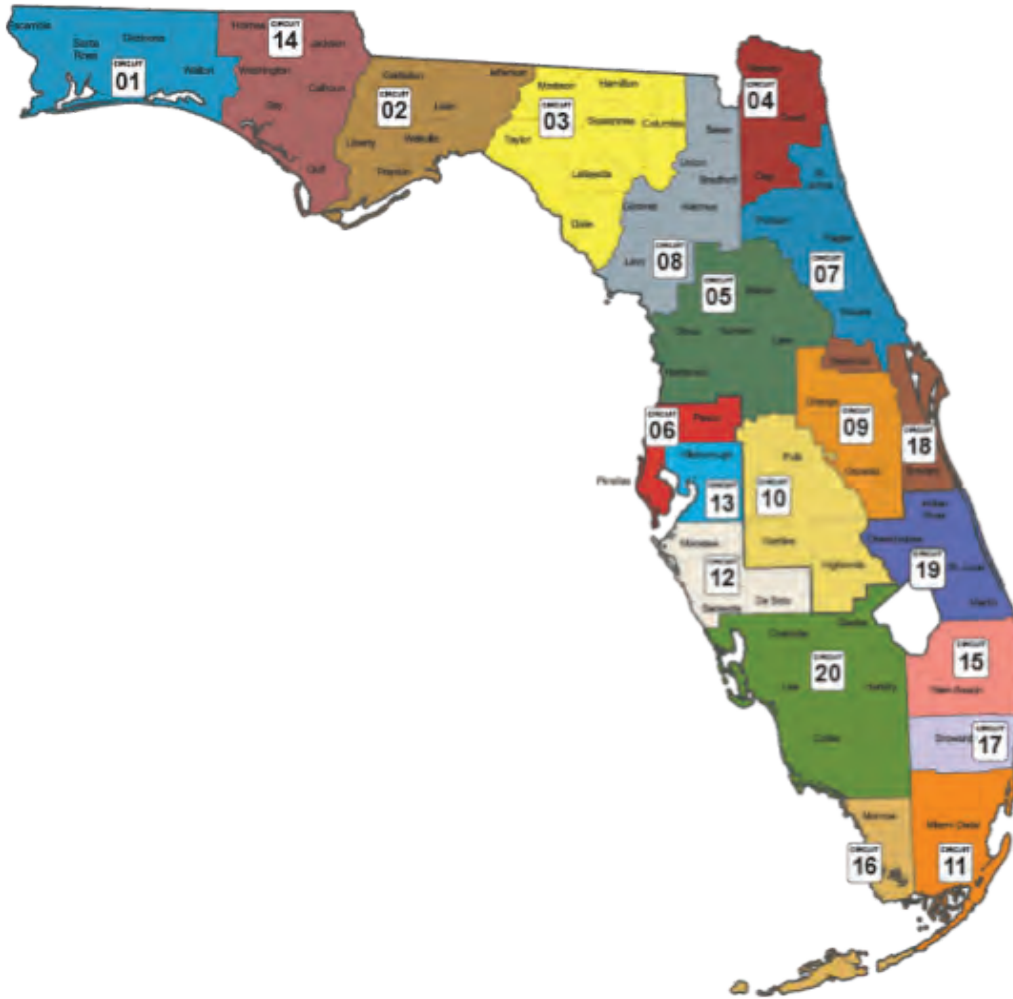
The Constitution of the State of Florida

“A public office is a public trust. The people have the right to secure and sustain that trust.” ARTICLE I, SECTION 8

“There shall be in each county a Clerk of the Circuit Court who shall be selected pursuant to the provisions of Article VII, Section 1.” ARTICLE V, SECTION 16

“The Clerk of the Circuit Court shall be Ex-Officio Clerk of the Board of County Commissioners, Auditor, Recorder and Custodian of all County funds” ARTICLE VII, SECTION 1(d)

FLORIDA JUDICIAL CIRCUITS



THE 20TH JUDICIAL CIRCUIT COURT

The State of Florida is divided into twenty (20) Judicial Circuits. Each circuit is comprised of a circuit court and one or more county courts.

Charlotte County is in the 20th Circuit that also includes Collier, Glades, Hendry, & Lee Counties. Three County Judges, four Circuit Court Judges and two Magistrates preside over Charlotte County.

The Clerk is responsible for the clerical business of the Courts, including maintaining court records and case files, issuing summons, warrant and violation of probation or injunction orders, entering judgments and managing court related fees and fines, just to name a few on the over 1000 other statutory requirements.

The Clerk of the Circuit Court's Civil and Criminal Divisions carry out the court services functions for both county and circuit court. Additional details are provided on the following pages.

In accordance with Florida Statutes, the Clerk appoints Deputies to assist him with fulfilling the duties of the office.

CLERK OF THE CIRCUIT COURT & COMPTROLLER OFFICE LOCATIONS

Charlotte County Justice Center: 350 E. Marion Ave. Punta Gorda, FL 33950 (941) 505-4716

Charlotte County Administrative Offices: 18500 Murdock Circle, Port Charlotte, FL 33948 (941) 743-1537

ONLINE SERVICES & E-FILING PORTALS

Criminal and Civil Court Records can be viewed via our **Online Services** menu, **Court Records** link at <https://courtsweb.co.charlotte.fl.us/BenchmarkWeb/Home.aspx/Search>. Searches can be made by name, case number, citation number.

Attorneys can file cases and documents via our E-File portal at: myflcourtagency.com. This service is another cost savings measure as we strive to go paperless.

Official Records searches are found at this link: <https://or.co.charlotte.fl.us/recording>.

Marriage License application request are online at: marriage.charlotteclerk.com. Tax Deed Sales can be viewed and bids made at: charlotte.realforeclose.com.

The Clerk of the Circuit Court and County Comptroller manages several Board Services and has a seat on the dais as required by Florida Statute and Florida Sunshine Rules. The responsibilities of our Commission Minutes staff includes the preparation and maintenance of all official meeting records for all Charlotte County Board of County Commissioners Board Meetings, Agenda's, Workshops and Value Adjustment Board Hearings. For more information click on this link: <https://www.charlottecountyfl.gov> to view taped meetings or to view agendas or archived meeting minutes under the BCC Agenda's menu.

Our Commission Minutes Department also manages

the Value Adjustment Board (VAB) Petition E-Filing application process for the County. VAB services allow property taxpayers a forum to dispute their assessed value or denial of a homestead or other qualified exemption. The County uses a Special Magistrate as an unbiased hearing officer for these types of cases. Results of the hearings are shared with both the Property Appraiser and Tax Collector's office. For more information go to <https://courtsweb.co.charlotte.fl.us/VAB2017/>

The Clerk's Comptroller Division provides accounting services to the Board of County Commissioners (BOCC) to assure that there is a checks and balance for goods, services, and State reporting. County Assets and Investments are also managed by the Comptroller's office. Responsibilities also include vendor payment processing and the preparation of tax forms and reports for accounts payable services.

Additionally, Payroll Services are provided to the BOCC, Supervisor of Elections Office, and some Court Administration staff, in addition to the Clerk & Comptroller's office. Our Payroll Services include the preparation of all payroll tax reporting for wage and employee benefit deductions, FRS contributions and 457 deferred compensation contributions following various rules governed under union and non-union policy provisions. Requests for information should be directed to RecordsRequests@CharlotteClerk.com.

A graphic for the Fraud Alert Program. It features a blue background with a white star at the top left. Below the star, the text "FRAUD ALERT" is written in large, white, serif capital letters, with "Protect Your Most Valuable Investment" in smaller white text underneath. In the center, there is a 3D illustration of a white house with a blue roof, partially obscured by a thick silver chain and a yellow padlock. To the right of the house, the text "REGISTER FOR OUR" is written in white, followed by "FRAUD ALERT PROGRAM" in large, white, serif capital letters. At the bottom right, the URL "https://or.co.charlotte.fl.us/recording/Fraudalert" is provided in white text.

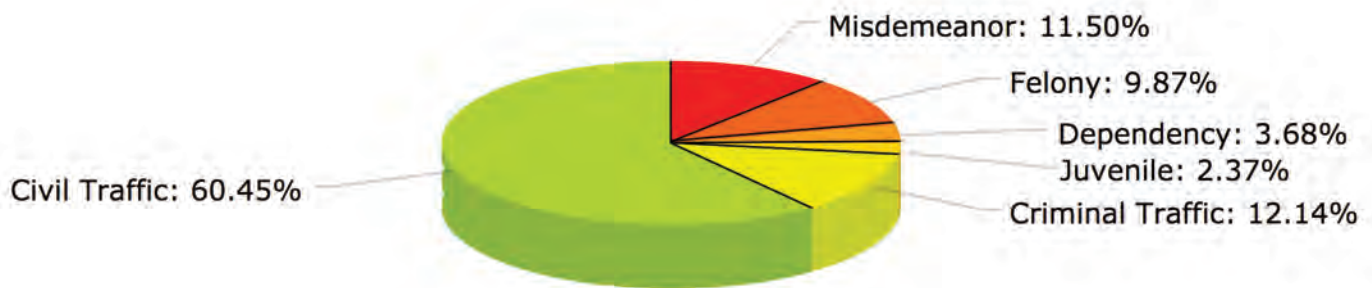
CRIMINAL COURT SERVICES

The Criminal Courts Division processes felony, juvenile, misdemeanor, and criminal traffic cases, as well as civil infractions.

The Clerks' duties involve coordinating with other agencies including Sheriff, Public Defender, State Attorney, Florida Department of Law Enforcement, Pre-Trial Services, Department of Corrections, and County Probation as well as the judiciary, defendants and private attorneys.

The staff attends Criminal Court where the duties include swearing in witnesses, marking and controlling evidence, and the reading of verdicts. All court records are maintained electronically and can be viewed via the Clerk's Online Services menu link. Court case and docket searches can be made using a number of different factors, such as by last name, followed by first name or by case number, among other options as noted on our site.

CRIMINAL DIVISION CASES FILED 2017



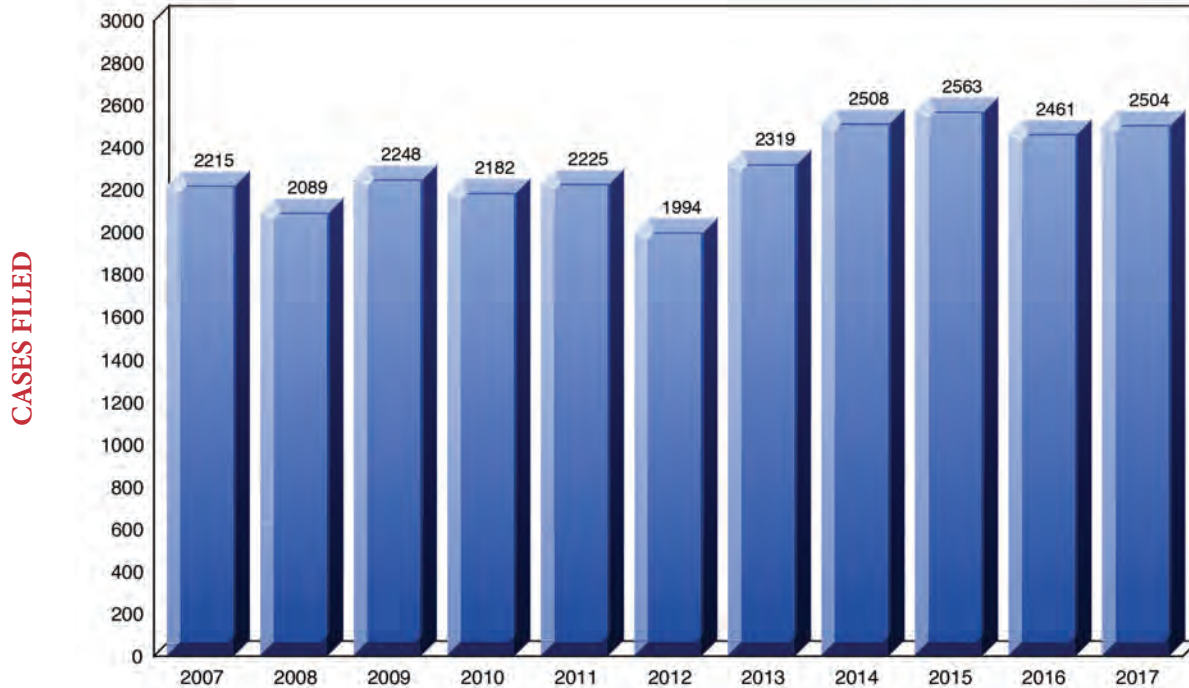
● Misdemeanor	2,146	● Felony	1,842
● Dependency	686	● Juvenile	443
● Criminal Traffic	2,265	● Civil Traffic	11,281

Payments for all case types can be made in person in our Punta Gorda and Murdock offices, or as an added convenience, payments for applicable fines and court costs can be made online at <https://www.charlottecourtpay.com> through our partnership with n-Court. Payments can also be made over the phone by calling the toll free payment line (855) 796-5772. Communication is available in both English and Spanish. All felony cases under the supervision of the Department of Corrections should be directed to them.

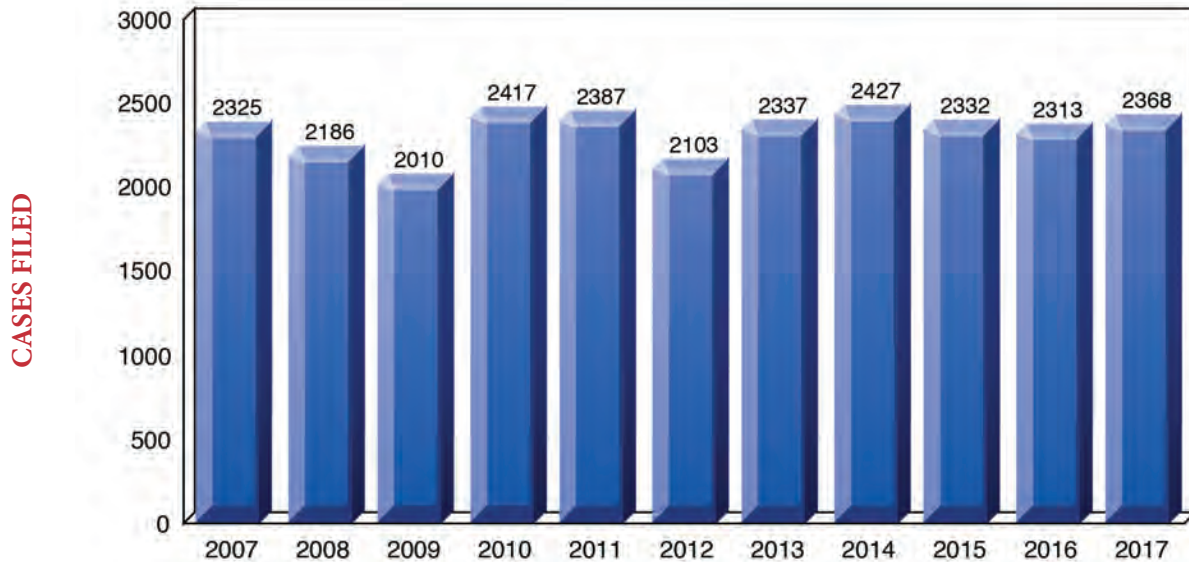


CIVIL AND CRIMINAL TRAFFIC COURT RECORDS

MISDEMEANOR

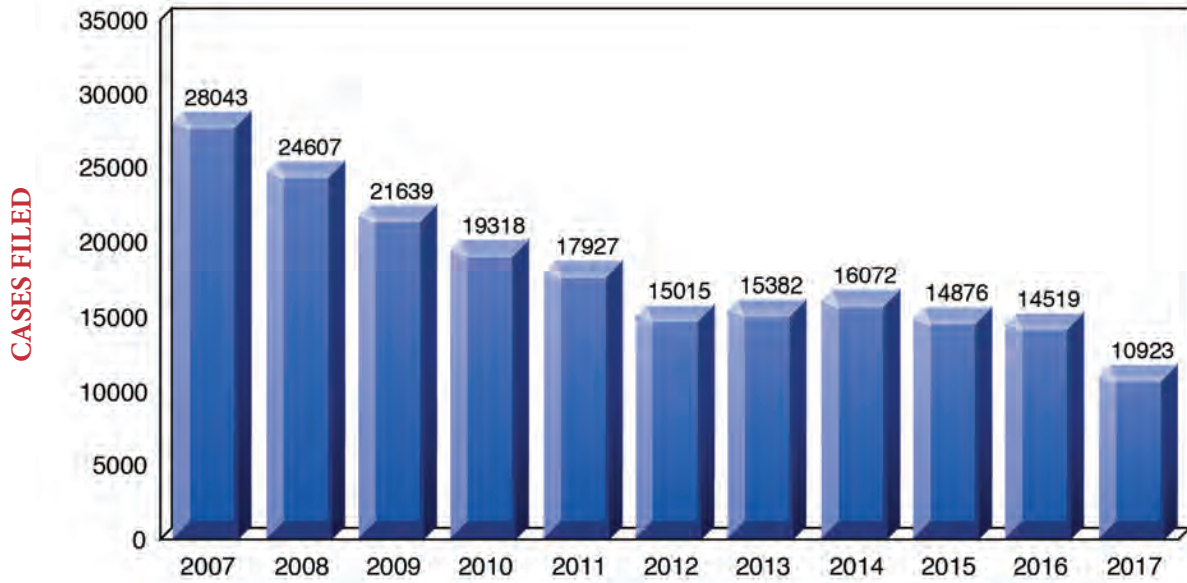


FELONY CASES

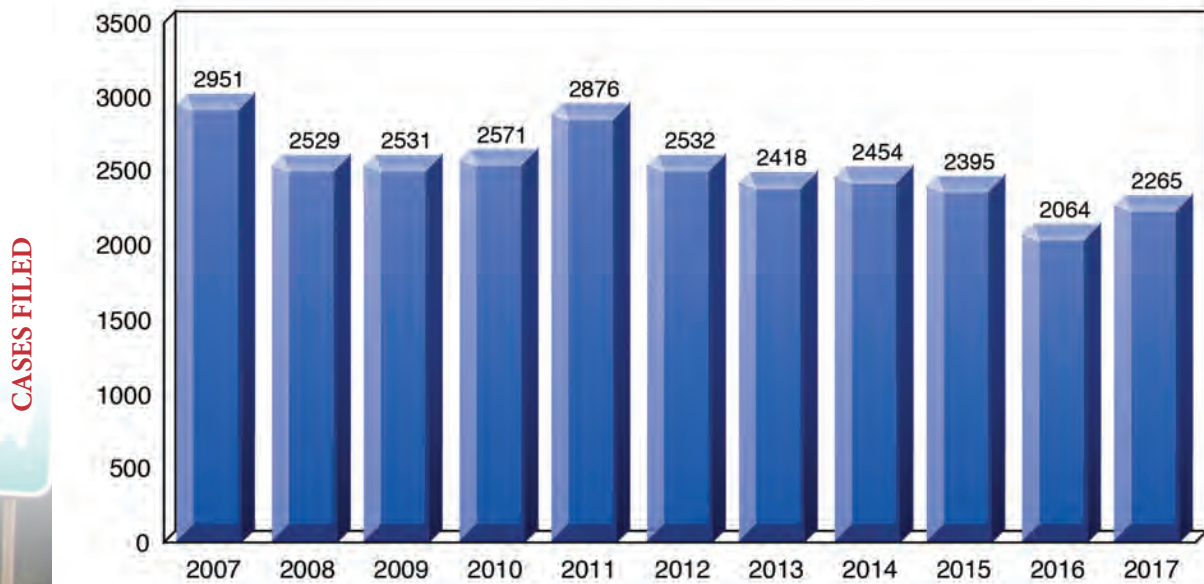


Uniform Traffic Citations are electronically filed through e-Citations and hard copy format. Information is submitted from the following agencies: Florida Highway Patrol, Charlotte County Sheriff, and Punta Gorda Police Department. Citations for parking tickets, animal control violations, code enforcement, alarm violations, boating citations, and some Department of Transportation (DOT) citations, are processed in hard copy format. Payments for citations can be made in person, over the phone at (855) 796-5772 and via the internet through our portal at CharlotteCourtPay.com.

CIVIL TRAFFIC



CRIMINAL TRAFFIC



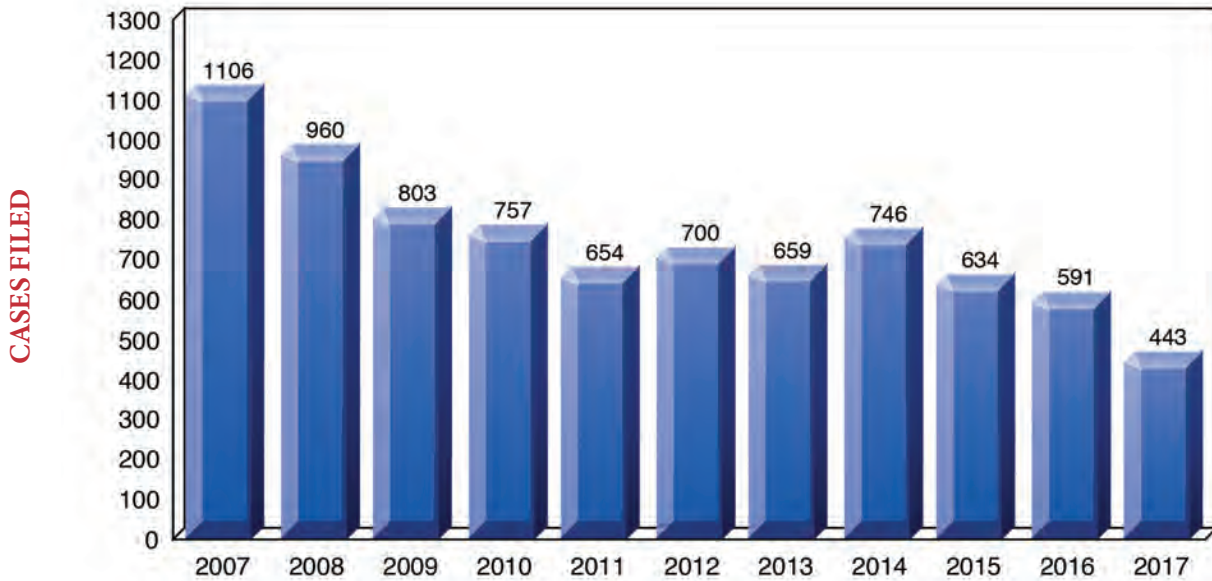
JUVENILE COURT RECORDS

Juvenile cases are similar in processing requirements to felony and misdemeanor cases. However, these cases are considered to be confidential and are not available to the public. Dependency cases are also processed by this department and are kept confidential.

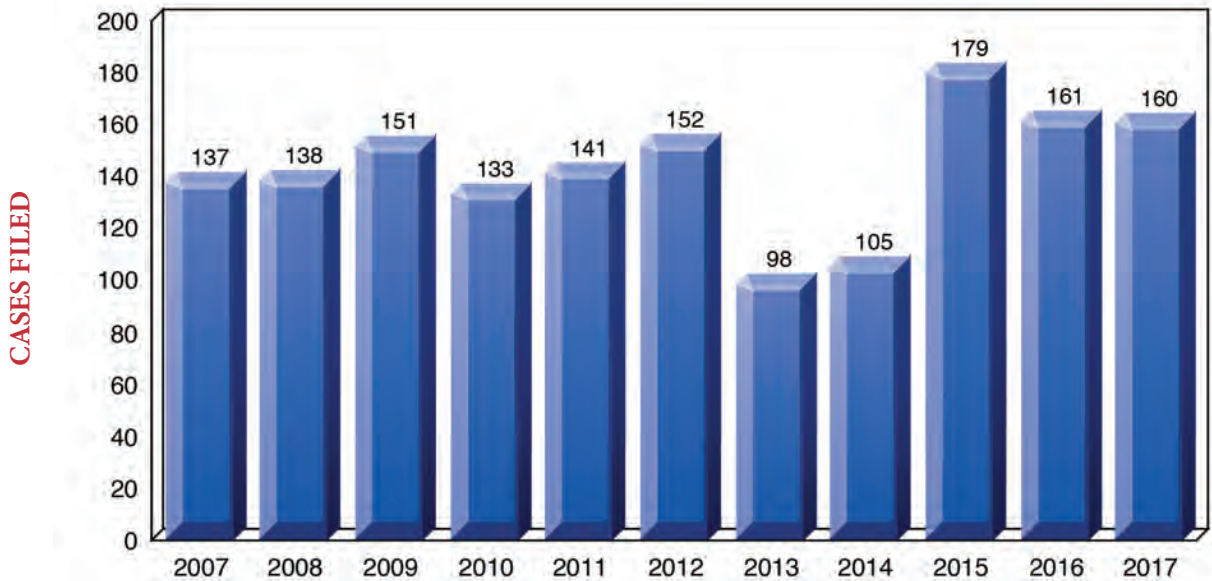
The State Attorney may choose to directly charge a juvenile offender as an adult. Such cases are closed in the juvenile

case and a felony adult case would then be opened. Some juvenile cases are transferred for disposition to the County where the offender resides. Dispositions are electronically reported to the State through software that requires special security access to ensure the mandated confidentiality is not compromised.

JUVENILE CASES



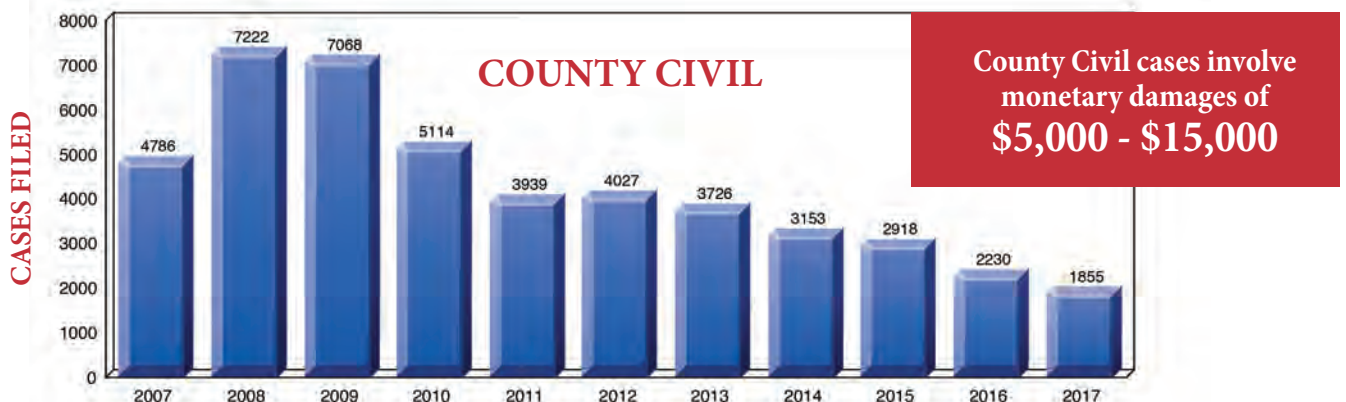
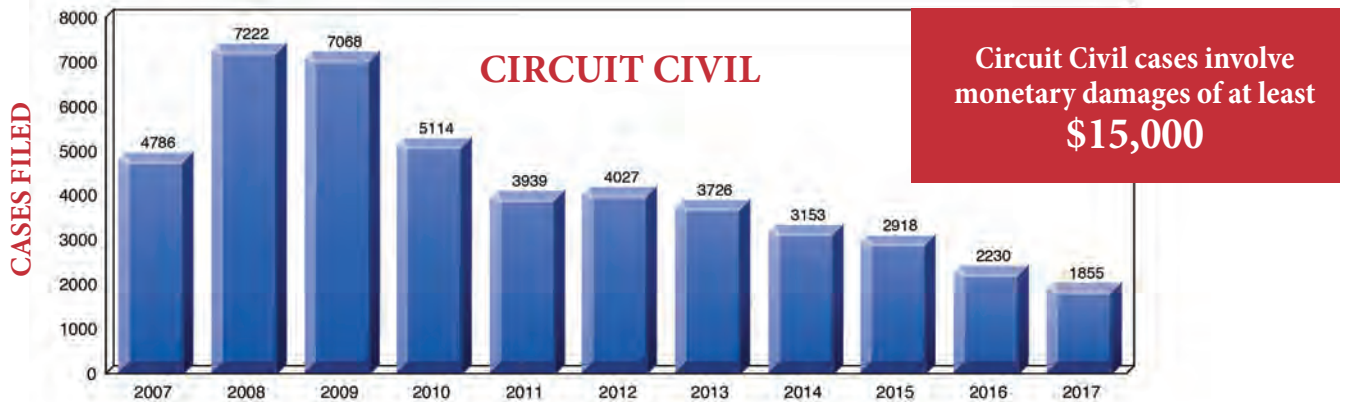
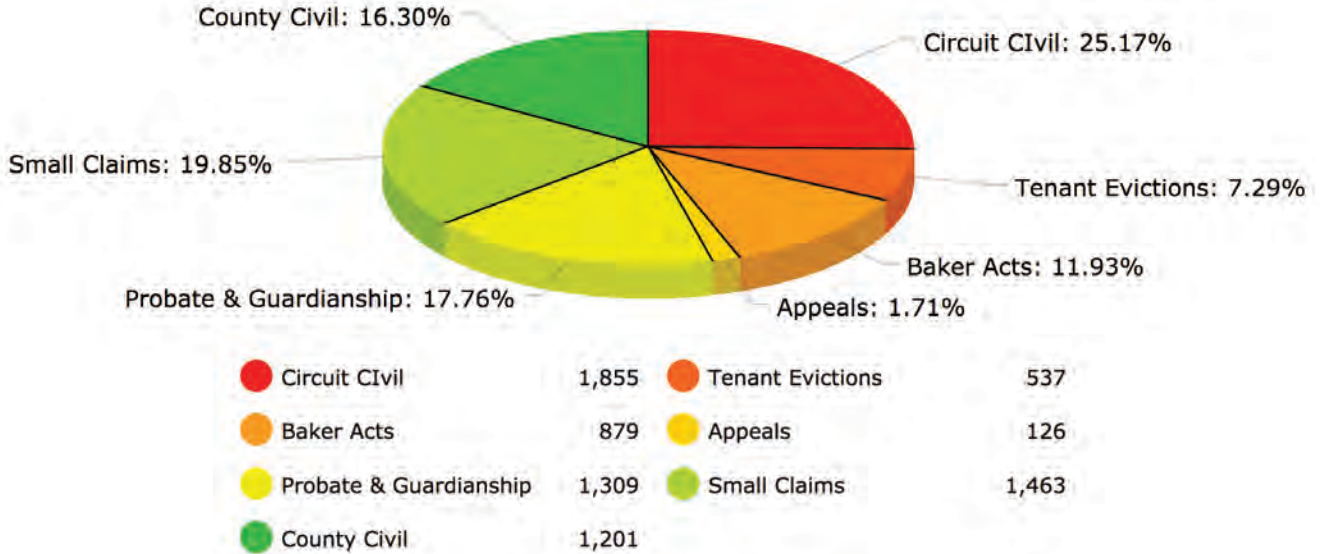
DEPENDENCY CASES



CIVIL COURT SERVICES

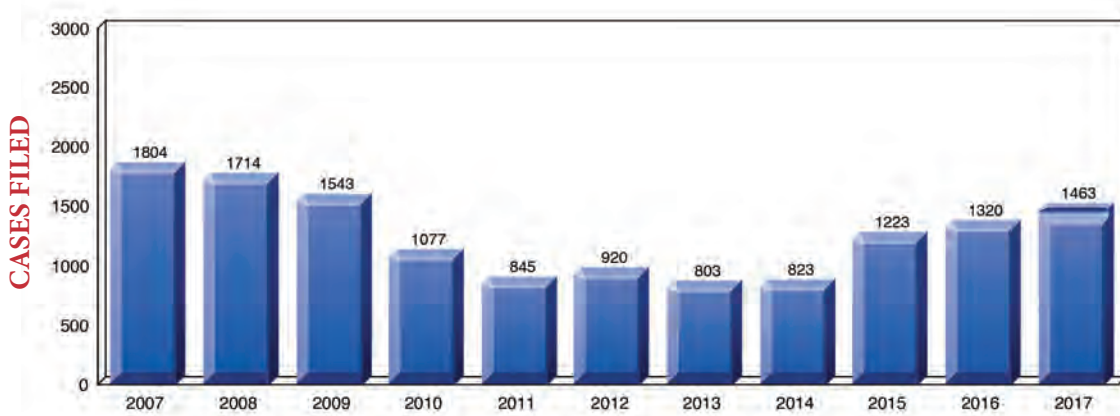
The Civil Courts Division is responsible for processing small claims, civil actions, probate, guardianship and mental health cases. Due to the diversity of cases, the Clerk's staff must be familiar with various types of actions and trial procedures.

CIVIL DIVISION CASES FILED 2017



SMALL CLAIMS

Small Claims Court involves damages less than \$5,000. A person may file a case without representation by an Attorney. The Clerk's staff provides the necessary forms and explains the process, but they cannot, pursuant to Florida Law, provide legal advice.

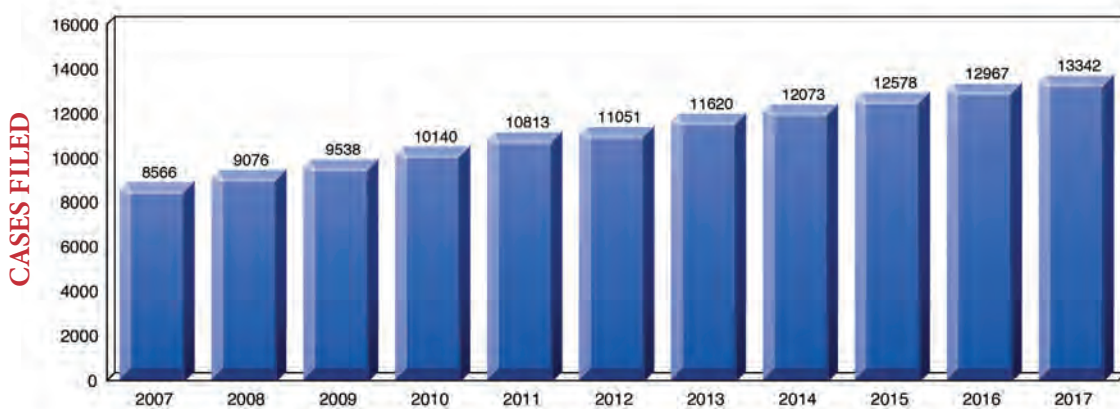


CHILD SUPPORT SERVICES

The Federal Welfare Reform Act passed by Congress mandated that every state create a centralized child support system. Charlotte County was chosen to be a test site for this new system. Our participation laid the framework for the processing center where all support payments throughout Florida are sent to the Florida's State Disbursement Unit (FLSDU) located in Tallahassee. This center processes the remittances and distributes checks to the receiving families. Normal processing time is 48 hours, barring any delays in mail delivery.

The Department of Revenue is authorized to assist the custodial parent in the collection of any unpaid child support by using its authority to intercept IRS funds, garnish unemployment and Workers' Compensation funds, freeze bank accounts and track delinquent payers who leave the state without notice. This program is committed to the goal of collecting support on behalf of the many children in our County who are unable to speak for themselves.

CHILD SUPPORT CASES

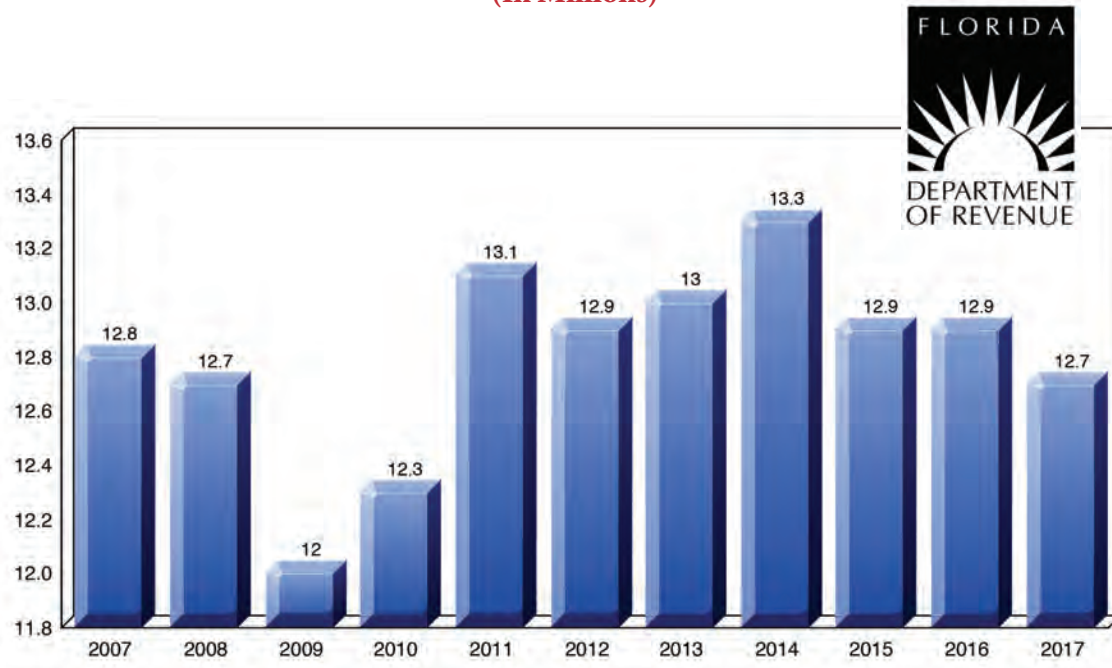


PAY CHILD SUPPORT ONLINE

The Charlotte County Clerk of Court has teamed with the State Disbursement Unit (SDU), Florida Department of Revenue, and other Florida Clerks to offer online Child Support Services through www.myfloridacounty.com; the official website for local government services and information. This service

enables non-custodial parents to pay child support using a debit or credit card and enables non-custodial parents to set up an account for recurring payments and enables parents to obtain details on the five most recent child support payments.

CHILD SUPPORT PAYMENTS (In Millions)



For Charlotte County, there are 13,342 current cases in the Child Support System for the year 2017. With payments collected for Charlotte County totaling over \$12.7 million dollars.

PROBATE, GUARDIANSHIP AND BAKER ACTS

The Probate/Guardianship section processes all probate, guardianship, and mental health (Baker Act and Marchman Act) cases. There were 1,309 cases filed in 2017.

The Clerk is responsible for auditing all guardianship cases. This requires close scrutiny of all reports filed by the guardian of an incapacitated citizen. This is an essential element for safeguarding the individual, as well as their property and assets.

JURY SERVICES



JURY SYSTEM HIGHLIGHTS

SELF CHECK-IN

At the start of January 2018, Clerk Eaton and his IT team, in partnership with Pioneer Technology Group, conceptualized and developed a New, state-of-the-art Jury Management self-check-in system tailored to meet the Clerk's vision to improve this County's Juror Service experience.

Some of the exciting operational improvements developed include a **Kiosk** system that allows summoned jurors to self-check-in, which reduced this office's juror processing time. As an enhancement to this concept, an **App** was also developed, called MyJuryServices, to allow jurors to do an early check-in from home using their personal computers or mobile devices

AT HOME CHECK-IN

(such as tablets or cell phones). The App also added additional efficiencies to our office.

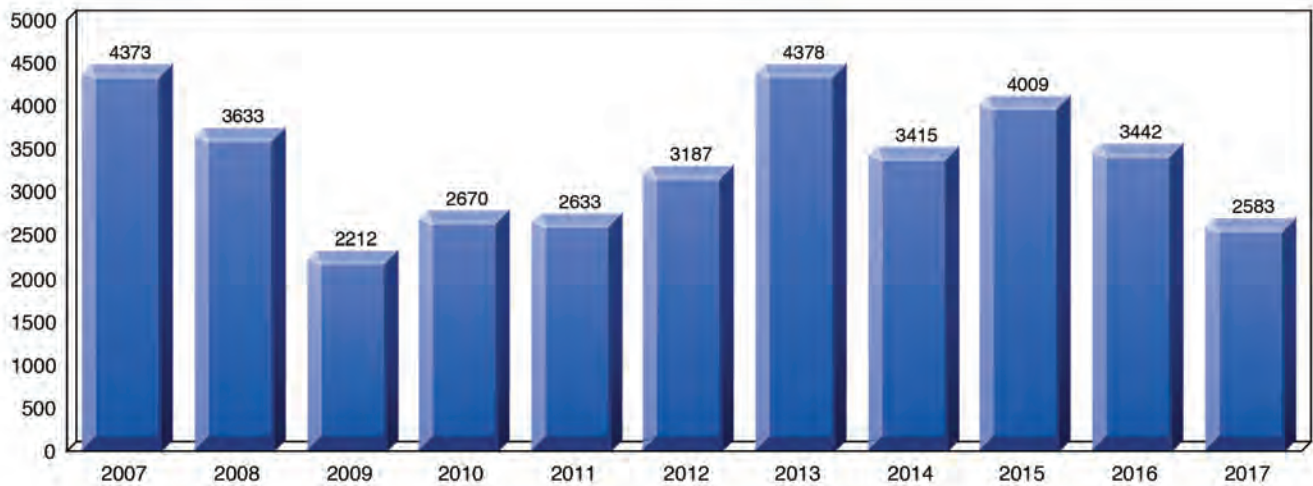
In addition, another cost saving measure was the implementation of "**Same Day Pay**", which is a program that allows jurors to be paid in cash each day they serve. Not only is this a great benefit for the juror, but there is a direct cost savings benefit for the Clerk's office by reducing the number of checks needing to be processed.

This office is very proud to be the **first in the State of Florida** to offer these types of time & cost saving measures in the management of juror services.

Jury.CharlotteClerk.com

SAME DAY PAY

JURORS REPORTED



HOW ARE JURORS SELECTED?

Prospective jurors are selected at random from the driver's license list issued by the Department of Highway Safety and Motor Vehicles. The Jury Management staff issues juror summonses 1 month in advance of scheduled trials.

There were 71 jury trials held in 2017 and 2,583 jurors reported for duty.



APPEALS

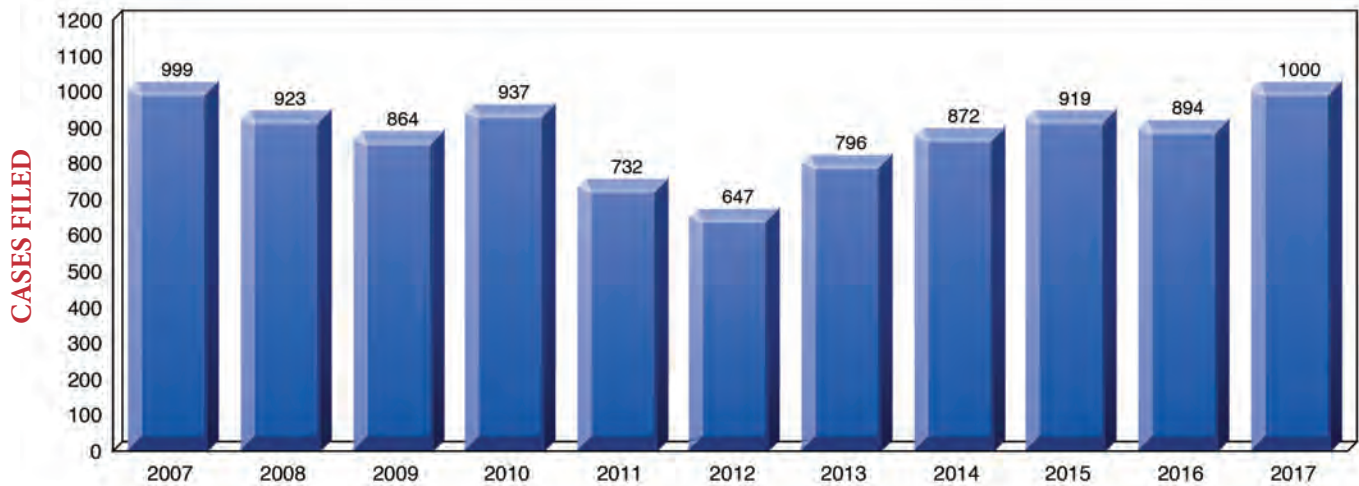
Appeals are cases presented to a higher court to review the decision rendered by a lower court.

For example, a County Court case would be appealed to the Circuit Court, and Circuit Court decisions are appealed to the District Court.

There were a total of 126 cases filed in 2017.



DOMESTIC VIOLENCE SERVICES



SERVING OUR COMMUNITY WITH DOMESTIC VIOLENCE ISSUES

Our staff assists victims of abuse in filing for an Injunction for Protection and provides privacy to petitioners.

In 2017 there were 1000 domestic violence cases filed.

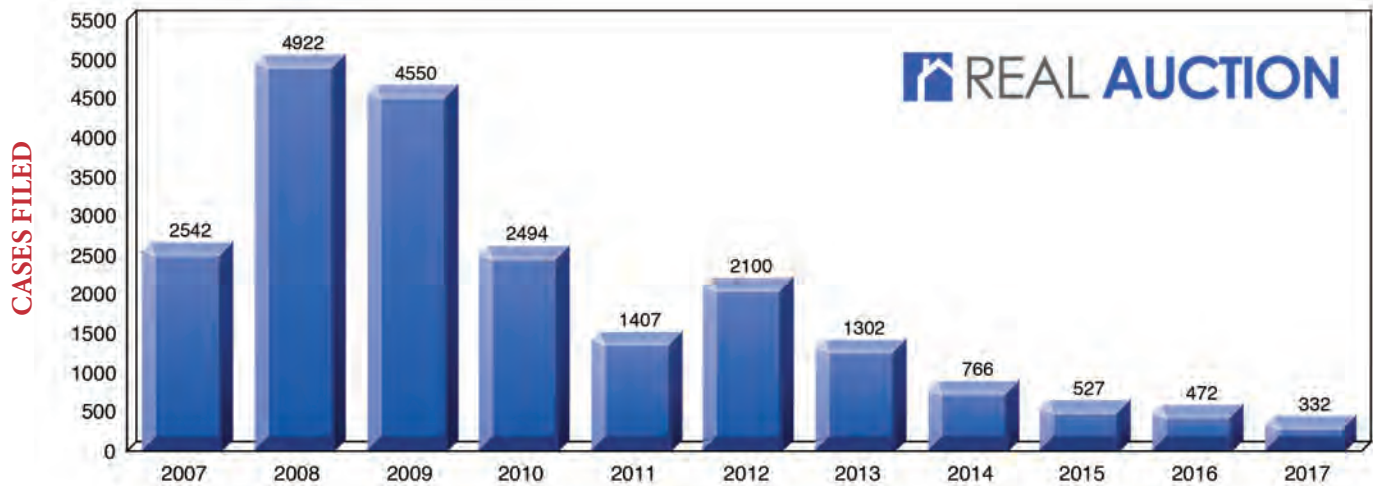
An informational brochure is provided to law enforcement officers for distribution on domestic violence calls. The brochure provides the victim with information on how to file an Injunction for Protection and outlines documents that the individuals need to bring with them to the Clerk's Office. This information is also available on the Clerk's website at www.charlotteclerk.com.

Each year, for the past 3 years, in recognition of October as Domestic Violence Awareness Month, Roger D. Eaton and his staff have promoted DV Awareness to the community by conducting fundraiser events and raising money for the local Center for Abuse and Rape Emergencies Shelter.

In 2017, we raised \$2,000 and were able to donate that amount to the shelter to help those who are affected by domestic violence.

Should you or someone you know be experiencing domestic violence, we urge you to reach out to our office at the Charlotte County Justice Center, 350 East Marion Avenue, Punta Gorda, FL. For more information contact the office at 941-637-2162 or 941-637-2264 or go to www.charlotteclerk.com.

FORECLOSURE SERVICES



Foreclosure is the proceeding by a creditor to regain property or other collateral following a default on mortgage payments.

The Clerk's office processes foreclosure case files and provides a new certified title upon the conclusion of a sale via our Real Auction portal. Charlotte County was the first county in the state of Florida to offer both online sales for tax deeds and foreclosure.

These online auction services offer greater access to records for the public and has improved the efficiency in the processing of foreclosure and tax deed sales and new titles..

In 2017 there were 332 foreclosure cases filed.



HIGHLIGHTS OF COURT OPERATIONS

Our E-filing services provide quick, convenient, case filing and submission of criminal pleadings through our secure online portal for Private Attorneys, the Public Defender and State Attorney's Office.

Additional e-filings include credit for time served, probable cause affidavits, amended bookings, motion for defaults, surety and cash bonds, just to name a few.

Once filed, documents can be viewed online via our website.

To maintain the security of documents filed, we implemented a process called Viewable on Request (VOR). This allows customers needing access to a secure document to electronically submit the request to the Clerk's office. Through this mechanism, we are able to process the request. Once completed and made available, the system has the ability to email the customer to let them know that the document is available for viewing online.

In 2017, we also implemented a new electronic booking interface between the Charlotte County Sheriff's department and the Charlotte County Clerk's office systems. This enhanced interface allowed us to reduce workloads at the jail and helped us create a paperless mechanism between both agencies.

Several innovative enhancements were also made in our juror services and official records divisions, in partnership with the Pioneer Technology group.

OFFICIAL RECORDS SERVICES

As County Recorder, the Clerk records and maintains the Official Records for Charlotte County in accordance with Florida Statutes. Official records include deeds, mortgages, judgments, military discharges, domiciles and other authorized documents. Once recorded, a document remains a permanent record, available for public viewing.

Access to the County's Official Records is available to the public via the Internet.

Presently, there are over 8.6 million images of recorded documents dating back to January 1, 1977 available for the public to view.

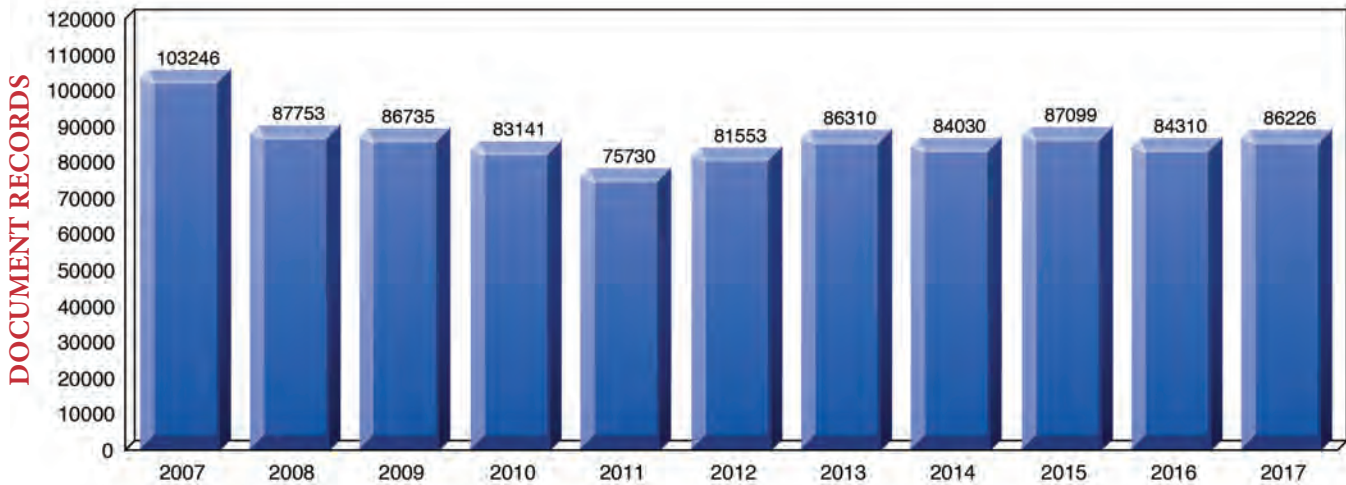
In January of 2017, the Clerk removed the watermark on all Official Records making all documents accessible and printable for FREE from the comfort of your home or office. Anyone needing a Certified Copy must come into the office for this service. There is a \$1.00 per page statutory fee along with a \$2.00 per document statutory fee for the certification.

In December of 2017, the Clerk introduced a new fraud prevention measure to protect property owners in Charlotte County. This new program protects an individual's property from fraud by monitoring documents such as liens, deeds, and mortgages that are recorded in Charlotte County.

The FBI reports that property and mortgage fraud is one of the fastest growing white collar crimes in the United States. Florida ranks #3 in the nation for this type of fraud. Scammers file fraudulent deeds, pretending to be property owners of homes. These scammers are then deceiving people into giving them money to rent or buy those homes.

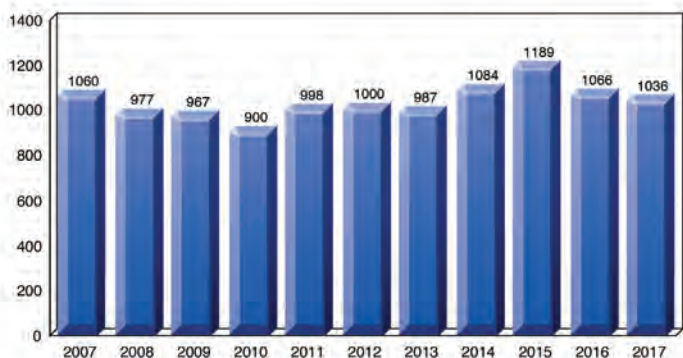
To conduct an online Official Records search to our Online Services menu at www.charlotteclerk.com, then click on Official Record – Search.

In 2017, 86,226 documents were recorded.

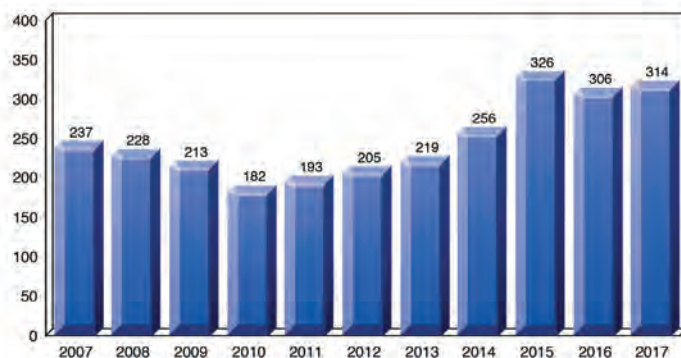


MARRIAGE SERVICES

MARRIAGE LICENSES



MARRIAGE CEREMONIES



The Punta Gorda Official Records Division issues marriage licenses and performs marriage ceremonies upon request. In 2017, there were 1,036 licenses processed and 314 ceremonies performed.

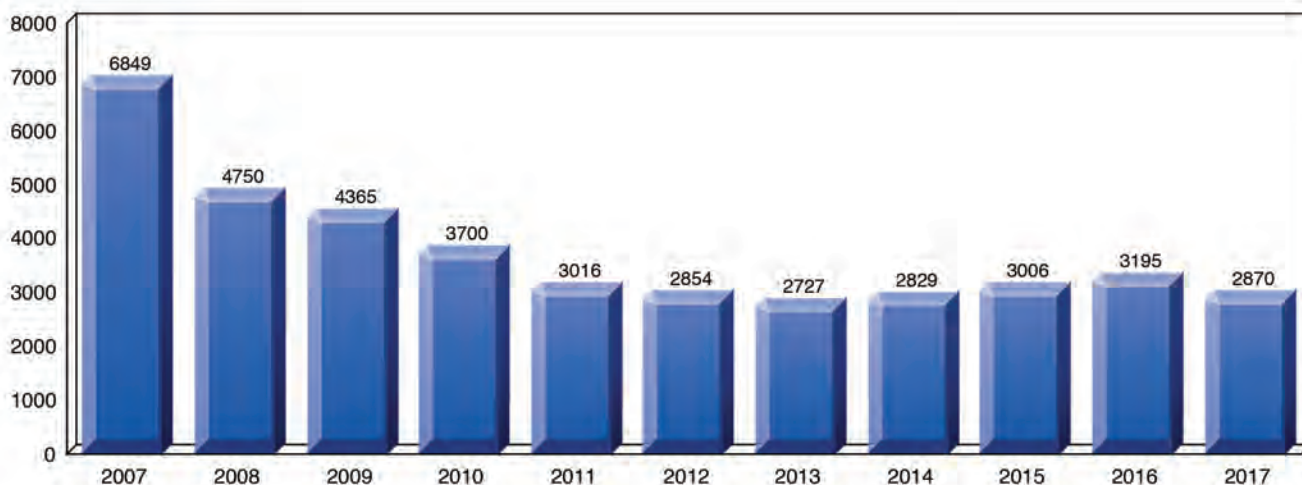
For your convenience, a Marriage License Application request can be prepared online at this link: marriage.charlotteclerk.com

PASSPORT SERVICES

Our Punta Gorda office processes New Passport applications, which are then forwarded to the U.S. Passport Agency in Miami for processing. For your convenience, Passport pictures can be taken and purchased at this office.

There were 2,870 passport applications sent in 2017 by this office.

NEW PASSPORT APPLICATIONS

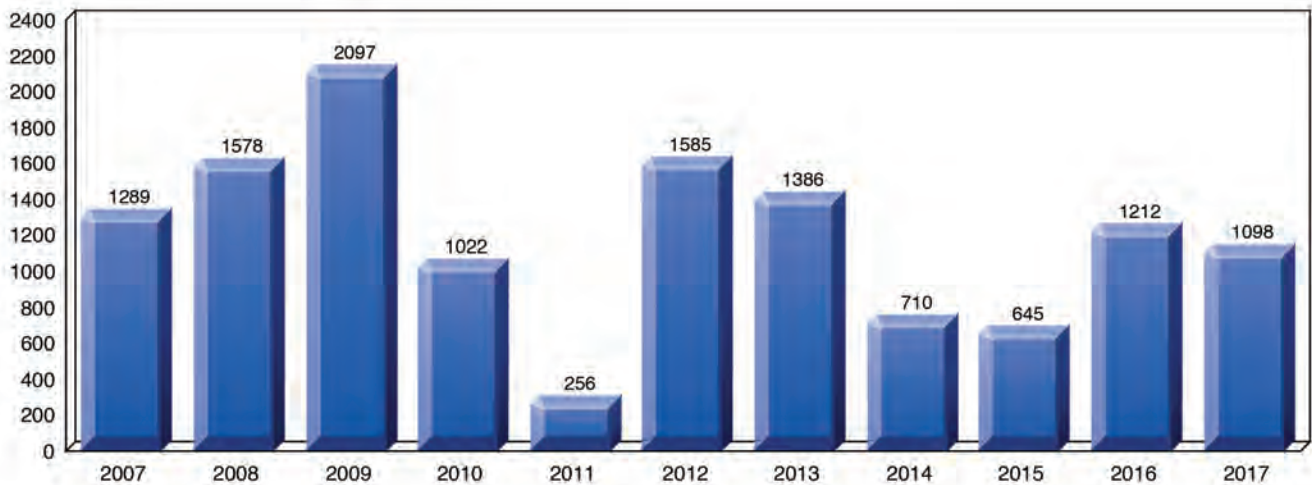


TAX DEED SERVICES

Tax deed applications are processed and sales of real property are auctioned for non-payment of property taxes. All sales are held on-line through www.charlotte.realforeclose.com and are advertised weekly in the local newspaper.

Anyone wishing to view Charlotte County Tax Deed and Foreclosure information can visit our Official Records office in Punta Gorda using a dedicated public computer.

TAX DEED SALES



ANNEX SERVICES

The Annex office in Murdock brings “service to the people” by offering convenience to residents in different parts of the County. Most services available at the Charlotte County Justice Center office are also available at the Annex office.

Documents can be recorded into Official Records. Documents for existing court cases can be filed in our Murdock location; they are then sent by interoffice mail to the Justice Center. Traffic fines and payment plans are also accepted at the Annex office. Official Records are available for viewing at this location via computer database and microfilm.

The Annex office is located at the Charlotte County Administrative Offices,
18500 Murdock Circle, Port Charlotte, FL 33948.
Phone (941)-743-1440.

RECORDS MANAGEMENT

The Records Management Division maintains the hard copy files until they are digitized using approved record keeping systems or have met their retention periods for disposal in accordance with rules promulgated by the Florida Department of State, State Library and Archives of Florida, and the Florida Rules of Judicial Administration. A review of our electronic records policy by the Bureau of Archives and Records Management at the Division of Library and Information Services noted our policies are “very impressive” and can be a “model for other counties”.

This division stores files for the Board of County Commissioners Human Resources, County Training and Community Development, County Risk Management Department, Permitting, Environmental Services and all Clerk of the Circuit Court and Comptroller, Courts, and Employee Relations records retention files.

The Clerk’s Office has been entrusted with the responsibility of housing, storing, and processing records of the Community Development Department, specifically the Building Construction Services, and

Permitting Division. The Clerk’s Office designed an imaging system to meet Florida Law requirements to process, retrieve, and maintain the documents in permanent record format. The program was designed to provide the Community Development Department with immediate access to these images from their desktops and is utilized by their permitting section, as well as other departments throughout the County.

This year, 80,380 permit packages were imaged, totaling 603,819 pages; a total of 7,773,648 pages have been processed since inception.



In preparation of moving the Records Center to a new much smaller facility our office designed efficient processes and procedures for imaging documents to reduce the amount of paper we store. These changes have enabled us to make strides in reducing the amount of boxes needed to be stored as a part of the Clerk’s objective of becoming paperless with our Records Retention needs, with images being scanned and stored electronically instead of being placed in boxes and warehoused, as evidenced in the pictures above.



'17 MAY 1 11:52:58

FLORIDA DEPARTMENT of STATE

RICK SCOTT
Governor

KEN DETZNER
Secretary of State

April 25, 2017

Mr. Roger D. Eaton
Clerk of Circuit Court & County Comptroller
Charlotte County, Florida
Charlotte County Justice Center
350 East Marion Avenue
Punta Gorda, FL 33950

Dear Mr. Eaton,

I have reviewed the current copy of the **Electronic Record Keeping Systems Policy**. It appears all recommendations that I made in June 2016 have been included in this version.

As stated last year, the policy is very impressive. Also, it is my belief that it can be a model for other counties to consider in the creation of their own policies.

I hope that my review has been to your satisfaction. Please do not hesitate to contact me if further clarification is needed.

Sincerely,

Tim Few
Records Management Training Section
Bureau of Archives and Records Management
Division of Library and Information Services
Florida Department of State
850.245.6746
Tim.Few@DOS.MyFlorida.com

Division of Library and Information Services
R.A. Gray Building • 500 South Bronough Street • Tallahassee, Florida 32399
850.245.6600 • 850.245.6735 (Fax) • info.florida.gov



COMPTROLLER DIVISION

Florida Statutes establish the Clerk of the Circuit Court as Ex-Officio Clerk to the Board of County Commissioners (B.C.C.), custodian of all County funds, and accountant to the Board. Responsibilities include: cash management and investments, debt accounting and management from issuance to post insurance compliance, payroll services to include collecting life/health insurance premiums and all required payroll reporting, reviewing expenditures prior to distribution of funds including construction contracts, disbursements of funds, accounting for all revenues including tax distributions and numerous special assessments.

Roger D. Eaton has established his Comptroller Division with appropriate checks and balance procedures assuring internal audit controls. He has also developed a sound Investment Policy, assuring growth and diversification with regard to County assets.

While some governmental entities rely upon their external auditors for preparation of their Comprehensive Annual Financial Report (CAFR), in Charlotte County, the Clerk's Office prepares the entire document in-house and is solely responsible for its content.



Download the Annual Financial Report at:

www.charlotteclerk.com/Reports/CAFR_2017.pdf

Our CAFR has received the Government Finance Officers Association (GFOA) Certificate of Achievement for Excellence in Financial Reporting for thirty one (31) consecutive fiscal years. This award is the highest form of recognition in the area of financial reporting.

PAYROLL produces a bi-weekly payroll for the Board of County Commissioners, the Supervisor of Elections office and for the Clerk of the Circuit Court. This includes all year end reporting requirements to the IRS for wage reporting and reporting under the Affordable Care Act.

THE BOARD REVENUE/ACCOUNTS PAYABLE SECTION, in addition to tracking B.C.C. revenues including Federal and State grants, billings for services, and local and state revenues, are also responsible for vendor payments, travel reimbursements, contracts for personal and professional services, materials and supplies, and asset acquisition and construction.

THE PROPRIETARY FUND ACCOUNTING section is responsible for processing payments, recording transactions and financial reporting for Enterprise Funds. These funds consist of County owned utilities (including Charlotte County Utilities, various water and sewer districts, landfill, and a sanitation district) and Internal Service Funds for vehicle maintenance, casualty, fleet, worker's compensation, general liability self-insurance, and health and disability insurance.

CASH MANAGEMENT consists of cash flow analysis, bank reconciliations and investments of surplus County funds. As custodian of all County funds, responsibility for the investment of these funds rests with the Clerk of the Circuit Court. Funds are invested to provide safety, liquidity and yield, in that order, with minimization of risks consistent with Chapter 218 Florida Statutes.

Funds are currently invested in a multi-tier program. Daily deposits, overnight funds and float monies are invested through an earnings credit vehicle. The County invests in short-term funds such as the Florida Prime, administered by the Florida State Board of Administration (SBA); the Florida Local Government Investment Trust (FLGIT), administered by the Florida Association of Court Clerks and Comptrollers, and the Florida Investment Trust (FIT), administered by Water Walker Investments. All of these investment vehicles are authorized by an indenture of trust pursuant to Florida Statutes Section 163.01 and 218.415.

Longer-term funds (2-5 years) are invested mainly in U.S. Government Agency obligations, authorized under Florida Statute 218. Such Agencies consist of the Federal Home Loan Bank (FHLB); Fannie Mae (FNMA); Freddie Mac (FMAC), Federal Farm Credit Bureau (FFCB) and Federal Home Loan Mortgage Corporation (FHLMC). The County's investment policy outlines investment amount maximums as well as length of maturity. The investment policy outlines investment amount maximums as well as length of maturity. The investment policy can be found at <http://www.charlotteclerk.com/reports/CCFLInvesttPolicy.pdf>

At September 30, 2017, the investment portfolio was \$461.4 million, 58% of which was invested in U.S. Government Agencies, and the balance in shorter-term liquid investments described above.

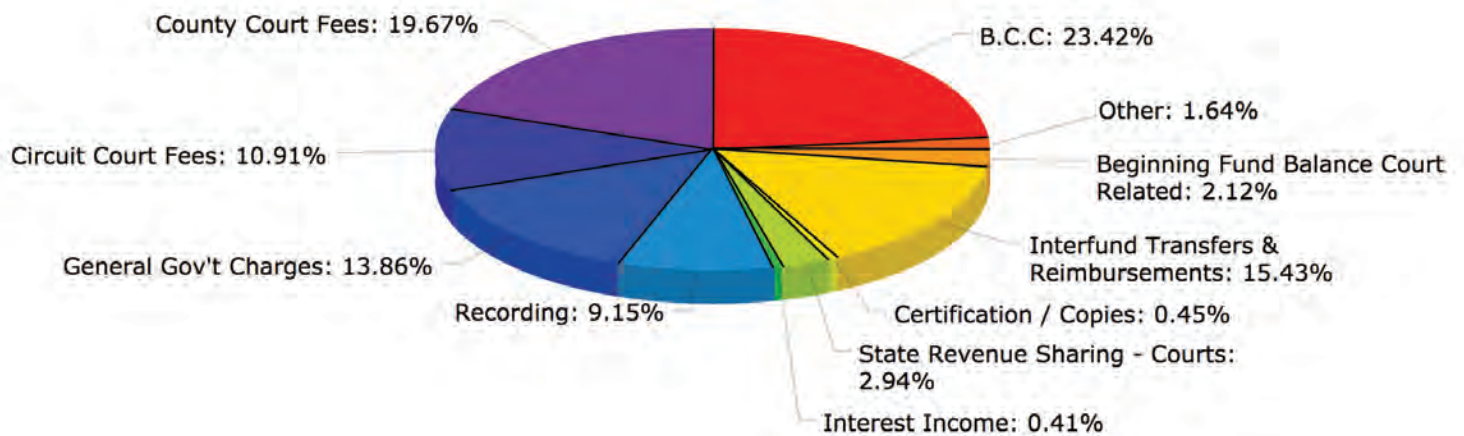
Earnings on investments in 2017 exceeded \$4.9 million with interest rates ranging from a low of .77% in the Money Market Funds, and a high of 2.48% in the small business administration pools.



THE CLERK'S ACCOUNTING SECTION is not only responsible for all Clerk revenues and similar expenditures, but also for the disbursement of funds held in trust by the Clerk of the Circuit Court including tax deeds, cash appearance bonds and distribution of fines and forfeitures in accordance with applicable law.

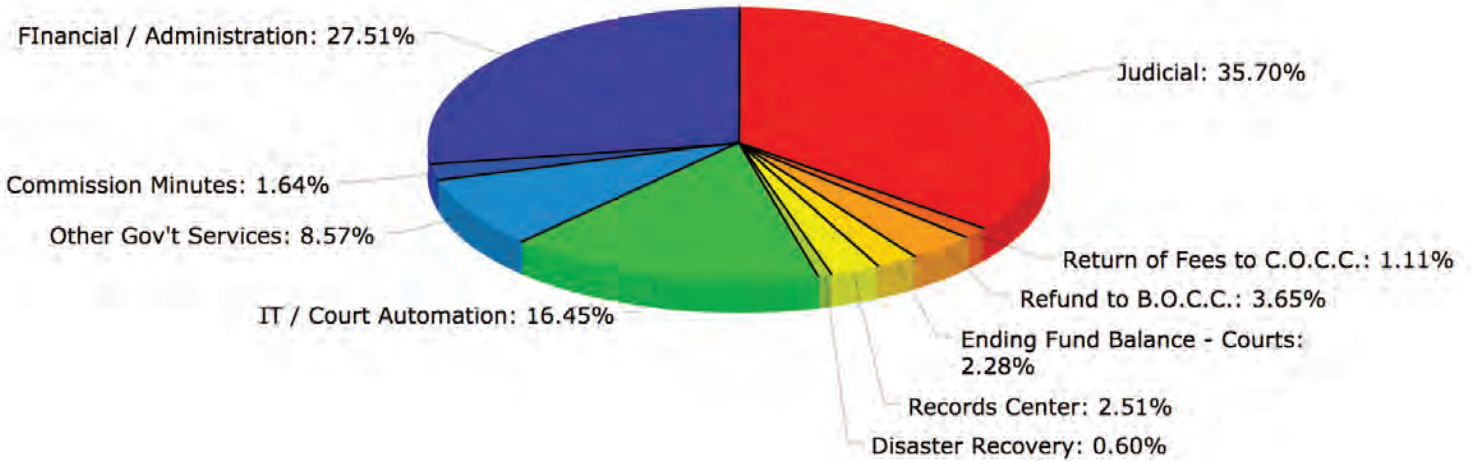
CLERK OF COURTS AND COMPTROLLER FUNDING SOURCES AND EXPENDITURES BY FUNCTION

2017 REVENUES



● B.C.C	2,320,237	● Other	162,510
● Beginning Fund Balance Court Related	210,378	● Interfund Transfers & Reimbursements	1,529,070
● Certification / Copies	44,154	● State Revenue Sharing - Courts	291,324
● Interest Income	40,790	● Recording	906,479
● General Gov't Charges	1,373,683	● Circuit Court Fees	1,080,879
● County Court Fees	1,948,885		

2017 EXPENDITURES



● Judicial	3,553,895	● Return of Fees to C.O.C.C.	110,204
● Refund to B.O.C.C.	363,415	● Ending Fund Balance - Courts	226,522
● Records Center	249,496	● Disaster Recovery	59,350
● IT / Court Automation	1,637,007	● Other Gov't Services	852,720
● Commission Minutes	163,361	● Financial / Administration	2,737,891



COMMISSION MINUTES SERVICES

The Commission Minutes Division fulfills the Clerk’s constitutional responsibility as Ex-Officio Clerk to the Board of County Commissioners (BOCC).

Among its many responsibilities, Minutes staff attends and records all Board regular and land use meetings, workshops, public hearings, and special meetings when more than two Commissioners will be present. Staff indexes and processes related official documents adopted by the BOCC. During each BOCC meeting, staff creates preliminary minutes by means of specialized web-based software and recording medias to capture a verbatim of the meeting. Minutes are a summary of each meeting and highlight essential information in a concise manner. All motions and votes are verified and accurately documented.

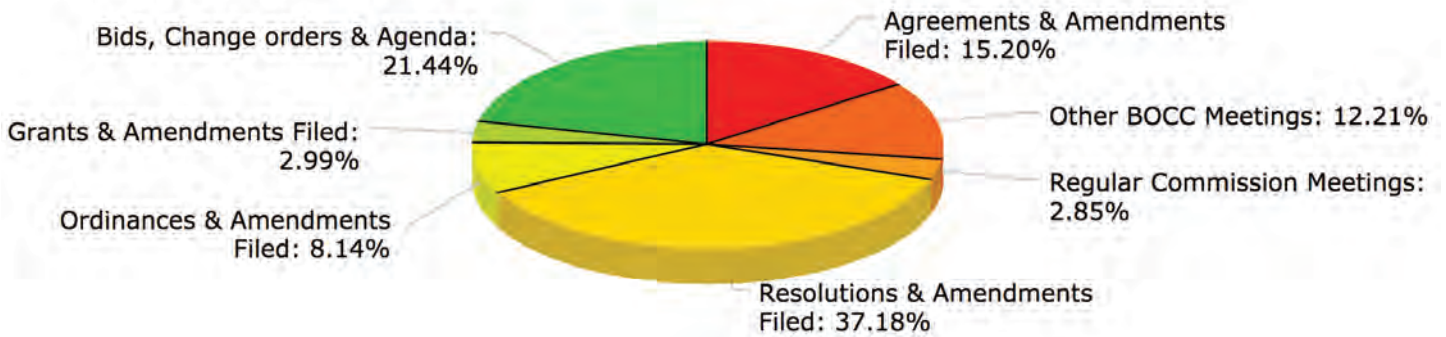
Once the minutes are finalized and adopted by the Board of County Commissioners at a regular meeting, the official minutes are published to the County Website for viewing in conjunction with the video stream, agenda, and any supporting documentation.

The Clerk’s Minutes Division adheres to the State of Florida, General Records Schedule GS11 for Clerks of the Court requirements. All meeting related documents

are preserved electronically. Documents requiring hard copy retention are indexed and filed in the department. Certified copies are available to the Public and County staff upon request. All original verbatim audio cassettes, compact discs (CD’s) and digital versatile/video discs (DVD’s) are forwarded to a climate-controlled, permanent underground storage facility with duplicates preserved in Commission Minutes Division for a period of two (2) years.

Regular meetings are held on the second and fourth Tuesday of each month with the Land Use Public Hearing Agenda being heard generally at the second Tuesday meeting at 2:00 p.m. Meeting lengths vary and are dependent on the size of the agenda to be followed.

Additionally, the Commission Minutes Division uses an innovative computer network that allows each staff workstation to access a centralized database of official BOCC documents and related indexes in response to research requests related to Agreements, Bids, BOCC Minutes, Grants, Ordinances, and Resolutions. These records can also be searched online via the Clerk’s website.



● Agreements & Amendments Filed	112	● Other BOCC Meetings	90
● Regular Commission Meetings	21	● Resolutions & Amendments Filed	274
● Ordinances & Amendments Filed	60	● Grants & Amendments Filed	22
● Bids, Change orders & Agenda	158		

VALUE ADJUSTMENT BOARD

Clerk staff is responsible for the overall VAB process which includes petition and document processing, record retention and scheduling through the use of specialized web-based software. Special Magistrates are appointed by the VAB to hear Real Property, Tangible Personal Property Tax Assessments, Homestead and Ad Valorem Tax Exemptions and Agricultural Classification appeals.

Special Magistrate recommendations are later presented to the VAB for adoption at their final meeting.

Documentation and audio recordings are retained for a minimum of four years. Staff is required, upon request of the Department of Revenue (DOR), to submit accurate records of VAB appeal proceedings for determination of probable cause based on assertions filed by the Property Appraiser. If DOR determines probable cause exists, the Property Appraiser may file a Complaint for Injunctive Relief in Circuit Court.

With greater organization and proficiencies, staff has reduced the VAB session length by several months.

For more information on how to file a VAB Petition, please visit the Clerk's website at

www.charlotteclerk.com.

VAB PETITIONS FILED 2017

• Real Property Tax Assessments	182
• Tangible Personal Property Tax Assessments	9
• Portability	1
• Agricultural Classification	2
• Homestead & Ad Valorem Tax Exemptions	3

The screenshot displays the Charlotte County Value Adjustment Board website. At the top left is the county seal and contact information: Charlotte County Value Adjustment Board, 15702 Winkler Circle, Room 416, Fort Chalkley, Florida 32046, Telephone: (904)403-3483, FAX: (904)327-1541, Email: VAB@cocharlotte.fl.us. The top right features the Axia logo. The main content area has two primary buttons: 'FILE A NEW PETITION' and 'CHECK PETITION STATUS'. The 'FILE A NEW PETITION' button includes a list of reasons for filing: 1. The taxpayer objects to the Property Appraiser's value assessment of the taxpayer's real or personal property; 2. The taxpayer's application for any of the following exemptions or special use classifications is denied: Homestead exemption and any other tax exemption as provided by Chapter 196, Florida Statutes or any special use classification as provided by Chapter 193, Florida Statutes. Below this is a 'Click to Begin Filing A Petition Now' link. The 'CHECK PETITION STATUS' button has fields for Transaction # and Password, with a 'Log In' button and a 'Forgot your password?' link. Below this is a section for 'AGENT, MAGISTRATE, PROPERTY APPRAISER, VAB ATTORNEY, OR VAB MEMBER ACCESS' with fields for Username and Password, a 'Log In' button, and a 'Forgot your password?' link. A central banner reads 'WELCOME TO CHARLOTTE COUNTY VALUE ADJUSTMENT BOARD' and 'THE DEADLINE FOR FILING A PETITION IS SEPTEMBER 15, 2017'. Below the banner is a paragraph: 'If you would like to file a petition to the Value Adjustment Board (VAB) for the 2017 tax year, you may do so by clicking on "Begin Filing a Petition Now" as shown above.' This is followed by instructions: 'Please complete the appropriate online petition form by completing all required fields and by clicking "Submit". Do not click the "Back" button on your web browser while completing your petition.' Then: 'After submitting your petition, you will be prompted to submit the required \$15.00 filing fee. (Please note that a Convenience Fee of 3.5% will be added to the transaction).' Finally: 'You are required to submit a valid email address in order to electronically submit a petition online. Once your Petition has been successfully submitted, you will receive a Transaction Number and Password that can be used to access the following in the future:' followed by a bulleted list: Review your petition; Log in to track your petition status and hearing date(s) information; Submit your evidence in PDF format; Review evidence submitted to the Property Appraiser.

INTERNAL AUDIT

The Internal Audit Division is staffed by accounting professionals experienced in public accounting and internal auditing who perform their responsibilities in adherence to generally accepted accounting principles and standards.

This Division monitors the operations of the Board of County Commissioners and the Clerk's Office. The primary purpose of the Division is to conduct internal post audits to render independent analysis and appraisal of the Board and the Clerk's operations and to ensure

that those operations are performed in compliance with applicable laws and regulations, established policies and procedures, and sound management practices.

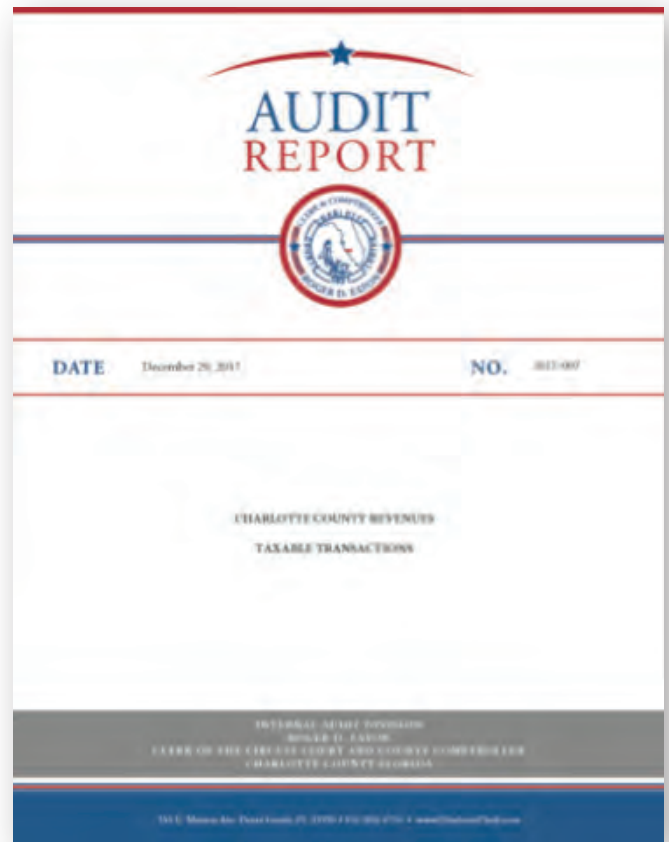
The Internal Audit staff assists the County's external auditors during the annual audit of the County's financial statements. The external auditors also receive a benefit from the internal audit reports generated during the fiscal year as a planning tool for their audit of the County departments and agencies.

INTERNAL AUDITS PERFORMED AND REPORTS ISSUED DURING 2017 INCLUDED:

- Procurement Card Usage – Travel Expenses
- Charlotte County Fire/EMS Controlled Substances
- Charlotte County Take Home Vehicles
- Fleet Management – Inventory
- Charlotte County Utilities – Accounts Receivable
- Charlotte County Revenues – Taxable Transactions

THE AUDIT DIVISION ALSO CONDUCTS GUARDIANSHIP AUDITS TO SUPPORT THE COURT'S OVERSIGHT PROCESS APPLICABLE TO THE PROTECTION OF WARD'S ASSETS ACCORDING TO CHAPTER 744 OF THE FLORIDA STATUTES.

The Division will conduct varying levels of audits/financial investigations related to Guardianship reports and activities.



During the year, 367 Guardianship case files were audited and the results of those procedures were communicated to the appropriate court in compliance with the Florida Statutes.

CLERK INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY

The Clerk Information Technology Division (CIT) provides the computer based technical initiatives and systems for the Clerk in his capacity as Chief Financial Officer, County Auditor and Ex-Officio Clerk for the Board of County Commissioners.

CIT is responsible for development and maintenance of applications, production and operations, user support and training, hardware and software, network operations, and maintenance and security for the Finance, Internal Audit, Commission Minutes and Administration Divisions.

MAJOR SYSTEMS AND APPLICATIONS IN CIT:

Eden Financial System is an Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP) suite for financial systems supporting both the Board of County Commissioners and the Clerk of the Circuit Court. The current implemented modules include accounts payable, fixed assets, general ledger, project accounting, accounts receivable, purchasing and receiving for maximum interdepartmental efficiency.

CIT manages the human resource and payroll system for the Board of County Commissioners, Supervisor of Elections and the Clerk of the Circuit Court.

Microsoft Office 2016 scanning, storage, and text search retrieval systems and Granicus Minutes Maker and Mobile Encoder are used by the Commission Minutes Division. A Windows 2012 SQL Server Database is used for the Value Adjustment Board and contains integrated petition and final decisions for the Board of County Commissioners and the County Property Appraiser.

In 2017, the Clerk's Information Technology Division worked on several innovation concept designs for the Clerk's Jury Management Services and Official Records departments, as well as other initiatives in keeping with the Clerk's goals in his pursuit of providing enhanced efficiencies in regards to compliance, security, customer relations, investment and audit controls, and other convenience services for his office through the use of innovative technologies.

The Court Automation Systems (CAS) provides application development and technical computer



Clerk Eaton showing off new jury kiosk

CLERK INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY

support for the Offices of the Clerk (Criminal, Traffic, Civil Courts, Official Records and County Judicial staff). The CAS network links the Clerk's, Sheriff, State Attorney, Public Defender, Court Administrator, Judiciary and Probation offices.

The CAS Division is responsible for development and maintenance of applications, production and operations, user support & training, hardware & software, network operations, maintenance and security among the agencies as they tie into the CAS network.

Major systems and applications are:

CRIMINAL AND CIVIL INFORMATION SYSTEMS

Court Automated System (CAS) encompasses data processing and integration of information for criminal and civil courts, criminal justice agencies and law enforcement organizations. Processes include modules for First Appearance/Intake packages, court document imaging, calendaring, payment processing, state reporting and electronic filings.

The CAS Division implemented the new Jury system streamlining the jury processes from notification, reporting and payment of juror services. This new system is recognized throughout the state of Florida for its innovations and use of technology. This feature rich systems includes mobile apps, electronic notification, check-in kiosk, and same day pay system.

State-wide CLERC application for Family Support tracking and Jury Management systems are also supported by CAS.

OFFICIAL RECORDS SYSTEMS

Official Records Systems consists of images and indexes for deeds, mortgages, judgments and other important documents. Other supportive systems include Electronic Recording and document redaction processes.

The CAS Division enabled a "Fraud Alert" system within the Official Records to help notify citizens if a document was recorded under their name. Online registration is quick and easy.

INTERNET PRESENCE

CharlotteClerk.com hosts general information about Clerk functions, and links to the websites of the BCC and other elected officials. It is the portal to the online access of Official Records, Tax Deeds, and Court case information. The general public can view Official Records, and an individual can look up his or her pending Criminal or Traffic case. Criminal Justice Agencies and subscribers can access all court records as allowed by law.

In a continued effort to provide public access and visibility to court records, we provide a web portal to allow citizens to search court records while providing security of confidential information.

EMPLOYEE RELATIONS

The Clerk, as an elected County Official and Constitutional Officer, must appoint deputies and employ a staff to carry out the duties of the office.

The Employee Relations department is responsible for all aspects of human resource management for this office, including work on other special projects as assigned.

POLICY DEVELOPMENT/ INTERPRETATION

New legislation affecting policy compliance in human resource management is monitored and policies are updated accordingly. Each employee receives a copy of the Employee Handbook containing personnel policy and all updates and revisions. The Employee Handbook was revised in 2017 and copies of the revisions were sent electronically to all employees. Access to the handbook is found on the Clerk's Intranet.

EQUAL OPPORTUNITY/LABOR LAW COMPLIANCE

All personnel actions and policies are reviewed for compliance with equal employment opportunity laws as well as the Americans with Disabilities Act, Family and Medical Leave Act, Fair Labor Standards Act, and all other State and Federal employment laws/regulations prior to implementation. Updates are made as changes to labor laws occur.

CLASSIFICATION AND PAY

All classification and pay actions are reviewed for consistency and equity as well as maintaining appropriate records. Salary surveys may be conducted to assure internal equity and fair market standards. Employees also contribute to their medical and FRS benefits.

SAFETY/WORKERS' COMPENSATION

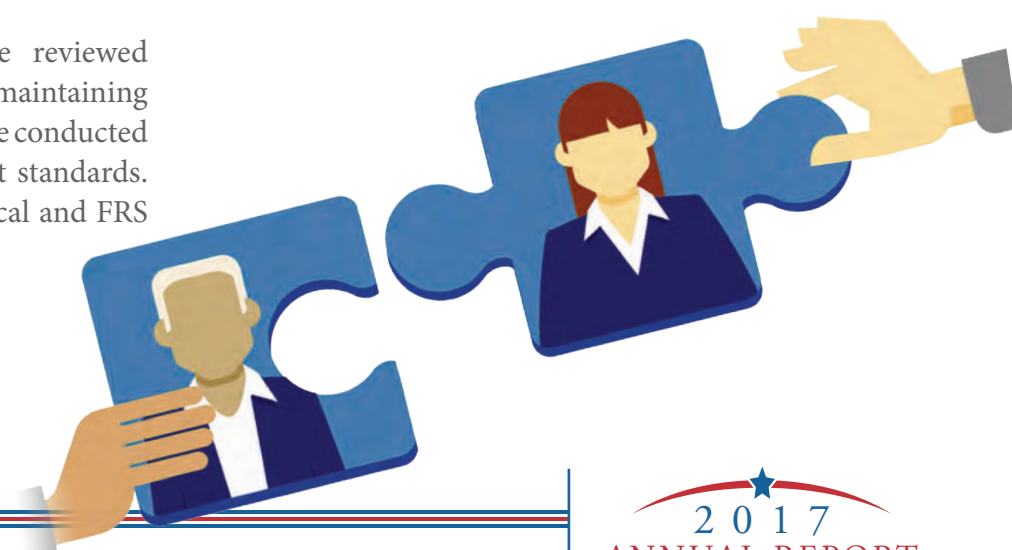
Employees are made aware of all safety procedures and workers' compensation compliance.

Annual walk-through safety inspections are conducted at all Clerk locations. Safe Rooms are also equipped with emergency preparedness items in the event of a life threatening situation.

EMPLOYEE RELATIONS

Communication, employee development, and the use of technology are the foundation of the Clerk's core values. This department works with management to address performance concerns utilizing the appropriate constructive methods such as counseling, recommendations for additional training and/or formal disciplinary action, when necessary.

Employees are formally evaluated at their initial 180-day introductory period and when they transfer to another position as part of the Clerk's performance review program.



STAFFING AND RECRUITMENT

All recruitment activities, new hire orientation, personnel records, benefits administration and performance measurement programs are also managed by this division. Employee Relations prepares and coordinates job position descriptions, announcements, advertising, testing and interviews as a part of the recruitment process.

We also work with local colleges, supporting internships for students attending criminal justice accreditation, including local high school and workforce development programs, such as:

- A State of Florida Summer Work Experience Program
- A Goodwill Industries of Southwest Florida High School / High Tech program

TRAINING

Employees are provided training in the areas of Florida Statute Laws, County and Civil Fines, Fees, and procedural processes, Customer Service, Employee Development, Supervision, word processing and spreadsheet skills. Additional training resources are available to assist employees when implementing new software programs and/or in meeting professional development requirements. Training programs are also provided through the Florida Association of Court Clerks and Comptrollers.

We also conduct “Lunch-n-Learn” programs designed to help educate the employee on personal finance, retirement options, work-life balance and wellness education. Attendance is voluntary and employees have expressed their appreciation in being able to learn important health, financial and insurance information during their lunch hour.

