

Archive Plan

For Preservation and Restoration
Of Archived Records

Presented by

Chester Holton, Recording Division Manager

for

Nancy E. Rister, County Clerk

August, 2015

Executive Summary

The vast majority of the permanent records in the County Clerks office are paper based. These records are used on a daily basis by the public and are vulnerable to loss by theft and wear and tear.

With no cost to the County, these records can be preserved by using the archive fees collected to cover the cost of scanning the paper based documents and preserving the handwritten ones by encapsulation. In addition to preserving the documents, the images can be added to our existing imaging system and improve customer service by offering a wider date range of documents on the Internet.

Introduction

County Clerks are currently authorized to collect a records management fee for maintaining and preserving current documents. A fee not to exceed \$10 may be imposed for recording or filing public documents in county clerk offices in any county for the purpose of preserving, restoring, and managing these county records. The legislation is designed to target archived records. This does not include court records.

This bill authorizes the Commissioners Court to adopt a records archive fee as part of the county's annual budget. This additional revenue will be dedicated to help focus on preserving older records.

Williamson County Commissioners Court approved the \$5 fee on August 26, 2003 under agenda item #23.

Historical Data FY2001 – FY2014

In FY 2001-2002 Deed books 1 through 3 and Survey book for 1902 were preserved and encapsulated. In FY 2002-2003 Deed books 4 and 5 were preserved and encapsulated. In FY 2003-2004 Police Court minutes 1850 – 1859; Elections Volume 1 – 1884-1892; Deed books 6 – 26 were preserved and encapsulated. In FY 2004-2005 Deed books 27 – 122 were preserved and encapsulated. In FY 2005-2006 Williamson County Bid 06WC406 was awarded. Deed books 123 – 168 were preserved and encapsulated. In FY 2006-2007 Marriage Indexes 1848 - 1997; Elections Volumes 2-9 were preserved and encapsulated.

The encapsulation effort was halted in 2006 pending the acceptance of the vendor that has done the majority of our books onto the State of Texas contract vendor's list. In early 2008, Brazoria County, TX awarded a contract to this same vendor for repair and restoration of historical books for Brazoria County. At that time, Williamson County Clerk's Office entered into an Interlocal agreement with Brazoria County for the Repair and Restoration of historical books.

Williamson County Commissioners Court approved an Interlocal Agreement with Brazoria County for the Repair and Restoration of historical books for the County Clerk on March 25, 2008 under agenda item #25.

Subsequent to the approval by the Commissioners Court, 52 Marriage books (1850-1997) and 51 Commissioner's Court books were sent to the selected vendor for preservation and encapsulation. Also completed in FY 2008-2009 were Birth Record Volumes 1-12, 1903-1957, Delayed Birth Records Volumes A-Z and Volumes A-1 through A-10, Still Birth Record and Register of Births 1868-1876, Death Records Volumes 1-12, 31 Naturalization Books, Index to Deeds and the Reverse Indexes for preservation and encapsulation. This was done in FY 2008-2009.

Since February 2005 with a staff of 7, all of the deed books have been scanned. All scanned books are made available on personal computers in the public research area and over the internet. Each book and page is accessible by book and page lookup. Scanning of 943 deed books has been completed. These images are now available online. Staff was reduced to 5 in 2007-2008 FY as people moved on to other jobs. After finishing this initial project, they scanned and indexed all marriage records including old marriage licenses that were not returned or picked up. This project was completed in FY2010-2011.

Restoration of the oldest probate records was started after the archive staff took photos of all documents sent for restoration. They then reviewed the returned books to proof the restoration work and verify what was sent, actually came back. Minor errors were caught and corrected. More books were encapsulated while they worked on photographing probate cases. There were no books restored in FY2009-2010 as staff got caught up with all the marriage books and taking photos of all probate coming up for restoration in FY2011-2012.

In the Fiscal Year 2011– 2012 restoration of all older probate records was completed. The original marriage licenses from the 1800's have been restored, scanned and indexed. They now are available online. Also 40 boxes of civil case files from the 1800's were photographed in preparation for being restored and encapsulated. This was a partial project as restoration couldn't be completed all in one year and was finished in October of 2012.

During FY2012-2013 criminal files from the 1800's consisting of 6,096 cases and 43,934 pages were photographed in preparation for restoration and encapsulation. These were sent out in October 2012 and were received before the end of the fiscal year.

The Archive Division indexed, scanned and entered the 60,000+ birth records in FY2013-2014. They started on the delayed birth records that are recorded from the beginning of the county records through 1940. During this same period technicians also reviewed 231,880 microfilmed OPR documents for image quality and completeness.

Archive personnel continued entering delayed birth records in FY2014-2015 and should finish this by the end of December 2015 and then finally being able to begin work on the death records of the county. They have been reviewing the microfilm from the State Library half days and work on birth the other half of the day. They still have a thousand reels to review.

Archive Plan

2015-2016

While the archive staff works on scanning and entering delayed birth records into the database this year, the Texas State Library will deliver microfilm of 2014. Microfilm is still

a preferred medium because of the length of its service life. We purchased cabinets when we moved into the Justice Center that are awaiting this film as more crucial projects came first. Staff are reviewing the microfilm to ensure image quality and that no documents have been skipped before filing them in the cabinets. Each budget year a revised plan and report of the current progress will be reported. Since the State Library has finished the film for 2014 we began to search for another firm to perform this service because of the quality we are receiving. Another company will do 2013 film as we hope for better quality. In January 2016 the archive staff will begin entering the death records as well as continue to review the microfilm.

Steps to implement and continue

Prepare Annual Archive Plan
Annual Commissioner's Court Approval
Annual Public Hearing
Post Notice of Fee in a conspicuous place

Projected Revenue for 2014-2015

Document Type	Forecast of # documents filed subject to fee based on 2014 filings	Anticipated maximum revenue at \$5.00 per document
Official Public Records	104,467	\$522,335

Proposed Budget of Expenses for 2015-2016

Salaries for 5 people	\$188,144.00
FICA @7.5%	14,393.00
Retirement @7%	24,101.00
Insurance	42,000.00
Workers Comp	410.00
Preservation of books	<u>70,000</u>
Total	\$339,048.00

(merit not included as no decision on merit has been made for 2015-2016 at this time)

LOCAL GOVERNMENT CODE

§ 118.025. COUNTY CLERK'S RECORDS ARCHIVE.

(a) In this section:

(1) "Deterioration" means any naturally occurring process or a natural disaster that results in the destruction or partial destruction of a public document.

(2) "Preservation" means any process that:

(A) suspends or reduces the deterioration of public documents; or

(B) provides public access to the public documents in a manner that reduces the risk of deterioration, excluding providing public access to public documents indexed geographically.

(3) "Public document" means any instrument, document, paper, or other record that the county clerk is authorized to accept for filing or maintaining.

(4) "Records archive" means public documents filed with the county clerk before January 1, 1990.

(5) "Restoration" means any process that permits the visual enhancement of a public document, including making the document more legible.

(b) The commissioners' court of a county may adopt a records archive fee under Section 118.011(f) as part of the county's annual budget. The fee must be set and itemized in the county's budget as part of the budget preparation process. The fee for "Records Archive" under Section 118.011(f) is for the preservation and restoration services performed by the county clerk in connection with maintaining a county clerk's records archive.

(c) The fee must be paid at the time a person, excluding a state agency, presents a public document to the county clerk for recording or filing.

(d) The fee shall be deposited in a separate records archive account in the general fund of the county.

(e) The funds generated from the collection of a fee under this section may be expended only for the preservation and restoration of the county clerk's records archive.

(f) The funds may not be used to purchase, lease, or develop computer software to geographically index public records, excluding indexing public records by lot and block description as provided by Section 193.009(b)(4). (g) The county clerk shall prepare an annual written plan for funding the preservation and restoration of the county clerk's records archive. The Commissioners' Court shall publish notice of a public hearing on the plan in a newspaper of general circulation in the county not later than the 15th day before the date of the hearing. After the public hearing, the plan shall be considered for approval by the commissioners' court. Funds from the records archive account may be expended only as provided by the plan. All expenditures from the records archive account shall comply with Subchapter C, Chapter 262.

(h) If a county charges a fee under this section, a notice shall be posted in a conspicuous place in the county clerk's office. The notice must state the amount of the fee in the following form:
"THE COMMISSIONERS COURT OF _____ COUNTY HAS DETERMINED
THAT A RECORDS ARCHIVE FEE OF \$_____ IS NEEDED TO PRESERVE AND
RESTORE COUNTY RECORDS."

(i) The fee is subject to approval by the commissioners' court in a public meeting.

(j) Any excess funds generated from the collection of a fee under this section remaining after completion of a county records archive preservation and restoration project may be expended only for the purposes described by Section 118.0216. The commissioners' court of a county may not order the collection of a fee authorized by this section after the county records archive preservation and restoration is complete.

(k) This section expires September 1, 2008.

Added by Acts 2001, 77th Leg., ch. 794, § 4, eff. Sept. 1, 2001.
Amended by Acts 2003, 78th Leg., ch. 974, § 3, eff. Sept. 1, 2003; Acts 2003, 78th Leg., ch. 1275, § 3(32), eff. Sept. 1, 2003.

From SB 526 79th Legislature

SECTION 7. Subsection (g), Section 118.011, and Subdivision (4), Subsection (a), and Subsection (k), Section 118.025, Local Government Code, are repealed.

From HB 1513 83th Legislature and AG Opinion GA1055

Allowed for an increase in the Records Management Fee to \$10 maximum and the Records Archive Fee to a maximum of \$10 to be implemented on September 1, 2013. The RMF went up to \$10 but the Archive fee stayed at \$5 as computer and software purchases also come out of RMF as well as salaries which deplete it.