

**COUNTY OF MILWAUKEE**  
Inter-Office Communication

Date: April 22<sup>nd</sup>, 2022

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

From: Israel Ramon, Milwaukee County Register of Deeds

Subject: Register of Deeds 2021 Annual Report

File Type: Informational Report

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This informational report provides a report on how the Office of the Register of Deeds set and achieved its 2021 goals.

**POLICY**

This report aligns to Chapter 108: Achieving Racial Equity & Health.

Milwaukee County Code of General Ordinances:	<a href="#">Chapter 108: Achieving Racial Equity &amp; Health</a>
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**BACKGROUND**

[File 22-104](#) amends Chapter 108 to require that “annually, by April 30 of each year or sooner, each Milwaukee County department leader and/or their designee(s) shall provide a written and oral report outlining their year-end results to a Milwaukee County Board of Supervisors committee. The reports shall, at a minimum:

- (a) Indicate the year-end goals the department set in the prior year.

**RESPONSE:** The budgeted revenue goals for 2021 were \$4,554,500.00. The actual revenues received were \$5,928,578.82. This represents a revenue overbudget of \$2,447,472.82. The tax levy contribution goal was budgeted at \$3,481,587.00. The actual tax levy contribution was \$5,929,059.82. The 2021 surplus is primarily from Real Estate Transfer Fees and General Recording Fees.

- (b) Share the rationale and relevance of the department’s performance metrics (i.e. explaining why they are “SMART” goals (specific, measurable, achievable, realistic, timely, and extending) and how they align to the county’s racial equity strategy, if applicable).

The Register of Deeds financial performance is tied to the overall strength of the

real estate market in the Milwaukee County. This also includes the construction and sale of large commercial and residential buildings. The budget metrics are extrapolated based on the strength or weakness of the real estate market in the last three years prior to the new budget cycle.

- (c) Report the department's year-end results relating to the goals it had set.

**RESPONSE:** Please see above. 2021 year-end revenue projections were exceeded by \$2,447,472.82.

- (d) Provide a thorough analysis clearly articulating why goals were significantly exceeded, met, or not met.

**RESPONSE:** Goals for 2021 were significantly exceeded due to an exceptionally vigorous real estate market in our county. Total 2021 recording transactions were 141,323. Of note, sizable real estate transfer fees were realized from the sale of these high conveyance value properties:

- Honey Creek Place Apartments
- Accession Hospital – Greenfield Campus
- FEDEX Industrial Complex
- First Stage and the Bartolatta Headquarters for the Museum Project

- (e) Explain the department's progress in creating a departmental-level strategic plan that aligns to the countywide strategic plan and provide an update about future plans to revise and enhance the departmental-level plan in the year ahead."

**RESPONSE:** Last year, I developed a reorganizational plan of the ROD Office that better fits our mission and operations relating to staffing needs, cross-training and cost-effective delivery of real estate and vital records services. That reorganizational plan was included in the 2022 budget which was approved by the Board of Supervisors.

The COVID 19 Pandemic created serious staffing problems in and out of our county. As a result, I worked with Human Resources, Compensation, and the Department of Administrative Services to increase the starting and current wages of ROD employees to bring them up to parity with other county employees and the private sector employees.

We instituted various ways in which the public can purchase vital records without significant contact with our employees and other county residents. We are the first ROD office on our state to have vital records kiosks and institute an On-Demand vital record application in which customers can purchase their vital records from a smart phone or tablet and simply pick the record up at our office or have it mailed to them.

Moreover, thousands of deed volumes which had not been digitalized and

incorporated into our archival program because the Board of Supervisors would not authorize the expenditure in 2019 were ultimately digitalized and funded through the CARES Act in 2020. This is a significant benefit to county residents and our industry partners for the archiving, researching and preservation of all of our county's deed records.

Strategic plans for 2022 are working with DAS and Facilities to remodel the ROD Office to make it more efficient and allow for the much-needed physical reorganization of employees and services. This remodel will benefit county residents in that it will enhance and expedite the delivery of services and significantly cut down on customer waiting times.

### **ALIGNMENT TO STRATEGIC PLAN**

- 1A: Reflect the full diversity of the County at every level of County government
- 1B: Create and nurture an inclusive culture across County government
- 1C: Increase the number of County contracts awarded to minority and women-owned businesses
- 2A: Determine what, where, and how we deliver services to advance health equity
- 2B: Break down silos across County government to maximize access to and quality of services offered
- 2C: Apply a racial equity lens to all decisions
- 3A: Invest "upstream" to address root causes of health disparities
- 3B: Enhance the County's fiscal health and sustainability
- 3C: Dismantle barriers to diverse and inclusive communities

Alignment to the above strategic objectives is articulated in response to the questions below.

### **BODY**

1. What were the top 3 goals of your department/office 2021? Please explain why they are "SMARTIE" goals (specific, measurable, achievable, realistic, timely, inclusive, and equitable) and how they align to the county's racial equity strategy.
  - Goal 1:

To enhance the delivery of Vital Records services to the public in an efficient, safe, and accurate manner, in a manner consistent with County Executive Health and Safety Orders relating to COVID 19 abatement and precautions.
  - Goal 2:

To enhance the delivery of Real Estate services to the public and our industry partners in an efficient, safe, and accurate manner, in a manner consistent with County Executive Health and Safety Orders relating to COVID 19 abatement and precautions.

- Goal 3:

To view our processes, procedures and the efficient delivery of services and collection of revenues through a racial lens.

2. To what extent were these goals accomplished in 2021? Please explain.

- a. Goal 1:

Fully achieved by maintaining, hiring, and training of staff which continued to work throughout the pandemic to assure our statutory obligations under Wis. Stat. Sec., 59.43 and 69.21 were fully complied with.

- b. Goal 2:

Fully achieved by maintaining, hiring, and training of staff which continued to work throughout the pandemic to assure our statutory obligations under Wis. Stat. Sec., 59.43 and 69.21 were fully complied with.

- c. Goal 3:

Achieved, but subject to ongoing commitment to enhance equity in our office to better align with the County's Mission under MCCGO 108.

3. What factors *enabled* progress toward accomplishing these goals?

**RESPONSE:** A dedicated leadership staff that trained both existing but new employees in the policies, procedures, and mission of the ROD Office.

4. What factors *hindered* progress toward accomplishing these goals?

**RESPONSE:** The biggest hinderance in accomplishing our goals was the COVID-19 pandemic. The effect on services to the public and our staffing with negatively impacted. Yet, we continued to provide services in a professional, thoughtful efficient manner.

5. What is the status of your department/office in developing its strategic plan?

**RESPONSE:** The strategic plan over the next five years is to continue to reduce operation costs while maintaining the high level of services to our county residents and industry partners.

To cross train document examiners and real estate research staff to allow flexibility in scheduling and meeting the needs of the public and our industry partners.

To complete the ROD Office remodel in 2023 which will enhance the delivery of services and optimize training of employees.

**FISCAL EFFECT**

The report is informational only and there is no fiscal impact.

**VIRTUAL MEETING INVITES**

**PREPARED BY:**

Israel Ramón. Milwaukee County Register of Deeds

**APPROVED BY:**

**ATTACHMENTS:**

cc: Kelly Bablitch, Chief of Staff, Milwaukee County Board of Supervisors  
Janelle M. Jensen, Legislative Services Division Manager, Office of the County Clerk