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# COUNTY OF ERIE

**CHRISTOPHER L. JACOBS**

COUNTY CLERK

January 15, 2014

The Honorable  
Erie County Legislature  
92 Franklin Street, 4<sup>th</sup> Floor  
Buffalo, New York 14202

**RE: Erie County Clerk – Verification Project**

Honorable Members:

Enclosed please find a proposed resolution and accompanying memorandum requesting authorization to allow Erie County to designate unanticipated 2013 revenues from the Clerk's Office to cover the one-time costs associated with a document verification project in the Clerk's Registrar Division.

Thank you for your consideration of this matter. Should your honorable body require further information, representatives from the Clerk's Office will be available to discuss.

Sincerely,

**CHRISTOPHER L. JACOBS**  
Erie County Clerk

Attachment

## MEMORANDUM

**To:** Honorable Members of the Erie County Legislature  
**From:** Christopher L. Jacobs, Erie County Clerk  
**RE:** Erie County Clerk - Verification Project  
**Date:** January 15, 2014

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### **SUMMARY**

Authorization is requested to allow Erie County to designate unanticipated 2013 revenues in the Clerk's Office to the Clerk's 2014 Budget to cover one-time costs associated with a verification project in the Clerk's Registrar Division/Land Records.

### **FISCAL IMPLICATIONS**

It is estimated that costs associated with this project will not exceed \$130,000. The County Clerk's Office - Registrar Division has monies available in the 2013 Budget from unanticipated revenue in Recording Fees (G/L 415150). At year-end 2013, the Clerk collected \$7,610,163 against a \$6,200,000 budget resulting in ending the year \$1,410,163 over-budget in this line.

### **REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATION**

A statutorily mandated function of the Clerk's Registrar Division is the recording, filing, indexing and maintaining of records affecting title to real property. Once the original land records are recorded, the identifying information entered into the Clerk's official records must be verified for complete accuracy. Once verified, the original document is returned to the customer. Currently there are over 70,000 documents waiting to be processed resulting in an 8-month delay in the return of these documents.

### **BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

Upon taking office two years ago, our immediate focus was on the backlog of transactions being recorded in the Land Records Division of the Registrar's Office. We established a Reengineering Working Group to look at process improvement and identify problem areas. This group identified a significant problem in the indexing verification of documents recorded in the Clerk's Office and the return of the original documents to customers. Steps were taken to improve processes within our control with the resources currently allocated (electronic recording of tax warrants, elimination of duplicate document counts, etc.). These improvements, along with the authorization of overtime, allowed us to reduce the backlog from a 12 month, 113,758 document backlog to an 8-month, 73,000 document backlog. Time studies and staffing models concluded that eliminating the remaining backlog could not be accomplished without an increase in current staffing levels. Requests to increase staff in our budget were not recommended by the County Executive.

Recognizing that the allocation of additional full-time positions to perform this work is unlikely, the Clerk's Office contacted CSEA regarding a one-time outsourcing of verification work for the sole purpose of eliminating the backlog. We have negotiated a Memorandum of Understanding with CSEA that allows the County Clerk to contract with an outside vendor to eliminate the backlog.

### **CONSEQUENCES OF NEGATIVE ACTION**

Funding will not be available for the County Clerk to issue an RFP to find a qualified vendor to eliminate the backlog. As a result, important documents affecting the title to land records in Erie County will not be further delayed.

### **STEPS FOLLOWING APPROVAL**

The County Clerk will work with the Budget Office to ensure that unanticipated revenues from 2013 will be carried forward to 2014 and an RFP will be issued to find a qualified vendor to perform this service. Once a vendor has been identified, the Clerk will seek appropriate legislative authorization to enter into a contract.

A RESOLUTION SUBMITTED BY:  
ERIE COUNTY CLERK

**RE: Erie County Clerk – Verification Project**

WHEREAS, the Erie County Clerk’s Registrar Division is responsible for the recording, filing, indexing and maintaining of all records affecting title to real property; and

WHEREAS, once the original land records are recorded, the information entered into the Clerk’s official records must be verified for complete accuracy; and

WHEREAS, a backlog in verifying the accuracy of the indexing information currently exists and necessary resources to eliminate this backlog are not available within the Clerk’s 2014 adopted budget; and

WHEREAS, the Clerk’s Office and CSEA have entered into a Memorandum of Understanding that would allow for the one-time outsourcing of this work to a qualified vendor; and

WHEREAS, the Clerk’s Office/Registrar Division has identified a funding source to pay for this one-time project from unanticipated revenues recorded in the 2013 revenue lines of the Clerk’s Office and designated for reappropriation into 2014.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT

RESOLVED, that upon approval of this resolution the Erie County Clerk will issue an RFP to identify the most qualified vendor to perform document verification services and will seek appropriate legislative approval before entering into any contract; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the Erie County Legislature does hereby authorize the allocation of the following funds from unanticipated revenues to adjust the Clerk’s 2013 Budget as follows:

2013 Budget - County Clerk, Business Area 113  
Fund Center 11310-Registrar Division

	<u><b>Increase</b></u>
415150 Recording Fees	\$130,000
516020 Professional Services, Contracts & Fees	\$130,000

; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the Erie County Legislature does hereby authorize the carry forward of this appropriation to the Clerk’s 2014 Budget; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the Budget Director and Comptroller may make any changes necessary to effectuate the implementation of this resolution; and be it further

**RESOLVED**, that certified copies of this resolution be sent to the County Clerk, the Director of Budget and Management, and the County Comptroller.