

CLERK ANNUAL REPORT



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

2018

CHARLOTTE COUNTY, FLORIDA

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MESSAGE FROM YOUR CLERK AND COUNTY COMPTROLLER



TO THE CITIZENS OF CHARLOTTE COUNTY:

Not resting on our laurels from my first year in office in 2017, your Clerk's Office continued looking for ways to provide efficient services to our local taxpayers while simultaneously reducing our operating budget. I am happy to report 2018 was another successful year.

Following up on the success of our Jury Services app developed and launched by our in-house IT team in 2017, we introduced a new and unique Marriage Scheduling app for both the iPhone and Android devices. With our new online marriage scheduling system, couples can complete an online marriage application and schedule a block of time for their wedding ceremony to be held in our newly designed marriage room in the Charlotte County Justice Center. This state of the art system allows for follow up text messaging and appointment notifications. Since instituting this system, over 200 couples have married in our office. The positive response by couples who have used this new system and ceremony room have been a highlight of 2018.

Your Clerk's Office provided a convenient solution to our citizens wanting to pay their fines and fees with

cash without them having to personally come into the Justice Center during business hours to make their payment. We partnered with nCourt and PayNearMe, financial services technology companies, to create the ability for Charlotte County citizens to pay their fines and fees in cash using a convenient barcode scan at participating merchants such as CVS, 7 Eleven and Dollar General. The new program is convenient, guaranteed, and confidential. This helps working people, as they can now pay after regular working hours. We are the first Clerk's Office in the State of Florida to offer this payment option.

As our office is always looking for excellent staff, we implemented a new internet-based system from NeoGov for job postings and online submission. This highly advanced online system allows us to quickly respond to the office's needs for highly talented candidates in our diverse departments.

Your Clerk's Office for the second year in a row lowered our citizen's tax burden by reducing our budget by 2% and returned \$368,305.00 to the Charlotte County Board of County Commissioners, despite health care

costs rising by over 5% and rising Florida Retirement System (FRS) rates. I am happy to report we have been able to accomplish this in both of my first two years serving as your Clerk of Court. I attribute this to an excellent staff and the implementation of cutting edge software systems which make our office incredibly efficient.

Many citizens do not realize that the Comptroller side of the Clerk's Office directs investment of millions of dollars of Charlotte County funds. Our team continually analyzes the current structure of investments, with a primary focus on providing security, safety, and liquidity of the County's investments. Taking advantage of rising interest rates, we shifted a sizable portion of County funds into US Government agency securities and instruments, which earned a substantially higher yield. In 2018, over \$7.9 million was earned on investments controlled by your Clerk's Office, as compared to \$4.9 million earned in 2017, an increase of 61%.

For the second straight year continuing a 32 consecutive year tradition for Charlotte County, your Clerk's Office has been awarded The Certificate of Achievement for Excellence in Financial Reporting by the Government Finance Officers Association for the year ended September 30, 2017. The Certificate of Achievement is the highest form of recognition in the area of governmental accounting and financial reporting, and its attainment represents a significant accomplishment by a government agency and its management.

Not only does our office serve the community, but we strive to be an active supporter of our tight-knit community. We are extremely proud that the Clerk's Office staff raised \$4,800.78 for The Center for Abuse

and Rape Emergencies (CARE) and \$2,530.90 for the Animal Welfare League in 2018, through car washes, bake sales, and other fund raising team events.

My office will continue developing new and innovative ways to provide a better service experience for local citizens, while always being mindful of reducing the burden to local taxpayers. As promised a year ago in my 2017 year in review, our office will never rest on its accomplishments. We will always strive to find better, more cost efficient ways to provide our services to the public. By combining excellent staff and the implementation of advanced technologies, our goal is to provide you with more services for less cost. I look forward to reporting to you this time next year on our 2019 calendar year advancements.

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, Clerk Eaton 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.

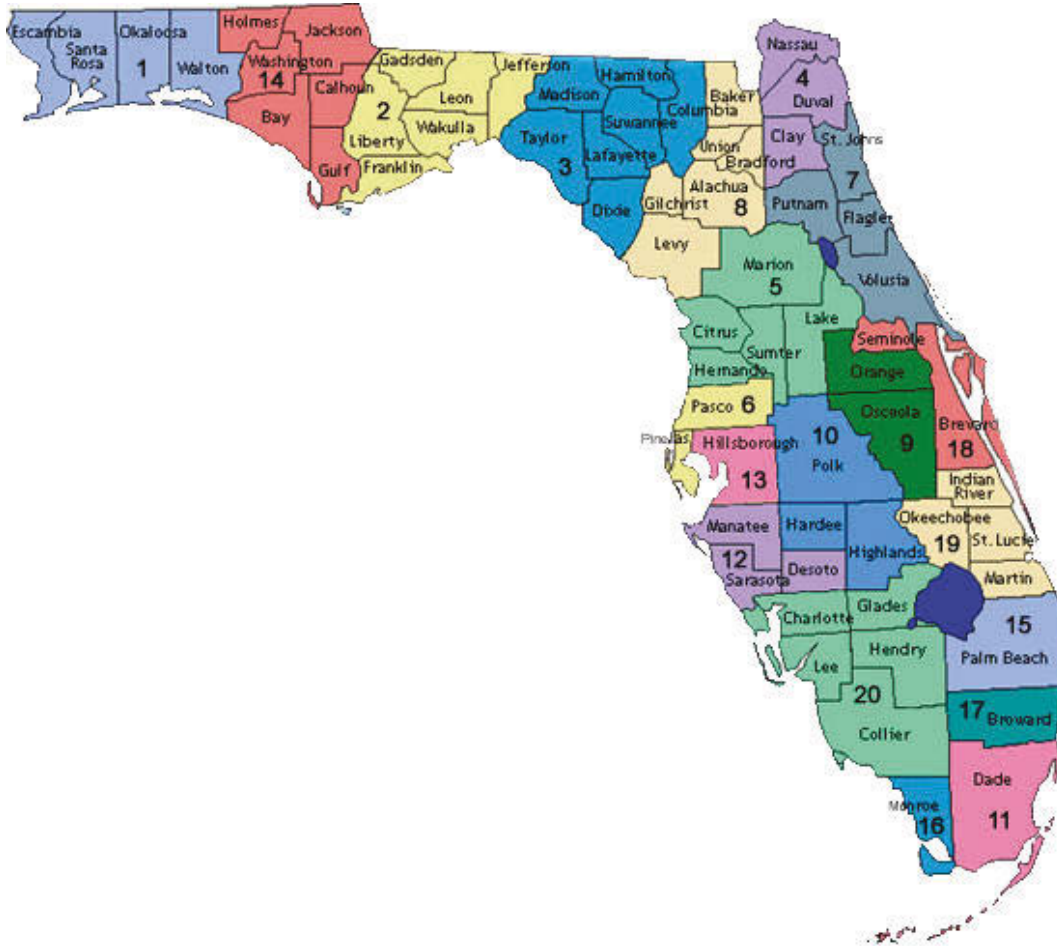
The Constitution of the State of Florida

“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 on our website: CharlotteClerk.com - [Court Records](#) - [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 can be viewed on our website: CharlotteClerk.com - [Official Records](#) - [Search](#).

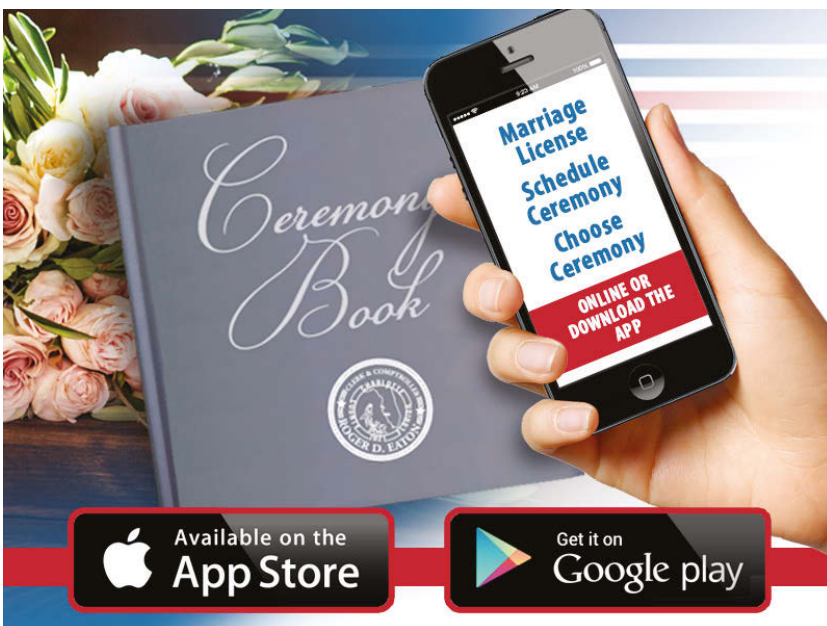
Marriage License application and wedding ceremony requests are available online at: Marriage.CharlotteClerk.com. Tax Deed Sales can be viewed and bids made at: charlotte.realforeclose.com.

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 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: charlottecountyfl.gov to view taped meetings or to view agendas or archived meeting minutes under the BCC Agenda's menu.

Our Minutes Division 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.

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.



Marriage License
Applications
& Wedding
Ceremony Requests

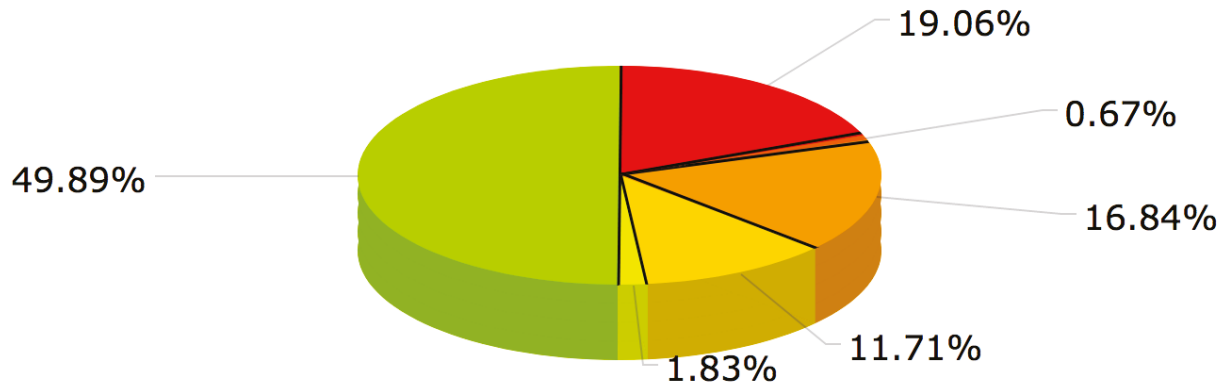
Marriage.CharlotteClerk.com

CRIMINAL COURT SERVICES

The Criminal Courts Division processes felony, juvenile, misdemeanor, county and municipal ordinance 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.

Clerks attend Criminal Court where the duties include accurately capturing all sentencing sanctions, swearing in witnesses, marking and controlling evidence, and the reading of verdicts. All court records are maintained electronically and can be viewed online at CharlotteClerk.com. 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 website.



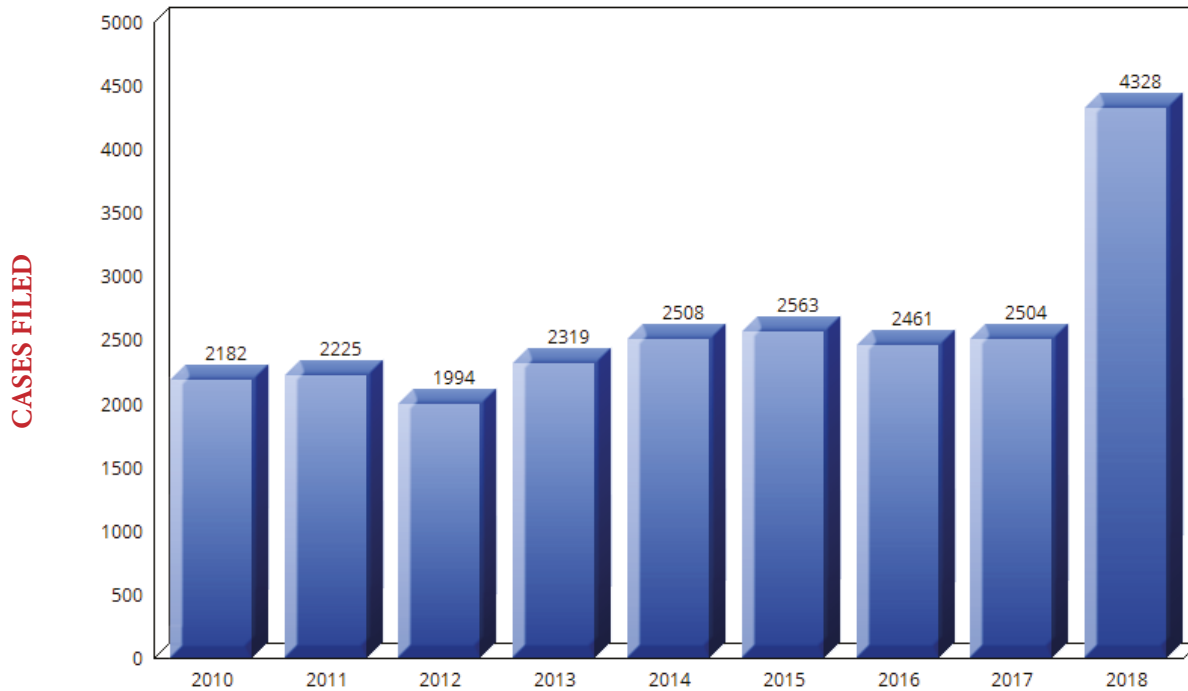
● Misdemeanor	4,328	● Felony	2,659
● Dependency	152	● Juvenile	416
● Criminal Traffic	3,824	● Civil Traffic	11,327

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 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.

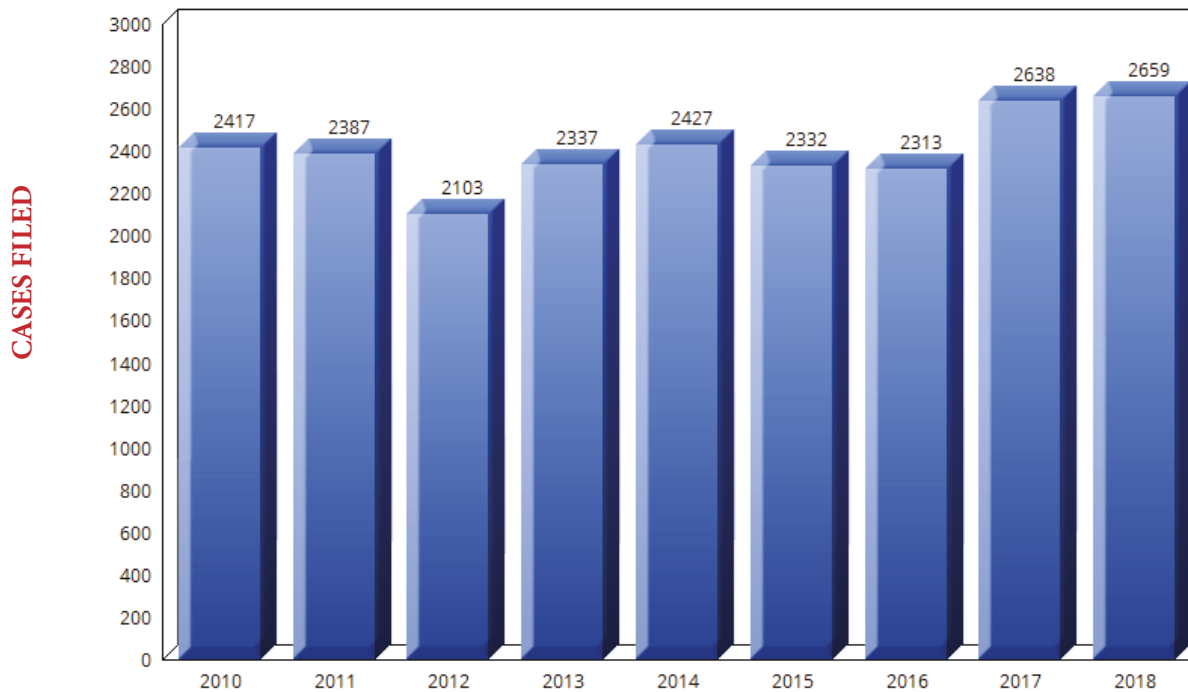


CIVIL AND CRIMINAL TRAFFIC COURT RECORDS

MISDEMEANOR

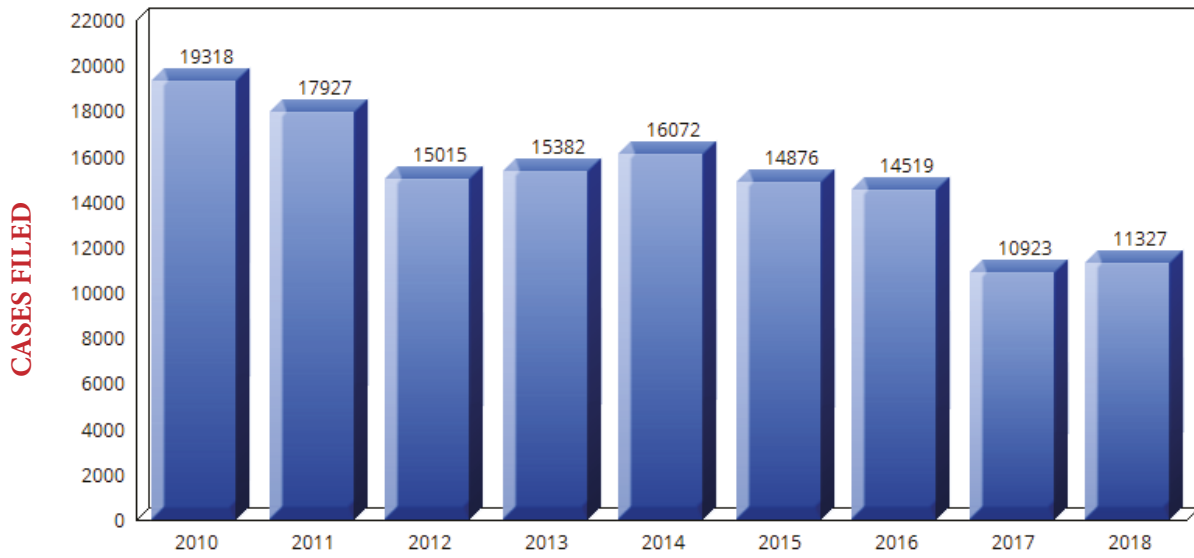


FELONY CASES

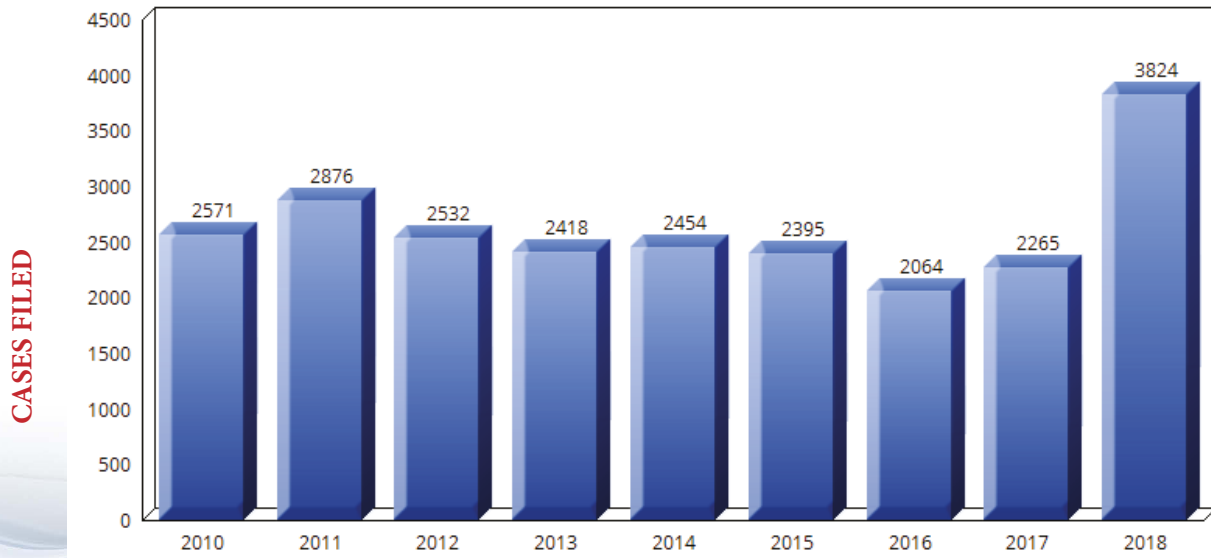


Uniform Traffic Citations are electronically filed through e-Citations and hard copy format. Information is submitted from the following agencies: Florida Highway Patrol, Charlotte County Sheriff, and Punta Gorda Police Department. Citations for parking tickets, animal control violations, code enforcement, 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, by mail, over the phone at (855) 796-5772 and via the internet through our portal at CharlotteCourtPay.com.

CIVIL TRAFFIC



CRIMINAL TRAFFIC



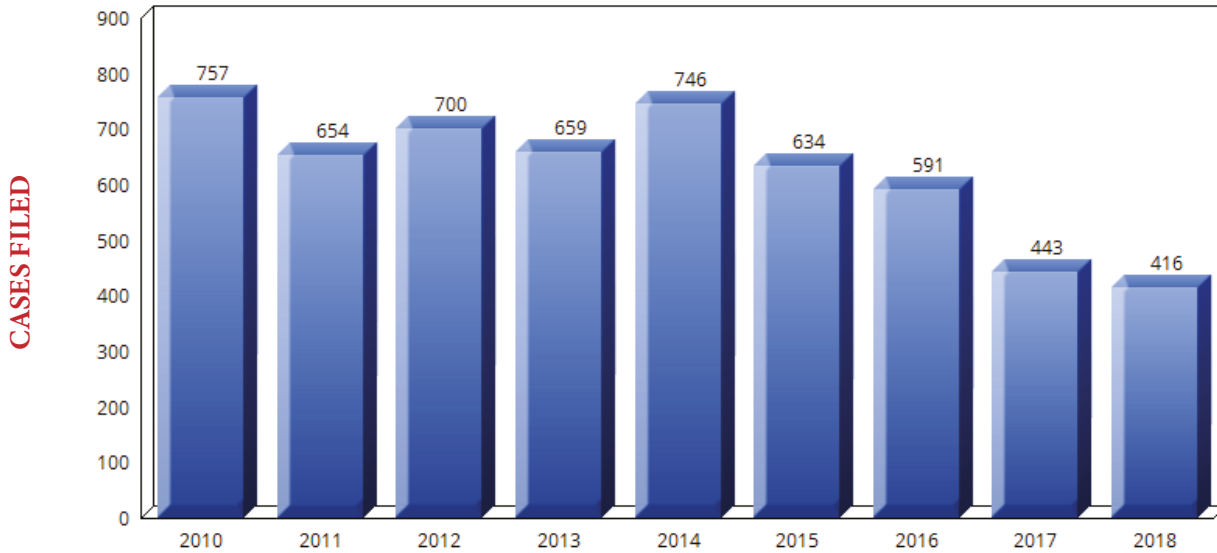
JUVENILE COURT RECORDS

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.

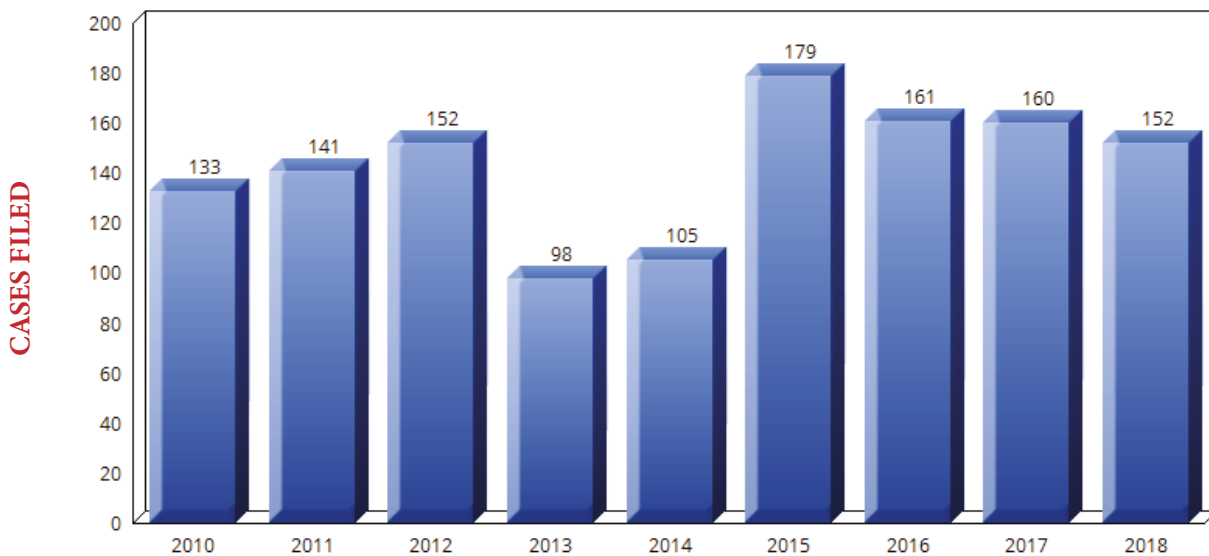
The State Attorney may choose to directly charge a juvenile offender as an adult. Such cases are closed in the juvenile

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



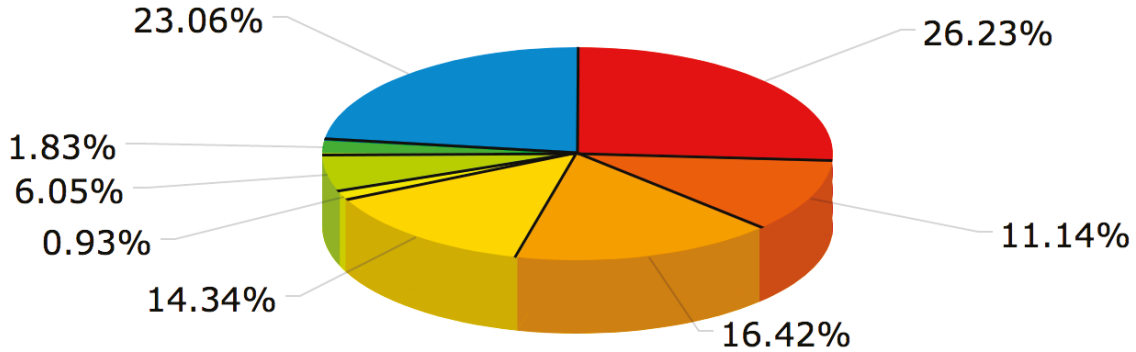
DEPENDENCY CASES



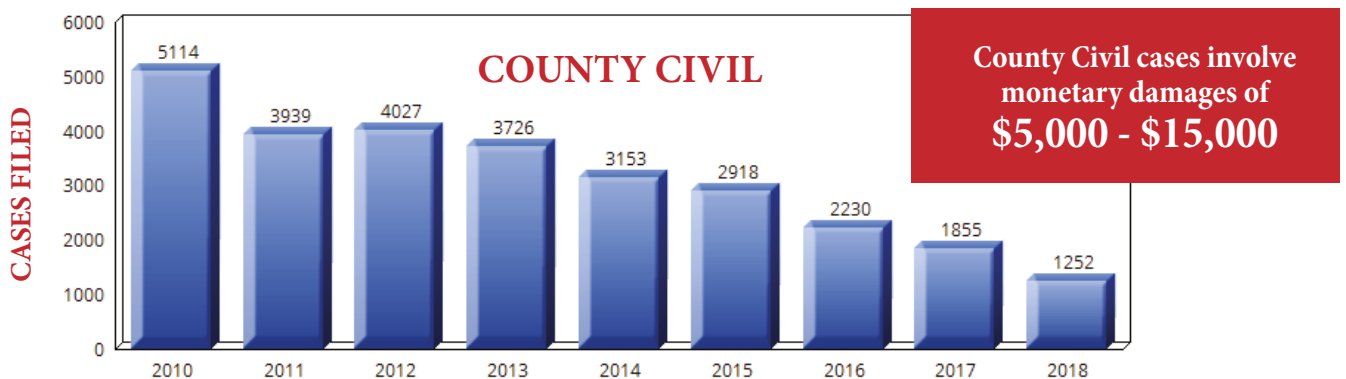
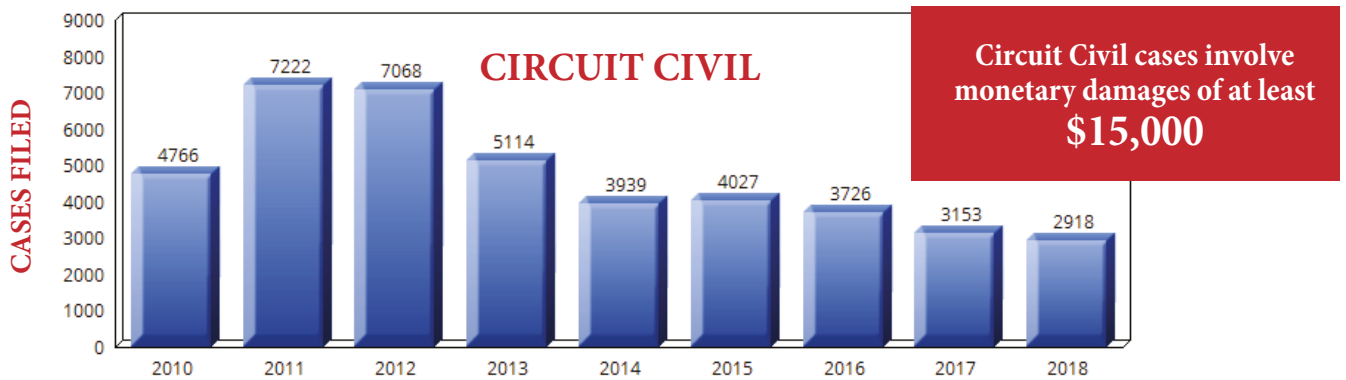
CIVIL COURT SERVICES

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 2018

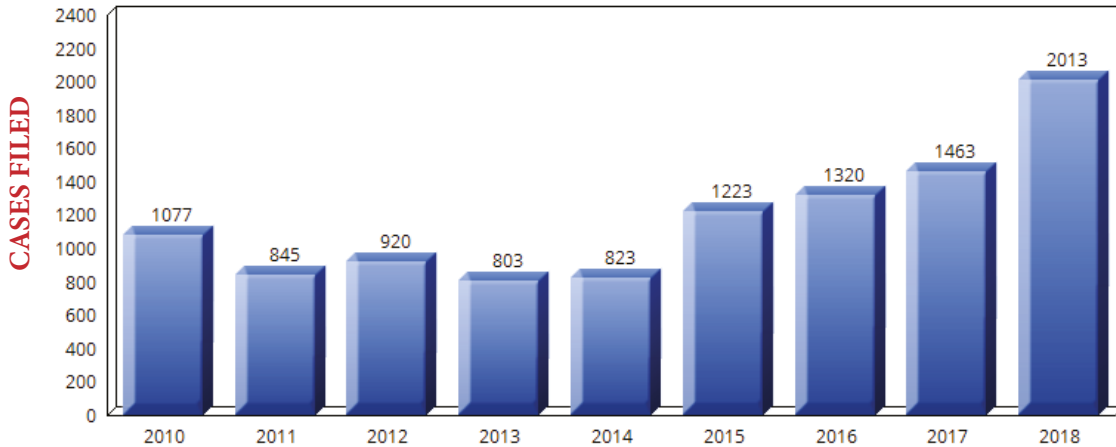


● Circuit Civil	2,290	● Other Mental Health	81
● Baker Acts	972	● Tenant Evictions	528
● Probate & Guardianship	1,433	● Appeals	160
● County Civil	1,252	● Small Claims	2,013



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.

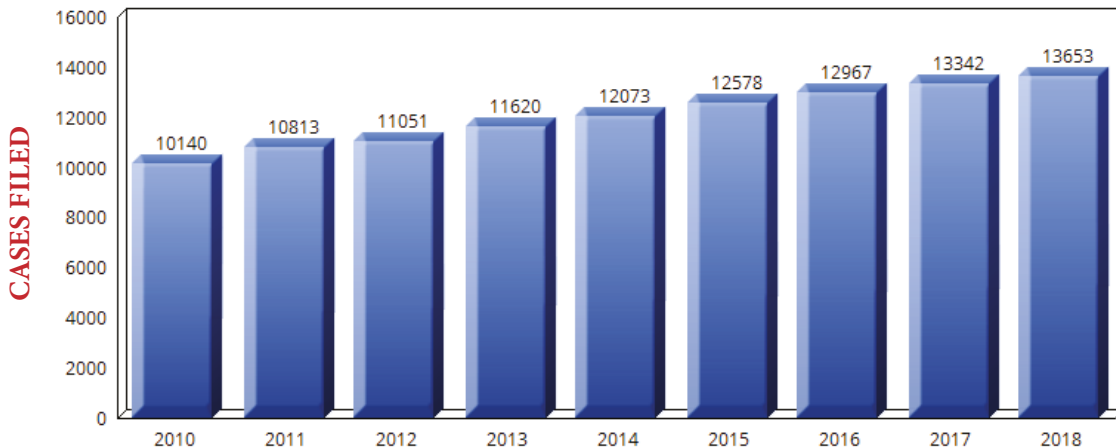


CHILD SUPPORT SERVICES

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

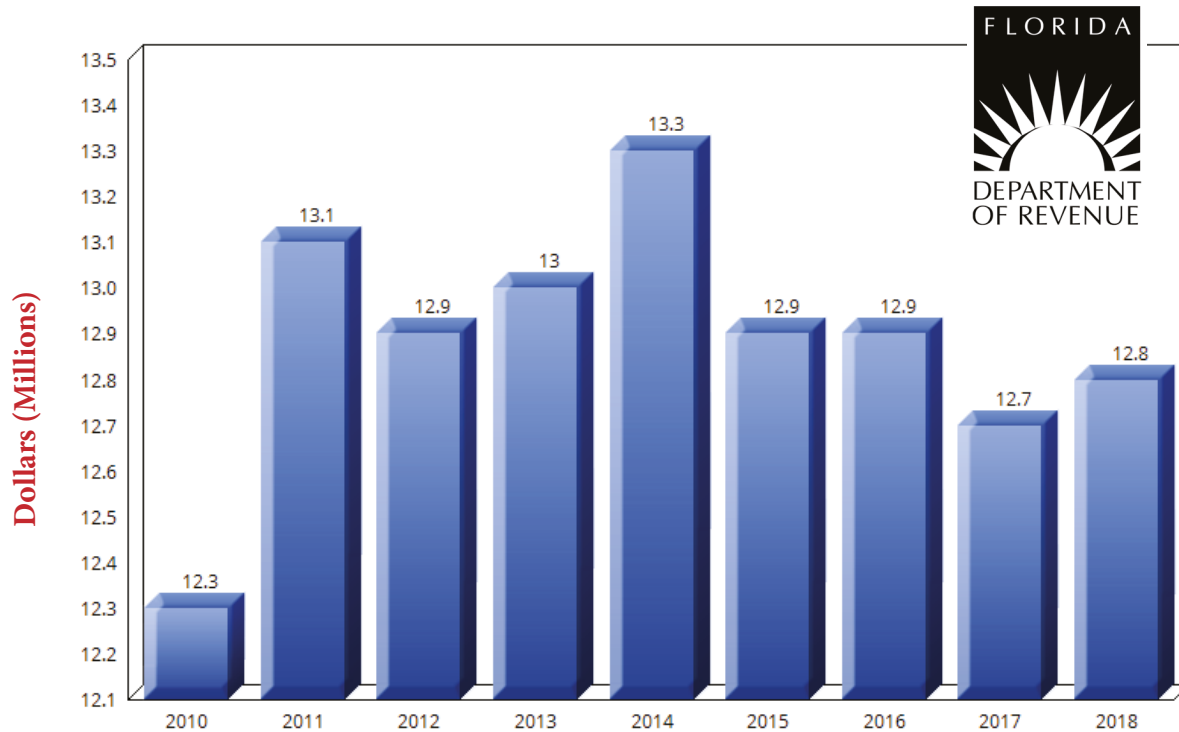


PAY CHILD SUPPORT ONLINE

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



For Charlotte County, there are 13,653 current cases in the Child Support System for the year 2018. With payments collected for Charlotte County totaling over \$12.8 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 2,486 cases filed in 2018.

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

Home Reporting Online Check-In Automatic Updates Request Excusal Directions F.A.Q Feedback



JURY SYSTEM HIGHLIGHTS

ELECTRONIC NOTIFICATION

It has been over a year since we deployed our automated jury process with our state-of-the-art Jury Management self-check-in system.

Our new system allows jurors to check in ahead of time online or by downloading our app to check in by phone.

In addition “Same Day Pay” allows jurors to immediately receive their jury duty pay of \$15 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.

In 2018, Clerk Eaton continued to improve upon the system by making it feature rich.

ONLINE CHECK-IN

Jurors get notifications by text when their number is called, much like many restaurants that text a patron when their table is ready.

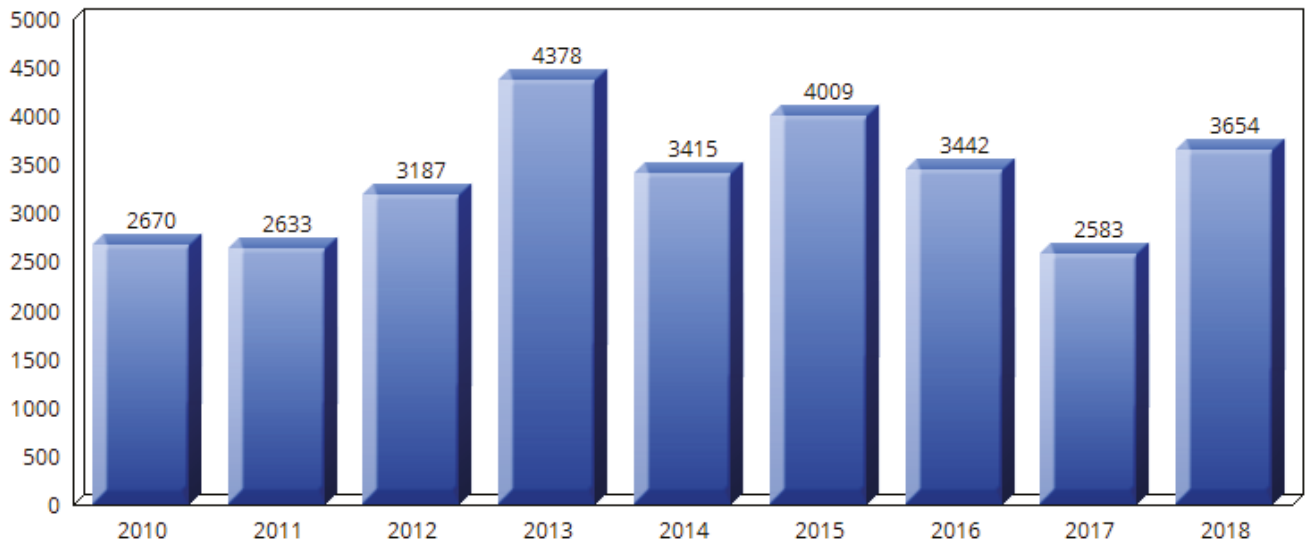
When jurors arrive at the courthouse, they can scan a QR code on their phone or a barcode on their jury summons at two kiosks installed in the Jury Management Office.

Our office has received numerous testimonials from jurors of how this service is cost efficient and a time saver.

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 73 jury trials held in 2018 and 3,654 jurors reported for duty.



APPEALS

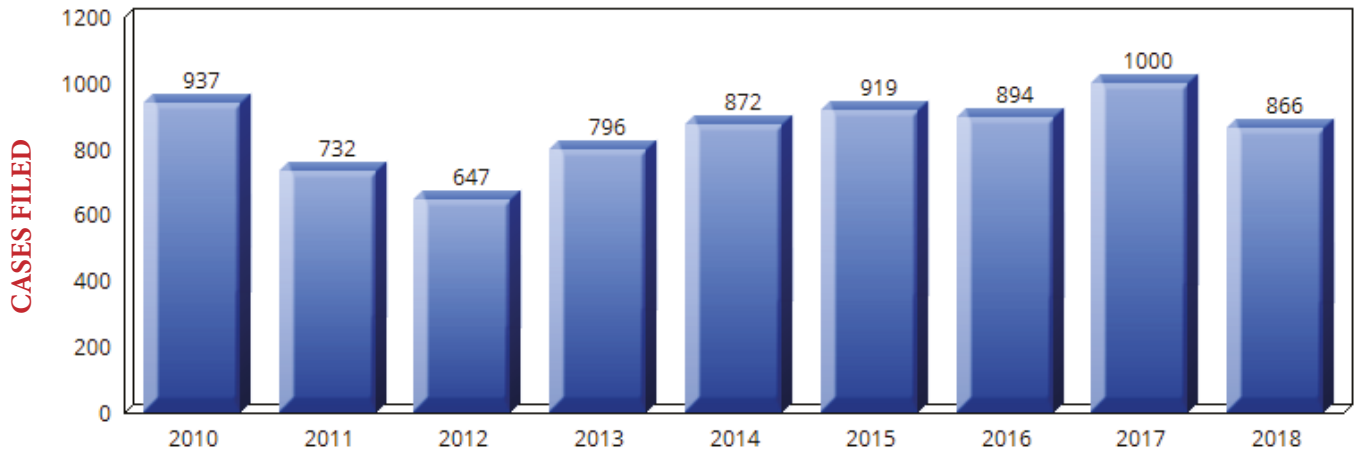
Appeals are cases presented to a higher court to review the decision rendered by a lower court.

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 160 cases filed in 2018.



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.

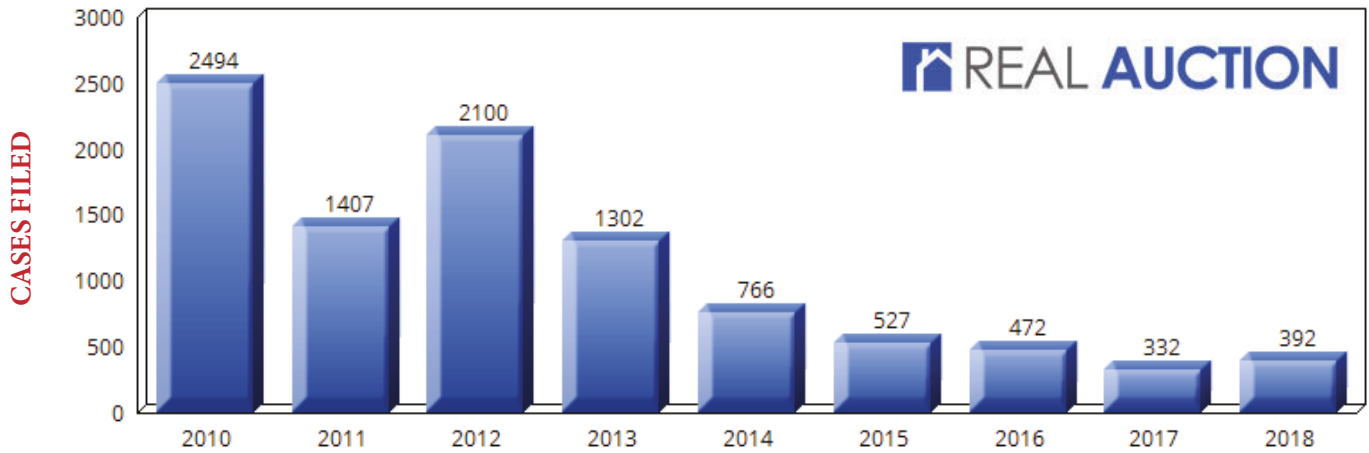
In 2018 there were 866 domestic violence cases filed.

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 CharlotteClerk.com.

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 go to 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 2018 there were 392 foreclosure cases filed.



HIGHLIGHTS OF COURT OPERATIONS

The Charlotte County Clerk of the Circuit Court and County Comptroller is leading the way in technological innovation by being the first Clerk's Office in the State to implement Scan, Pay & Go. This new program allows payments of court-related fines and fees to be paid with cash at CVS Pharmacy, 7-Eleven, Family Dollar and other trusted retail locations; which is an added convenience for our customers.

E-Filing both new case documents and subsequent pleadings into both the Civil and Criminal court records continues to grow. In 2018, we saw a 14% increase of filings from Pro se parties, private attorney firms and our Justice Center partners which include the judicial staff, State Attorney, Public Defender and local law enforcement agencies. Electronically filing is an efficient and cost effective method of processing documents in a paperless court file. For the customer experience, this provides faster access to court records as these become available on our courts public access site as soon as they are docketed into a case and reviewed for any confidential information.

For those records which need closer inspection for sensitive information, the Clerk's Office leverages 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.



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 9.6 million images of recorded documents dating back to January 1, 1977 available for the public to view.

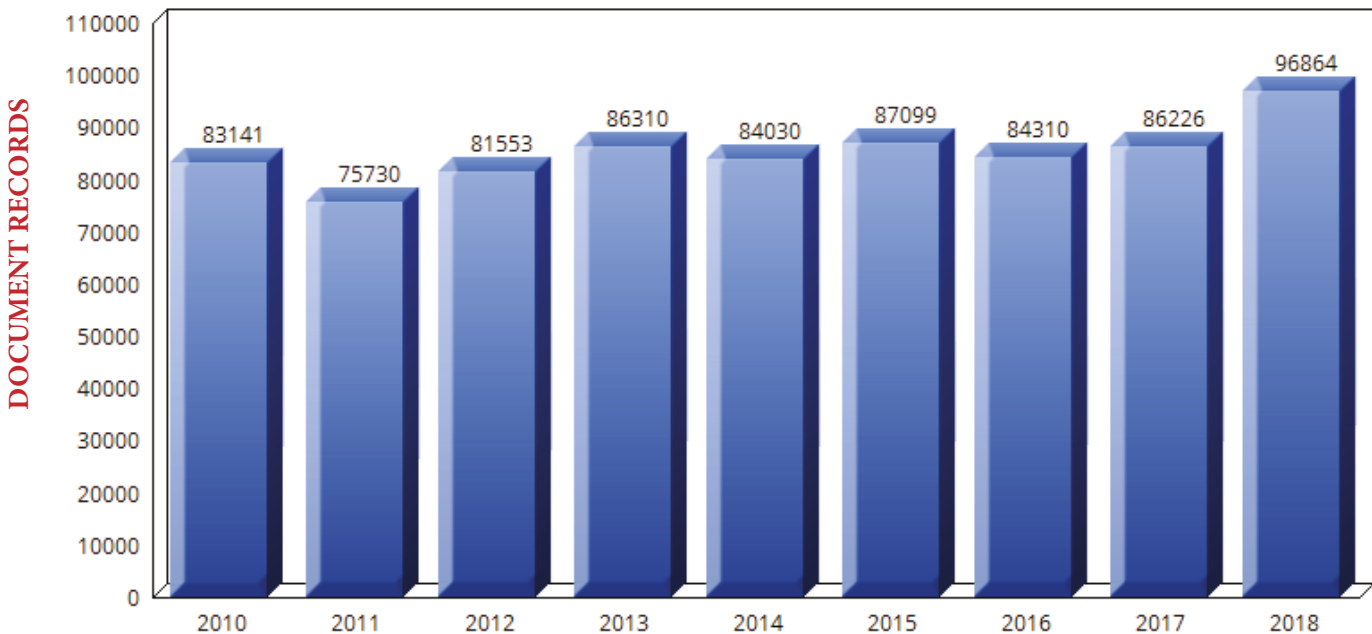
each recorded document can be properly indexed. This process of indexing is expected to be completed in 2019. Upon completion, all of the Official Records dating back to the creation of the county in 1921 will be available to the public.

The Clerk is always looking for new services to provide the public. Since implementation of the 2017 Fraud Alert Service, over 1,100 citizens have monitored documents recorded into Official Records to prevent fraud against their property. To sign up for this service visit us at CharlotteClerk.com.

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

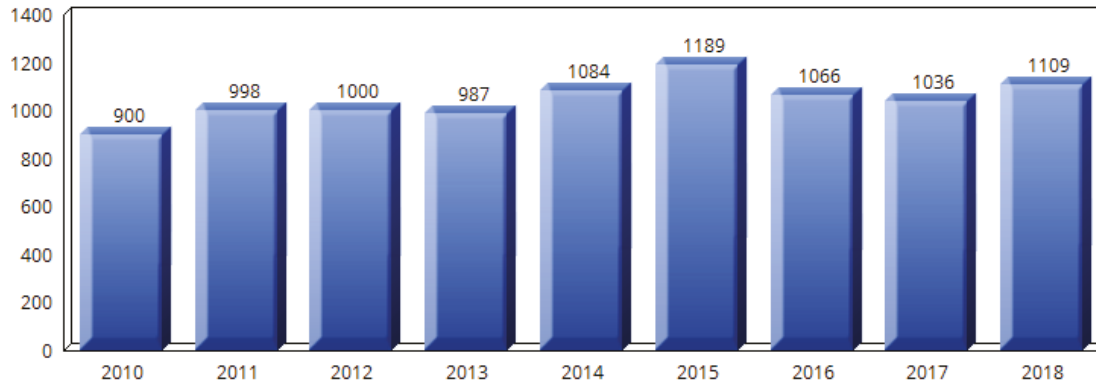
In 2018, 96,864 documents were recorded.

In October of 2018, Clerk Eaton had all of the older Official Record images digitized from the microfilm. These images were imported into a database so that

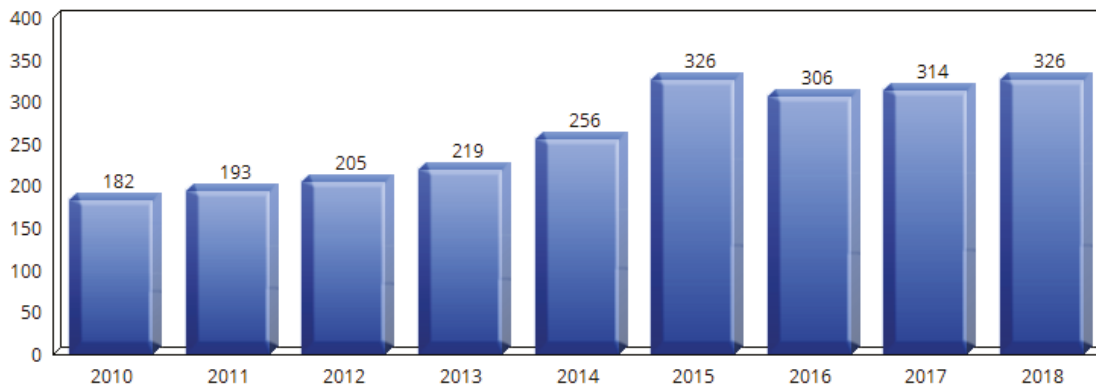


MARRIAGE SERVICES

MARRIAGE LICENSES



MARRIAGE CEREMONIES



The Punta Gorda Official Records Division issues marriage licenses and performs marriage ceremonies upon request. In 2018, there were 1,109 licenses processed and 326 ceremonies performed.

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



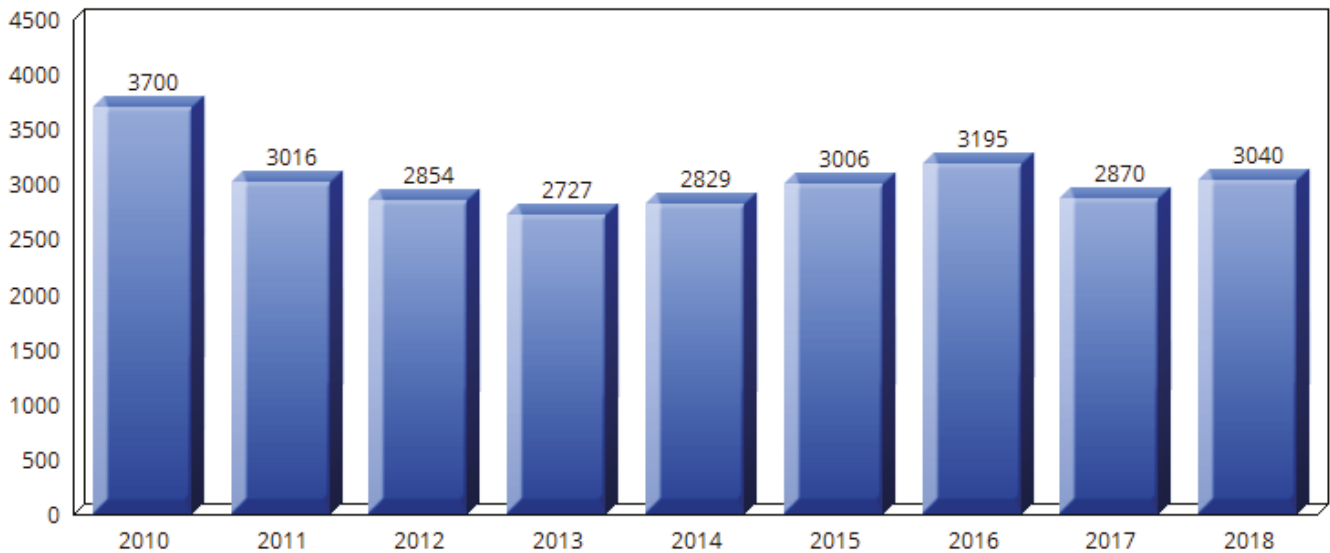
Visit our newly renovated ceremony room

PASSPORT SERVICES

New passport applications may be processed at either of our two office locations. The applications are forwarded to the U.S. Passport Agency for processing. For your convenience, passport photos are available to be taken and purchased at our Punta Gorda location.

There were 3,040 passport applications sent in 2018 by this office.

NEW PASSPORT APPLICATIONS

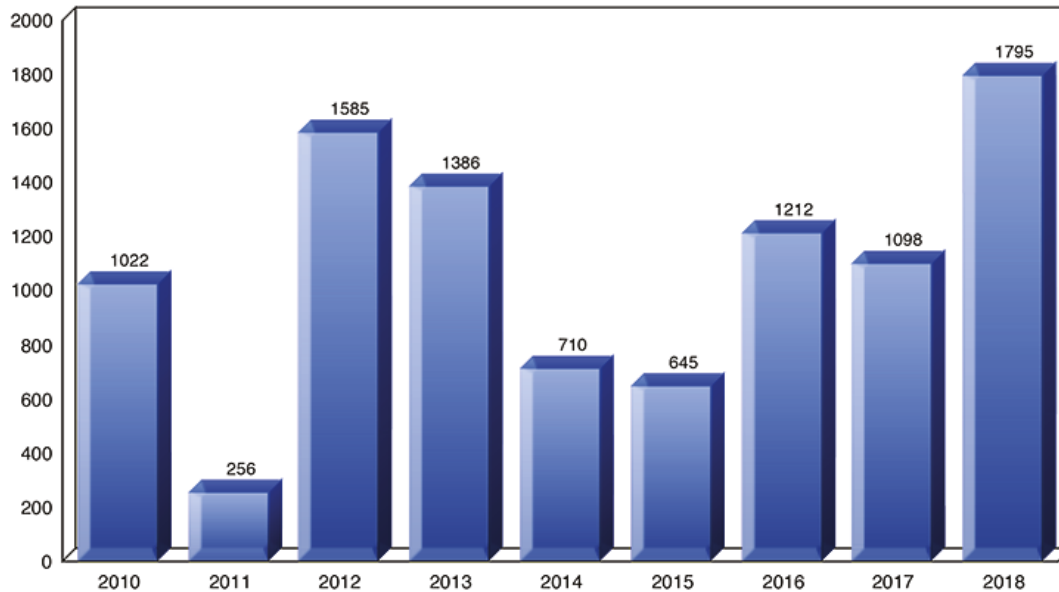


TAX DEED SERVICES

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 website saving the citizen from having to come into the office.

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. Marriage licenses and passport applications can be processed at our Murdock Annex location.

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, 7,584 permit packages were imaged, totaling 238,243 pages; a total of 7,968,463 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.



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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,

Handwritten signature of Tim Few

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 issuance 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.



View our Comprehensive Annual Financial Report at:

CharlotteClerk.com/Reports/CAFR_2018.pdf

Our CAFR has received the Government Finance Officers Association (GFOA) Certificate of Achievement for Excellence in Financial Reporting for thirty two (32) 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, is 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 individual investment transaction limits as well as length of maturity. The investment policy can be found at <http://www.CharlotteClerk.com/reports/CCFLInvesttPolicy.pdf>

At September 30, 2018, the investment portfolio was \$502.8 million, 67% of which was invested in U.S. Government Agencies, and the balance in shorter-term liquid investments described above.

Earnings on investments in 2018 exceeded \$7.9 million with interest rates ranging from a low of 1.05% in the Money Market Funds, and a high of 2.5% in the small business administration pools.

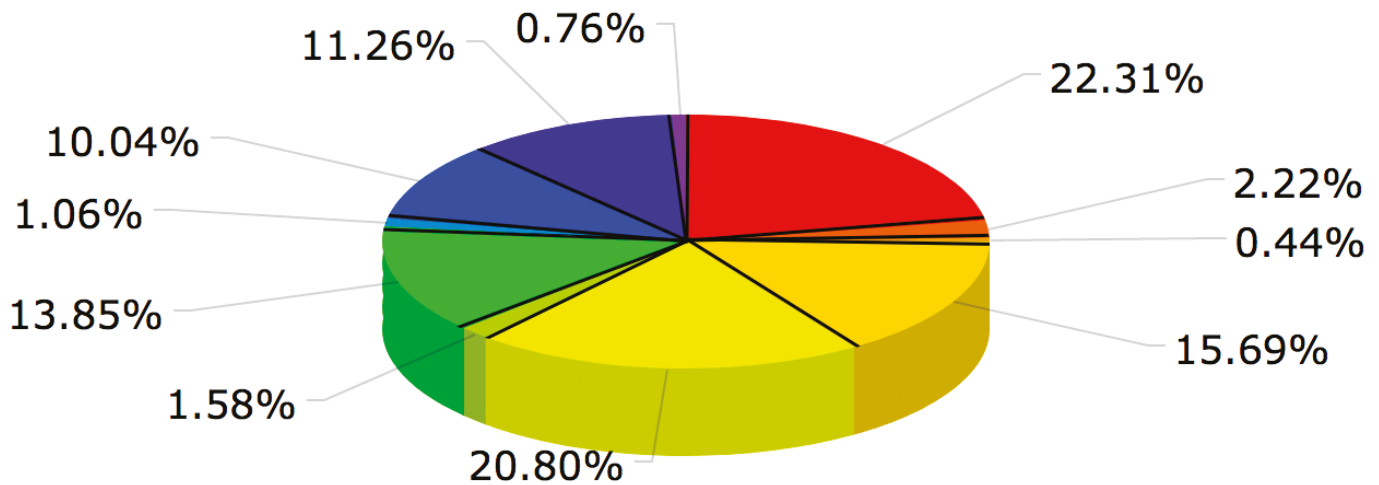


Earnings on investments managed by the Clerk & Comptroller have exceeded \$231 million

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.

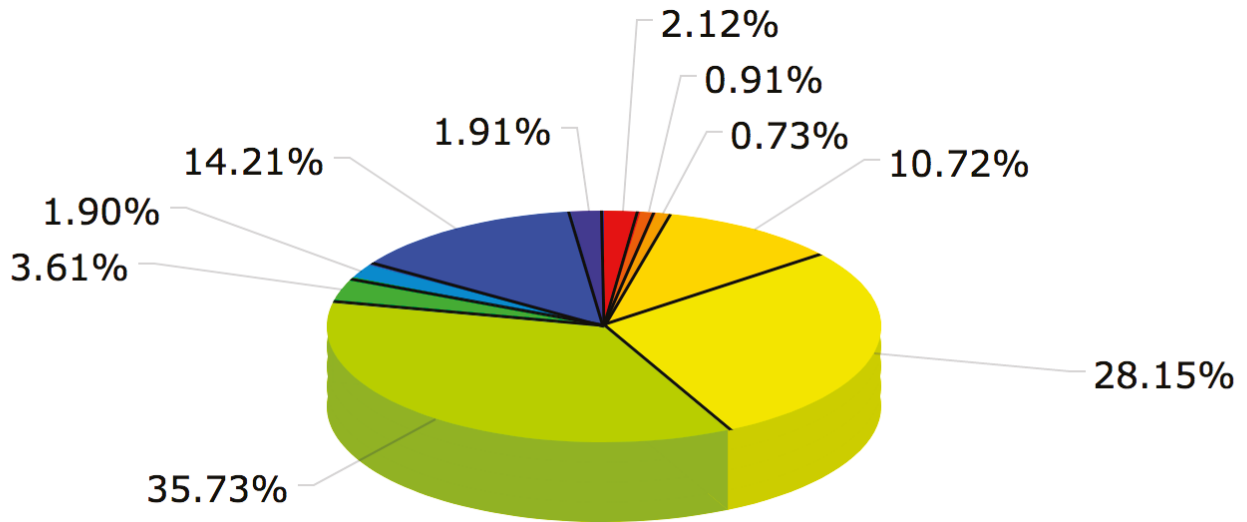
CLERK OF COURTS AND COMPTROLLER FUNDING SOURCES AND EXPENDITURES BY FUNCTION

2018 REVENUES



● B.C.C.	2,272,904	● Interfund Transfers & Reimbursements	1,410,873
● Beginning Fund Balance Court Related	226,522	● State Revenue Sharing - Courts	108,017
● Certification / Copies	44,690	● Recording	1,022,767
● General Gov't Charges	1,598,823	● Circuit Court Fees	1,147,044
● County Court Fees	2,119,336	● Interest Income	77,419
● Other	161,129		

2018 EXPENDITURES



<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Return of Fees to C.O.C.C ● Ending Fund Balance - Courts ● Disaster Recovery ● Other Gov't Services ● Financial / Administration 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 215,569 93,196 74,883 1,092,109 2,868,540 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Judicial ● Refund to B.O.C.C ● Records Center ● IT / Court Automation ● Commission Minutes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 3,640,616 368,305 193,853 1,448,006 194,447
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MINUTES DIVISION

The Minutes Division fulfills the Clerk’s constitutional responsibility as Ex-Officio Clerk of 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.

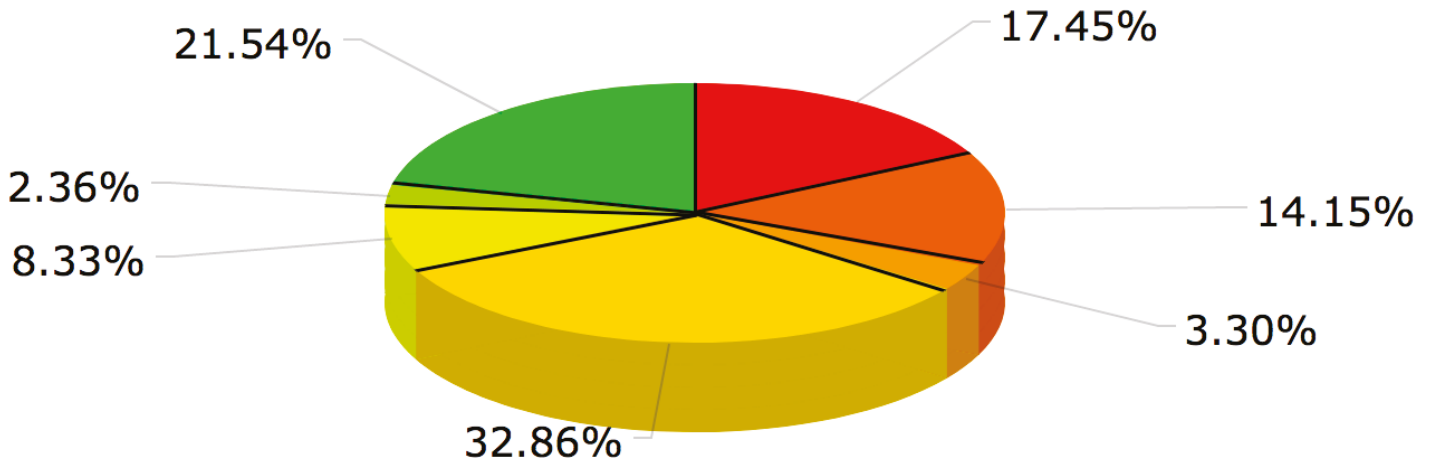
Once the minutes are finalized and adopted by the Board of County Commissioners at a regular meeting, the official minutes are published to the County website for viewing in conjunction with the video stream, agenda, and any supporting documentation.

The 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 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 at CharlotteClerk.com



● Agreements & Amendments Filed	111	● Ordinances & Amendments Filed	53
● Other BOCC Meetings	90	● Grants & Amendments Filed	15
● Regular Commission Meetings	21	● Bids, Change Orders & Agenda	137
● Resolutions & Amendments Filed	209		

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 CharlotteClerk.com.

VAB PETITIONS FILED 2018

• Real Property Tax Assessments	205
• Tangible Personal Property Tax Assessments	19
• Portability	0
• Agricultural Classification	0
• Homestead & Ad Valorem Tax Exemptions	6



INTERNAL AUDIT

The Internal Audit Division is established to assume the duties and responsibilities of the Clerk of the Circuit Court and County Comptroller as auditor and custodian of all county funds as established by Article V, Section 16, Florida Constitution. The internal audit activity's responsibilities are defined by the Clerk of the Circuit Court and County Comptroller as part of their oversight role.

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 2018 INCLUDED:

- Placida Road Safety Improvements
- Accounts Payable Vendor Master File
- Emergency Generators
- Procurement Card Program
- Vehicle Replacement Program
- Follow-Up Tax Deed Sales
- District 22 Medical Examiner Office

[View our Internal Audits online at CharlotteClerk.com](http://CharlotteClerk.com)

During the year, 383 Guardianship case files were audited and the results of those procedures were communicated to the appropriate court in compliance with the Florida Statutes.

383 GUARDIANSHIP AUDITS PERFORMED AND REPORTS ISSUED DURING 2018 INCLUDED: 143 ANNUAL REPORTS 91 INVENTORY REPORTS

The Division conducts varying levels of audits/financial investigations related to guardianship reports and activities. The results of audited case files were communicated to the appropriate court in compliance with Florida Statutes.

The Division performs audits of ordinances, resolutions for compliance with the edict of the Board of County Commissioners. During 2018, we audited 11 ordinances and 88 resolutions.

The Division performs surprise cash counts and site inspections to determine that assets are adequately safeguarded. During 2018, we performed surprise cash counts on 284 locations.



CLERK INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY

The Clerk's Information Technology (IT) Division is a critical component of the Clerk's office as this department leverages both information and technology to move the Clerk's business unit forward. The IT division delivers a robust and secure infrastructure to support our core systems, employees, connecting governmental agencies and the public.

The IT Division supports the many diverse operations of the Clerk's office to include those functions provided by the Clerk in his capacity as Chief Financial Officer, County Auditor and Ex-Officio Clerk for the Board of County Commissioners. IT department 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 Administrative Divisions.

The major systems and applications provided and supported include the Eden Financial System which is an Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP) suite with modules for accounts payable, fixed assets, general ledger, project accounting, accounts, receivable, purchasing and receiving for maximum interdepartmental efficiency. Additionally, this system supports both the human resources and payroll systems for the Board of County Commissions, Supervisor of Elections and the Clerk of the Circuit Court.

The IT Division supporting the Commission Minutes Division leverages a text search and retrieval systems along with Granicus Minutes Maker and Mobile Encoder for documenting Board of County Commissioners meeting. Additionally, supporting the Value Adjustment Board with an integrated solution connecting the Charlotte County Community, Property Appraiser, Board of County Commissioners and the Clerk for the filing of petitions for value adjustment, scheduling of hearings, document management all the through process until final decisions.

As the County Recorder the Clerk's Information Technology department maintains the application, databases, image repository and citizen web interface for all recorded documents within the county. This year, the Clerk challenged the technology team to develop a new marriage scheduling concept where couples are able to schedule their upcoming nuptials in the newly renovated marriage ceremony room. This new system is now available on our website at Marriage.CharlotteClerk.com or by downloading the mobile app [myMarriageServices](#) for both the iPhone and Android devices.



CLERK INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY

Another major system the Clerk's IT department supports is the criminal and civil courts electronic systems. These systems include modules for First Appearance / Intake packages, court document imaging, calendaring, payment processing, state reporting and electronic filings. This past year the IT team continued to accept the challenges of Clerk Eaton and his vision of providing better service to the community. They did this by implementing a system to allow cash payments for court fines and fees at local participating businesses in their neighborhoods without having to come to the Justice Center.

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 2018, to better reflect Clerk Eaton's policies and federal compliance updates; 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 as changes to labor laws occur. In 2018, updates were made to our policy concerning the prohibition of all forms of harassment and retaliation in compliance with EEO standards. Training on these policies was also provided to all supervisory staff. 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. In 2018, we reclassified many positions to better align ourselves with our local labor market as a part of the Clerk's mission to attract and retain a well-qualified staff.

SAFETY/WORKERS' COMPENSATION

Employees are made aware of all safety procedures and workers' compensation compliance policies during their new hire orientation and throughout the year.

In 2018, the Clerk implemented a new emergency preparedness policy and electronic notification system that delivers mass notification in real time to all employees via three formats: phone, text and email. This new system has greatly enhanced the delivery of communication during emergency preparedness events or emergency office closures.

Annual walk-through safety inspections are conducted at all Clerk locations.

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.

In 2018, we deployed a new online resource tool that markets our open recruitments nationally and posts positions on various job boards, significantly increasing our exposure to attract more qualified applicants. We also work with local colleges, supporting internships for students attending criminal justice accreditation, including local high school and workforce development programs. In 2018, we once again partnered with the State of Florida Summer Work Experience Program through their local CareerSource high school on-site youth counselor where eligible high school students obtain hands-on experience in a pre-approved clerical/legal curriculum learning areas of civil, criminal and/or employment law.

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.

In 2018, the Clerk and Comptroller's office partnered with FGCU University to provide affordable supervisory training for his new/entry level supervisory staff. These courses have proven to enhance our management teams' communication and administrative skill sets.

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.



CLERKS CARE

The Charlotte County Clerk of Circuit Court's Office prides itself for actively supporting important community causes.

In April 2018 Clerk Eaton and his staff raised \$2,530.90 for the Charlotte County Animal Welfare League, through bake sales, salad bar lunch sales, raffles and candy bar sales. In addition, the office also collected and donated needed supplies for the shelter.



Each year, for the past 4 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 October 2018, we raised \$4,800.78 and were able to donate that amount to the shelter to help those who are affected by domestic violence.



The Clerk's Office dedicates many volunteer hours for these community events to promote awareness and support for their causes.