



GEORGE L. CHRISTENSON
MILWAUKEE COUNTY CLERK

Date: November 13, 2025

To: Marcelia Nicholson, Chairwoman, Milwaukee County Board of Supervisors

From: George Christenson, Milwaukee County Clerk

Subject: Chapter 59 Ordinance Changes to comport with the Milwaukee County 2026 Adopted Budget

File Type: Ordinance Change

The County Clerk is an independently elected Constitutional Officer and, among other duties, is charged by Chapter 765 of the Wisconsin State Statutes to issue marriage licenses and collect fees pertaining to the same. Wis. Stat 765.15 authorizes the County Clerk to collect marriage license fees and empowers individual counties to set the marriage license fee amount. Milwaukee County codifies its marriage license fee amount in the 59.15 provision of its Code of General Ordinances and the purpose of this ordinance change is to increase the fee from \$110.00 to \$120.00 starting on January 1, 2026 to comport with the Milwaukee County 2026 Adopted Budget. The fee increase is driven by marriage license fee alignment State-wide as well as the urgent need to raise revenue in light of Milwaukee County's less than favorable fiscal outlook.

This resolution also aims to amend provision 59.20 of the Milwaukee County Code of General Ordinances to allow Milwaukee County Judges and Court Commissioners to receive compensation for performing marriage ceremonies at the County Courthouse during the hours when the buildings is open to the public. This ordinance provision results from Wis. Stat. § 59.79(5) that authorizes Milwaukee County to impose a fee for each marriage ceremony performed by a Judge or a Circuit or Supplemental Court Commissioner as specified in Wis. Stat. 765.16 (1m)(e). This ordinance change is required in order to resume marriage ceremonies at the Courthouse and resume revenue collection for this function. Marriage ceremonies at the Courthouse were disrupted by the Covid-19 pandemic, and in working with the Chief Judge's Office, it's been determined that the courts cannot resume the ceremonies under the pre-pandemic model. The optimal path to resume marriage ceremonies at the Courthouse is to have Court Commissioners perform them based on the independent schedule maintained by the County Clerk's Office, which will be government by the public's demand. Having thoroughly surveyed the stakeholders, and in doing so determined that there is insufficient interest to officiate marriage ceremonies without compensation, the Clerk's Office seeks to amend the County Ordinance provision 59.15 to allow the Court Commissioners to be compensated for officiating marriage ceremonies at the Courthouse.