



## Register of Deeds 15

### **BUDGET SUMMARY AND HIGHLIGHTS:**

A proposed budget of \$164,640 is proposed for the Register of Deeds Office in 2019, this is an 11.62% decrease from 2018. Revenues are projected at \$167,000, exceeding expenses by \$2,360.

The budget includes an additional half time back-indexing employee for 2019. This position is paid half out of the Register of Deeds budget and half out of the Land Records WLIP grant budget.

Revenue adjustments to two line items were made increasing revenues by \$12,000.

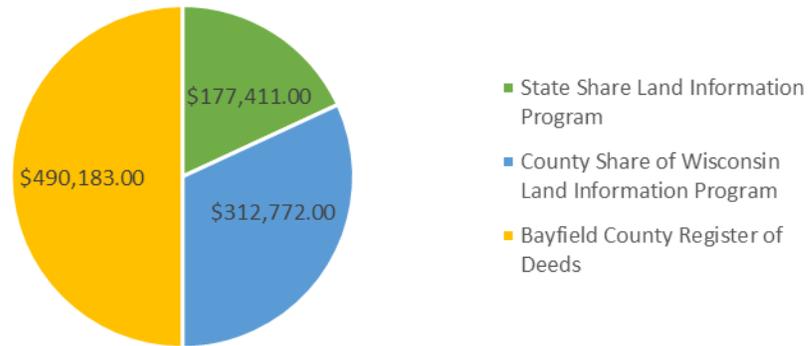
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**Since our fees are driven by the economy, it is always hard to project revenue for the upcoming year. Copy revenue has been increasing as we enter more records into the database.**

**Hiring a ½ time person to back-index records is a priority project for the next 10-20 years with help from Land Records Modernization funds.**

**Since 2009 the Register of Deeds has contributed over \$656,217.00 from our recording fees to the Bayfield County Land Records Office and the State Land Information Program This amount includes the Redaction monies collected NOT included in the Pie Chart below. Seven (\$7) of every recording fee goes to the State of Wisconsin for the State Land Information Program and \$8.00 of our recording fees directly goes to Bayfield County Land Records Office. This is a large chunk of revenue that leaves our office for the work that we do. Not only does the Register of Deeds support our own office, but we support the Bayfield County Land Records office as well. This portion of money given to the Bayfield County Land Records Office could be used to help subsidize an additional ½ time person in our office to back-index older records. According to the Land Modernization Plan, funds from Land Records can be used for back-indexing purposes. The ROD office would also utilize this person to provide assistance at the counter, help the public research our records, and provide Vital Records to customers. I'm requesting ½ of the wage for the position, while Land Records provides the other half for this position. The ½ time position does not receive any benefits other than sick time and vacation time.**

Recording fees Collected by Register of Deeds  
January 2009 to July 9, 2018



Statewide issuance of vital records is entering the second year. This brings value to my constituents, as anyone born in the state of Wisconsin can now purchase their birth certificate from any Register of Deed's Office in Wisconsin. This has a positive impact on the public. State Vital Records is in the process of entering marriage records next with death records to follow. Most marriages and death records are NOT on SVRIS (State Vital Records Information System) and require my staff and I to provide copies to the public from paper copies. All birth certificates MUST be made from the SVRIS program per State Vital Records. Once vital records are entered into SVRIS, all vital records will be made from the State Vital Records System. This process is more cumbersome than making records from our paper copies. It can take up to an hour for SVRIS to update records before we can print them for our customers.

Back-indexing by staff continues to take up a large part of our time. Entering the data into our Fidlar program is done between recording of our daily documents, making copies for the public, and vital record requests. Once indexed, the documents can be purchased online and are made available to the public for a fee. Laredo is a contracted service for customers who search our records daily from their office, home, or on a mobile device.

The public prefers to purchase copies through our office, instead of paying the credit card charges. Fulfilling customer copy requests takes up staff time, but it is a major part of our customer service. With the vital records issuance through SVRIS and the increase in copy requests, this is where extra, knowledgeable staff would be helpful. A half-time person working in the afternoon would fill the void left by the unexpected cutting of the Imaging Clerk position in 2009. Hiring an additional afternoon person will also help with back indexing our records so that more records are available online.

Below is a table of how Bayfield County compares with other counties for back indexing records. Back indexing is where the data is entered and saved. Once saved, it is available on the Internet for purchase or viewing.

Bayfield	1999	Done In House
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<b>Ashland</b>	<b>1950</b>	<b>Done In House</b>
<b>Polk</b>	<b>1995</b>	<b>Done In House</b>
<b>Rusk</b>	<b>1965</b>	<b>Done In House</b>
<b>Burnett</b>	<b>1952</b>	<b>Done In House</b>
<b>Iron</b>	<b>1992</b>	<b>Done In House</b>
<b>Washburn</b>	<b>Back indexed to 1987 verified to 1995</b>	<b>Done In House</b>

**Due to lack of staff, Bayfield County is behind other counties in our district. All have hired and trained their own staff to do the work in-house.**

**FUNCTION:**

The County Register of Deeds is a constitutional office of the State of Wisconsin and is filled by election, pursuant to Article VI of Section 4 of Wis. Statutes, except in the case of a vacancy whereby the governor has the authority to appoint an official by Section 17.21 of Statutes. The Register of Deeds Office was established to perform those duties, functions and services defined by Wisconsin Statute 59.43. However, several other statutes govern and affect the office, among them, Chapter 69, Vital Records. (Birth, Death, Marriage, Divorce, and Veterans)

**MAIN RESPONSIBILITIES:**

**In Brief Duties of the Register of Deeds**

The Register of Deed's (ROD) office provides the official county repository for real estate and vital records. The ROD files, records, and issues instruments and documents of significance both to the community and to its individual citizens. Vital records document the span of our lives from birth to death. Real estate records establish title and property rights. The ROD office can tell the vital story of "who, what and when" of any property. This function is critically important as the local government property tax base is defined from records housed within the ROD office.

Examine, record, index, archive and maintain:

- All instruments authorized by law and return them as designated
- All certified survey maps, subdivision plats, condominium plats, county plats, cemetery plats and transportation project plats as required by Wisconsin State Statutes
- Federal tax liens, real estate related Uniform Commercial Code (UCC) documents, articles of incorporation, change of name, and firm names
- Record military discharge papers and issue certified copies as requested by the veteran or veteran service officer
- Record Vital Records (birth, death, marriage, and divorce), issue certified copies as requested through Statewide Vital Records Information System (SVRIS) when appropriate
- Issue copies of recorded and filed records upon demand and collect required fees
- Accurate bookkeeping practices to ensure monies received from vital records, recordings and real estate transfer fees are dispersed in the correct amount to the appropriate county and state agencies
- Provide safe archival storage and convenient access to these public records

- Use and implement new technologically advanced electronic programs to become more efficient in our duties to provide fast and accurate information
- Implement statutory changes, system modernization, programs, procedure evaluation, disaster recovery and staff development to assure a high level of timely customer service for our citizens
- Provide public education and assistance
- Provide education and assistance to other county offices who use our records
- Collaborate with other county offices



### **FY 2018 ACCOMPLISHMENTS**

I am pleased to share that the Bayfield County Register of Deeds Office is in the final stages of completing a large-scale imaging project that has digitized all recorded Deed documents. Via OnQ Solutions, Bayfield County Register of Deeds will be able to ensure we have a digital copy of our physical documents in case they are ever lost due to natural disaster or from normal wear and tear.

Once scanned, the records are back-indexed daily. Entering data into the computer and double checking the work takes time. Technology doesn't make less work, it gives you the ability to provide more information.

The ROD office continues to redact all social security numbers on documents imaged before 2006 back to 1935. There are approximately 300,000 images to view.

The ROD office has an Internet credit card service called Tapestry in place for the public to purchase an occasional copy of a recorded real estate document. Although we educate and provide to the public this service, customers repeatedly contact the office for copies from our office at the statutory fee without the credit card service charges. I feel it is important to provide our customers with these copies. This service takes up staff time to provide and bill for these copies. Extra, knowledgeable staff would be helpful providing this service.

The Register of Deed's has added another contract in 2018. Eight contracts are in place for remote access to our on-line records. This contracted service is called Laredo. This service is for customers who use our records daily. Most title companies rely on this contracted service. The more we back-index, the more information customers can obtain, either for viewing or purchasing from Laredo or Tapestry.

Staff searches **Birth, Death, Marriage and Divorce** records using the on-line Vital Records program called **SVRIS (Statewide Vital Record Information System.)** There are guidelines as to whether a record can be printed from records in our office or on-line with State Vital Records System. All searching, entering of applications, and payments are now done through the State

Vital Records System. It takes much longer and is a much more cumbersome process. Vital records are confidential. Extra knowledgeable and trusted staff would be helpful in this area.

Staff are filing, indexing, and providing certified copies of Birth, Deaths, Marriages and Veterans Discharges, along with our real estate documents.

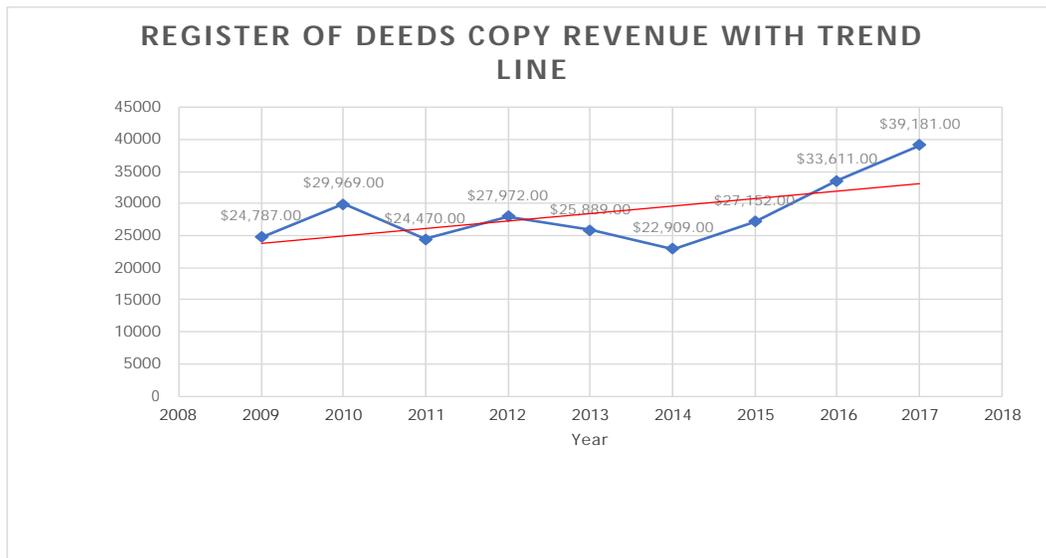
The Register of Deeds Office has gone over the 21,000 mark for over the counter sales since we began using our imaging/computer system.

The Register of Deeds Office has recorded and filed over 2,000 documents electronically.

Completed the annual Social Security Number Redaction Report Summary for the Wisconsin Department of Administration for 2017.

Completed staff evaluations.

The Register of Deeds Office bills 18-20 customers monthly for copies obtained in our office and spends a significant amount of time scanning and emailing customers daily. At the end of every month, staff totals the amounts for copies and sends out invoices to our customers. This is a time-consuming process to collect copy fees, but it is a great service to our customers. The Register of Deed's office collected over \$39,000 in copy fees in 2017. From January 2018 to June 2018 we have collected more than \$20,000 in copy fees. Copy revenues continue to rise as we back-index documents and make them available to the public through the Internet.



Completed Quarterly reports for State Vital Records.

Assured staff completed yearly State Vital Records confidentiality agreement for 2018.

In 2018 the office added another eRecording submitter- CSC (Corporation Service Company). As of 2018 we are e-recording with four (4) trusted submitters, CSC, Simplifile, Indecomm and EPN. The eRecording process takes longer and directs staff away from the service counter. ERecordings take extra scrutinizing on the computer screen. If a customer comes to the counter,

they must wait until we get through the eRecording process before we can wait on them. This is not acceptable! Extra staff would be helpful. We still must make paper copies to work from. Documents now must be viewed and scrutinized on-line. A questionnaire must be answered and the document must be accepted and then processed. If something is missed in the recording process; it is not an easy process to correct. Our recording requirements are set by state statute and must be followed for all recordings. After thorough scrutiny of documents in a "batch" if documents do not meet the recording requirements, the documents are rejected back to the submitter. Documents are recorded by date and time. We must fit them in between our paper documents and walk-in customers.

### **FY 2019 GOALS:**

- Hire another half-time Clerk to enter data into our system so that more real estate records are available on-line. There is also a double-check process to make sure any information put out on the Internet is correct. There are hundreds of books to get through. This is one of the areas where there's a need for extra, knowledgeable staff to fill the vacancy in the afternoon.
- Scan Grantor/Grantee books with OnQ Solutions. The Grantor/Grantee books will be scanned and put out on the Bayfield County website for public access for general searches. The book and page will be listed for the document. The public can request a copy without coming into the office to do the searches. This will be a search by name. This will add revenue to the copy fund.
- There are 95 Mortgage books, 25 Grantor books and 25 Grantee books that still need to be scanned by OnQ Solutions.
- A CSM (Certified Survey Map) index will be put on our web page for easier access for Tapestry (our online copy purchase vendor) customers and our other customers.
- Staff continues to back-index real estate documents. This will be beneficial not only to the Register of Deeds Office, but also the public who use the records extensively. There is also a double check in place to insure the data is filled in correctly. This takes additional time, but is necessary to prevent/correct any errors.
- Continue to redact all security numbers on any previously recorded documents that have been scanned and imaged from the year 2006 back to 1935. Quality Control is a main requirement for this project.
- Continue scanning projects with On Q Solutions. This is for disaster recovery purposes. I am confident we will put indexes on-line for the public to view/search free of charge.
- Continue to make customer service our highest priority. Even though documents are on-line we still see a lot of foot traffic coming and going in our office. We have seen an increase in requests for copies from our office, even though we provide an on-line service. We provide assistance and training to genealogists, title companies, attorneys, assessors, realtors, bankers, septic installers, other Bayfield County offices and the public doing research. We go out of our way to assist our customers find the records they are looking for.

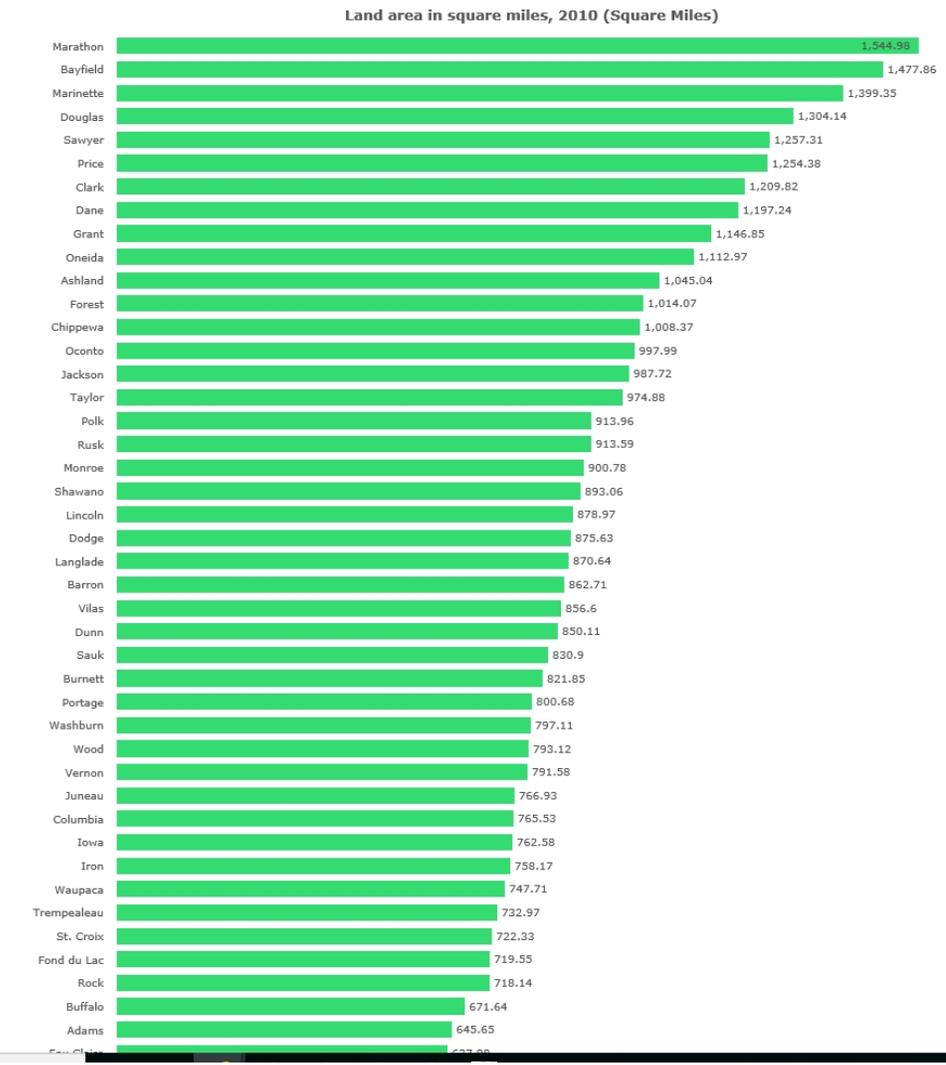
Performance indicators for the Register of Deeds Office are difficult to establish. The state of the economy has a great affect on this office. There is no shortage of work in this office. There are hundreds of books to enter into the computer database. County records need to be made available to the public when the courthouse is open, and we are working on getting our records on-line. Once records are on-line, they will be available to purchase remotely.

## **REGISTER OF DEEDS STAFF**

### **A Little History of Register of Deeds Office:**

The Northwest Territory law (later to become the Wisconsin Territory) first created a County Office of Record in 1795. In 1836 the Territory established the Office of Register of Deeds and in 1839 an act was passed providing for an election every 2 years. (in 2008, this was changed to 4 years) In 1848 the Wisconsin Territory became the State of Wisconsin and a constitution was adopted. Duties of this office have been expanded over the years & technology has changed the way we do things. The Register of Deeds is the custodian of all books, records, maps etc. deposited within the office. The Register of Deed's office is the true repository for the record. The function of this office is critically important as the local government property tax base is defined from the records housed within the ROD office. Though much has changed, the intent of the WI State Statutes remain the same.

Bayfield County is the second largest county by land area in square miles in Wisconsin.



Source: <https://www.indexmundi.com/facts/united-states/quick-facts/wisconsin/land-area#chart>