



Annual Report

2019

**More Revenue, More Service, More Savings for Erie County
Taxpayers. Putting Taxpayers First.**

MICHAEL P. KEARNS
Erie County Clerk



COUNTY OF ERIE
MICHAEL P. KEARNS
ERIE COUNTY CLERK

June 29, 2020

Honorable Timothy Meyers
Acting Chairman, Erie County Legislature
92 Franklin Street, 4th Floor
Buffalo, New York 14202

Re: Erie County Clerk's Office – Annual Report 2019

Dear Acting Chairman Meyers:

As I reflect on my first two years serving as your Erie County Clerk, I am pleased to inform this Honorable Body that the County Clerk's Office continues to transform and expand the services offered to the public. My top priority remains making services of the County Clerk's Office more welcoming and convenient for all taxpayers of Erie County. Through the ingenuity and dedication of our employees, we have consistently increased and expedited services.

Again, I am pleased to report to this Honorable Body that the Clerk's Office experienced growth this year by processing \$141 million dollars in transactions, nearly a 13% increase from the previous year. This increase generated a \$6.9 million surplus in total revenues, which the County Clerk's office transfers directly to the general fund to support County services for taxpayers. While monitoring the budget throughout the year, I noticed that revenues were not meeting the projected budgeted amounts as provided by the New York State DMV. To compensate for the State's inaccurate projection, and through precise budget monitoring, I reduced expenses of the Erie County Clerk's Office by \$909,312.00.

Among the most exciting developments this year was the opening of our new modernized Southtowns Auto Bureau, located in the Southgate Plaza. The public made its voice heard when it pointed out that previous administrations' decision to eliminate bathrooms has proved to be an unsustainable inconvenience. I have since pledged to provide accessible bathrooms at all Auto Bureau locations.

The Pistol Permit Department efficiencies improved this year as well. On a weekly basis I reviewed reports tracking applications and their progress. Our newly implemented barcode-based tracking system made this possible, and enhanced the Department's ability to pinpoint and remedy any impediments to processing permit application.

Looking forward, many challenges remain for 2020 and beyond. Due to COVID-19, the federal government has extended the REAL ID compliance deadline. Commencing October 1, 2021, driver's licenses and non-drive identification cards will need to meet REAL ID federal standards in order to be used as identification to board a domestic flight, or enter military bases or certain federal facilities. The additional year will mean that the increased strain on our Auto Bureaus will continue. Also, consistently failing NYSDMV technology presents a significant hurdle impacting daily operations of our Auto Bureaus.

The primary goal of the County Clerk's is to provide of efficient, cost-effective services to residents of the County of Erie. I am proud of my staff that has worked to achieve this goal in 2019, and this report will illustrate that success.

Sincerely,



MICHAEL P. KEARNS
Erie County Clerk

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COUNTY CLERK'S OFFICE

The Erie County Clerk is an independently elected official responsible for recording, filing and maintaining a central repository of legal documents and records affecting property titles (including land and real estate transactions), those related to corporate filings, assumed names, and, as Clerk of the Supreme and County Courts, all court pleadings and papers. Responsibility for maintaining all court records was transferred to the County Clerk from the State Court System in 1986. In 1987, the responsibility of processing pistol permits and maintenance of those records was transferred to the County Clerk from the State Court System. The above-described duties are carried out pursuant to the laws of the State of New York, the Erie County Charter and Administrative Code.

In addition, the Erie County Auto Bureaus (the "ECAB" or "Auto Bureau"), as agent for the State Department of Motor Vehicles, are managed by the County Clerk, staffed by Clerk office personnel and budgeted separately from the Registrar Division. The County Clerk oversees the operations of two Auto Bureau branches, four satellite offices and one Mobile unit serving four locations on a weekly schedule.

Fees are mandated by New York State and local law. The operations of the Erie County Clerk's Office (the "ECCO" or "Clerk's Office") garner revenue primarily from recording, filing or processing legal records and documents, and for services provided by the Clerk's Office, such as copying and certifying the records maintained as public records in the Clerk's Office. More specifically, the Clerk's Office, as an agent of the State, collects mortgage and real estate transfer taxes that are then apportioned between the State, State agencies, the County and cities, towns and villages located within Erie County. Recording fees, filing fees, licensing fees and fees such as criminal surcharges and fines paid to the County Clerk are divided between various State agencies, such as the New York State Department of Education, the Department of Finance, the Department of Motor Vehicles, the State of New York Mortgage Agency (SONYMA), the Unified Court System and the Niagara Frontier Transportation Agency (NFTA). The funds required for office expenses, administrative costs, and New York State document and record retention requirements are drawn from the County general fund, into which the balance of revenues collected by the Clerk's Office are deposited.

ACCOMPLISHMENTS

FINANCIAL

- Generated \$6.9 million in revenue surplus, which is transferred directly to Erie County's general fund and used to support county services.
- Processed over \$141 million in transactions.
- Generated \$15.3 million for the County Road fund.

AUTO BUREAU

- Relocated our ECC South Campus office to Southgate Plaza in West Seneca to better meet the overcrowding and customer volume.
- Upgraded seating in all auto bureau offices to meet public seating health standards.
- Continued our partnership with the Erie County Office for the Disabled to hold Disability Awareness Outreach Day, assisting individuals with disabilities and their families to obtain state issued picture identification through the Erie County Auto Bureau.
- Offering extended hours services at our downtown auto bureau on the last Thursday of the month.
- Added additional (6th) service window to our Eastern Hills Mall Office to better assist our customers.

PISTOL PERMIT DEPARTMENT

- Worked with town and city police agencies to consolidate applicant interviews & background checks through the Erie County Sheriff's Office (approx. 65% of total application intake).
- Cross-trained staff on various aspects of pistol department duties & responsibilities (was once function to staff member specific).
- Implemented scanning & digitizing of archived pistol permit application files. After verification, hard copy files are safely destroyed.
- Instituted weekly reporting to the County Clerk, providing the number of active/live applications within each step of the process.

VETERANS SERVICES

Erie County Clerk's S.A.L.U.T.E.S. Program.

"Showing Appreciation, Loyalty and Unity Towards Erie County Service Members"

Thank A Vet Discount Program

- Continuation and expansion of Thank A Vet Discount Program.
- Updated all Thank A Vet Business Participants (hours, discounts, contacts) and removed all businesses that have since closed since the start of program.
- Coordinated "Thank A Vet Day" at Bisons Ballpark and distributed 1,000 free tickets to veterans.
- Participated in Annual "Buffalo Stand Down" offering S.A.L.U.T.E.S. services to veterans.
- Offered S.A.L.U.T.E.S services through "Clerk on the Go" Outreach Events.
- Provided S.A.L.U.T.E.S services at Erie County Fair and participated in "Veterans Day" Ceremony.
- Partnered in first annual "Honoring Our Veterans and Families" Event in Sloan and provided S.A.L.U.T.E.S. services.

William J. Donovan Purple Heart Book of Merit

- Collected 2019 Book of Merit applications for William J. Donovan Purple Heart Book of Merit to include over 500 Erie County Purple Heart Veterans.
- Coordinated "Purple Heart Day" which included a presentation of the 2019 Book of Merit, ceremony to honor 2019 recipients and unveil of Wounded Warriors Parking at Elma Town Hall.
- Became first county building to fly Purple Heart Flag at Erie County Clerk's Office and hosted ceremony with Military Order of the Purple Heart.
- Participated in and supported events with the Military Order of the Purple Heart, like Purple Heart Picnic in September.
- Honored West Seneca Purple Heart Veterans at Pearl Harbor Remembrance Ceremony.

Operation Appreciation (Collaboration with Veterans Post Restoration of Erie County, NY Inc.)

- Hosted "Veterans Post Restoration Advisory Board" meetings and served as an Advisory Board Member.
- Continued to host veterans at the Auto Bureaus to support handicap accessibility renovations at Erie County Veteran Posts. (Veteran Flag Donation Program).
- Working in collaboration with Veterans Post Restoration, handicap accessible restroom renovations were completed at the Frank L. Gierlach Post 1320 at an estimated \$50,000 value (raised through volunteer efforts).
- Within one month, handicap accessible restrooms and ramp renovations were completed at West Seneca Post 735 at an estimated \$140,000 value (raised through volunteer efforts).

Wall of Honor

- Dedicated to host Wall of Honor while Naval Park display is under construction that veterans and visitors to the County Clerk's Office are able to observe.
- Coordinated ceremony to honor Captain Sydney Cole, 104-year-old WWII Veteran..
- Honored SGT Elmer N. Crowell, 93-year-old WWII Army Veteran; "I've never done anything like this" –Crowell.

TECHNOLOGY

- Server & Workstations Upgrades at all sites.
- Network upgrades at Auto Bureaus.
- Barcode Application Scanning\Tracking System implemented in Pistols.
- Document Recording Module & Scanning in Pistols.
- TV Digital Signage & queuing system integration at Auto Bureaus & Land Records.
- Digitizing of historic documents.

ERIE COUNTY CLERK'S ZOMBIES INITIATIVE

- When Clerk Kearns became the 142nd District Representative in the New York State Assembly, he brought this fight against vacant and abandoned zombie properties to Albany and was instrumental in the passage of the 2016 Zombie Property and Foreclosure Prevention Law ("Zombie Property Law.") As Clerk since 2017, resolving the issue of vacant and abandoned zombie homes throughout the County has become a top priority in his office.
- Due to the severity of this issue, the New York State Attorney General began allocating funds to selected municipalities with high concentrations of zombie foreclosures. The 2019 grant initiative was called Zombie 2.0.

- While this was a great step forward, zombie foreclosures persist in smaller communities that were ineligible to apply for Zombie 2.0 grants. Recognizing the need to assist these communities, Clerk Kearns issued a Request for Proposal on March 6, 2019, and the Western New York Law Center ("WNYLC") was selected by a reviewing committee to be the vendor to provide zombie property outreach services. On April 18, 2019, the Erie County Legislature approved Comm. 7E-29 authorizing Erie County to allocate \$200,000 and enter into a contract with the WNYLC to create the Erie County Clerk's ZOMBIES Initiative.
- The acronym stands for Zero Tolerance; Open Lines of Communication; Municipal Participation; Bank Accountability; Investment in Neighborhoods; Engage and Educate Communities and Solutions.
- Since it began in June and through December 2019, the Initiative team has met with supervisors or mayors, code enforcement officers, clerks, municipal attorneys and/or town or village boards regarding the Zombie property and foreclosure law and how this initiative team could help its municipality.
- Thus far, approximately 125 vacant and abandoned properties have been researched. About half of these properties either have no mortgage on them, are not classified as a 1-4 family household, or the bank is exempt, therefore the zombie laws do not apply. Interestingly, about 86% of properties reported in Buffalo are vacant and abandoned with no mortgages. The team has received the most property complaints from Angola, Buffalo, Colden, Evans, Grand Island, and Gowanda. However, Clarence has the largest percentage of zombie properties compared to non-mortgaged vacant and abandoned properties (4 of the 6 reported).
- Of the Zombie properties throughout Erie County, approximately 26 have been brought into compliance and/or the deed has transferred to a new owner since the initial complaint. This accomplishes the S in our ZOMBIES acronym—Solutions.
- There are 16 properties throughout the County, which the team is monitoring, but not proceeding forward since a foreclosure sale is pending, the loan is current, or the property is occupied.
- The team has reported 25 addresses to the Department of Financial Services (DFS) and, of those, approximately 16 are considered priority properties with violations still existing. Each case is unique and has its own share of complications, which the team is working diligently with DFS to resolve while staying in contact with the code enforcement officers from the municipality.
- The initiative has resulted in numerous print and broadcast media stories. There is a website and an active Facebook page for the public to report on vacant and abandoned properties in their neighborhood.

Erie County Zombies Task Force

- Created in the Fall of 2018, three quarterly meetings were held in 2019 that were chaired by Erie County Clerk Michael P. Kearns. The Task Force members include federal, state, county and municipal elected officials, code enforcement officers and representatives from banks, service providers, real estate, local non-profits in the housing fields and private businesses.
- A success was the collaboration created through these meetings of which the WNY Law Center was a catalyst for the Town of Cheektowaga to work with the Land Bank and Habitat for Humanity on vacant and abandoned zombie homes. Other communities are looking into following this model.

- Clerk Kearns has created a working relationship with law students from Columbia University and they have made presentations on projects they are working on in regards to zombie properties.
- The WNY Law Center has scheduled several well-attended trainings about many issues regarding housing, especially with how to deal with vacant and abandoned zombie homes.
- Sub-committees have been created for banking, legislation, real estate and home owner advocacy and they report out at each meeting.

CONSTITUENT COMMUNICATION

- Continued "Catching Up with the Clerk" episodes (City of Buffalo cable station).
- Initiated startup of new podcast: "Conversations with the Clerk".
- Created "Constant Contact" account allowing the Clerk to communicate with approximately 10,000 constituents via email.
- Continued to connect with constituents through social media platforms including: Instagram, Twitter, Facebook, and new YouTube platform.
 - Instagram @mickey.kearns
 - Twitter @ErieCountyClerk
 - Facebook @ErieCountyClerkMickeyKearns
 - YouTube: Erie County Clerk Michael P. Kearns

CLERK ON THE GO

A new initiative established by the County Clerk in February of 2019. The program was designed to bring the services of the Clerk's Office into the communities of Erie County.

- Hosted over 150 Outreach & Seminar Events in 2019 including but not limited to Community Centers, Senior Centers, Senior Living Complexes, Public Libraries, Special Events, Fairs, Festivals...and anywhere people gathered in Erie County.
- Erie County received and approved a \$53,400 donation from Lamar advertising promoting Real ID Act and the Auto Bureau. The public service awareness campaign consisted of two (2) billboards to be displayed from Aug 1-Dec 31 educating the public. Impressions from these billboards generated in excess of 20,000 per week.
- Established Banner and television reader images highlighted the REAL ID and Auto Bureau. These awareness messages ran at the Buffalo International Airport from May 1 through December 31 2019.
- Established a 12-day Outreach at the Erie County Fair on behalf of the Clerk's Office. The CLERK ON THE GO Staff communicated with an estimated 8,000 people pertaining to everything from Auto Bureau Reservations, Passports, REAL ID questions and answers, Pistol Department procedures and the S.A.L.U.T.E.S. program.
- CLERK ON THE GO received two (2) 2019 National Awards from the US DEPARTMENT OF STATE for its innovative approach of passport services to Erie County residents.
 1. COUNTY CLERK Michael Kearns received one of only two awards out of 7,700 passport acceptance facilities nationwide for "The Most Innovative Passport Acceptance Facility of 2019".
 2. Marjorie Sullivan received a "Leadership Award from the Bureau of Consular Affairs" for CLERK ON THE GO expanding Passport services in Erie County in a time of increasing demand.

HEALTH

Erie County Clerk's Wellness Collaborative.

Healthiest Districts Initiative (HDI)

- Continued monthly meetings with five HDI School Districts, introducing numerous health partners and resources each month in partnership with the Wellness Institute of Buffalo.
- Coordinated "Wellness in the Parks Day" in partnership with five HDI School Districts, Wellness Institute of Buffalo, Mental Health Advocates of Western New York, Youth Advantage, Beaver Island State Park, and WellNow Urgent Care to host a day of nutritional, physical, mental, and environmental wellness for HDI students.
- HDI School Districts were recipients of grant funding through the Mental Health Advocates of WNY for mental health support and resources.
- Hosted annual HDI Luncheon at Catholic Health Mercy Hospital.

Partnership with Catholic Health System

- Continued "Heart Healthy Blood Pressure Screenings" at the Erie County Auto Bureaus during American Heart Month in February.
- Served over 200 constituents in February with Free Blood Pressure Screenings. Results showed that 59% were abnormal. Of the 59% of abnormal screenings (31% pre-hypertension and 28% hypertension).
- Added "Stroke Prevention Screenings" at the Erie County Auto Bureaus leading up to "Stroke Awareness Day" in October, providing both blood pressure and carotid artery screenings to constituents for free (normally a \$200-300 procedure).
- Doubled the number of constituents served by health partnership with the October Health Screenings and reported findings.
- Served 409 constituents in October with free blood pressure and additional carotid artery screening service. Results from blood pressure screening showed 69% were abnormal (25% pre-hypertension and 44% hypertension). Results from carotid artery screening showed 50 were found to have carotid stenosis greater than 40%.
- Multiple patients called so say the screening alerted them of problems they were unaware of. "This saved my life, I was just a heart attack away from a stroke" – Mr. Robert Henry (constituent served at October health screening)
- Over 600 constituents took part in free health screenings in 2019.

Employee Wellness

- Hosted weekly "Mindfulness Meditations" for Clerk's Office Employees through a collaboration with local wellness instructor, Jennifer Gress.

Miscellaneous CWC Collaborations

- Hosted "Connect Life" (formally known as "Unyts") at Auto Bureaus to administer blood donations.
- Participated in Robert Wood Johnson County Health Ranking Report Release through the Wellness Institute of Buffalo which is reasoning for "Clerk's Wellness Collaborative".
- Led "WNY Walks!" Walking Event with Wellness Institute of Buffalo – May 29, 2019.
- Participated in "Gowns for Prom" and "Coats for Kids" in partnership with Colvin Cleaners to collect gowns and coats for children in need.

BUDGET VS. ACTUAL

ERIE COUNTY CLERK'S OFFICE 2019 Budget Summary

	2019		
	Budget	Actuals	Variance
Registrar			
Revenues	\$ 7,849,397	\$ 7,709,573	\$ (139,824)
Expenses	5,261,945	4,711,591	\$ (550,354)
Commitment	\$ 2,587,452	\$ 2,997,982	\$ 410,530
Auto Bureau			
Revenues	\$ 11,680,535	\$ 10,834,939	\$ (845,596)
Expenses	7,264,822	6,905,864	\$ (358,958)
Commitment	\$ 4,415,714	\$ 3,929,075	\$ (486,638)
Clerk's Office Total			
Revenues	\$19,529,932	\$ 18,544,512	\$ (985,420)
Expenses	\$12,526,766	\$ 11,617,455	\$ (909,312)
Commitment	\$ 7,003,166	\$ 6,927,057	\$ (76,109)

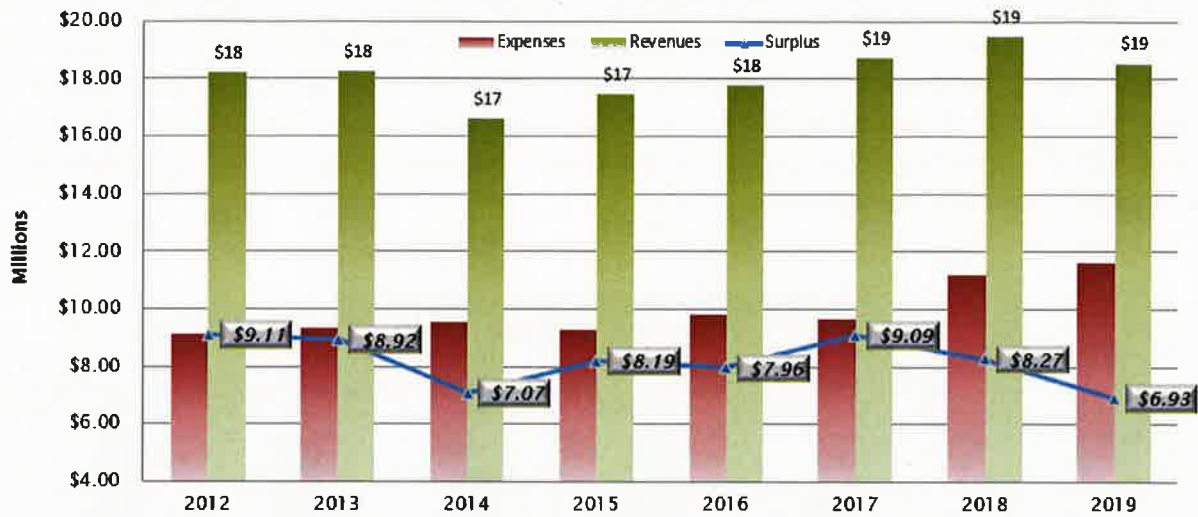
The Clerk's Office generated \$18.5 million in revenues between the Registrar Division and the Auto Bureau, coming in under budget by \$985,000 or -5%. Expenses for the year were \$11.6 million, under budget by \$909,000 or 7.3% lower than estimated. Overall the Clerk's Office generated a \$6.9 million surplus for the year, coming in \$76,000 under budget. The \$6.9 million surplus is transferred directly to Erie County's general fund, used towards supporting services and departments such as social services, road repair, and offsetting future tax increases for the County residents and businesses.

HISTORICAL BUDGET PERFORMANCE

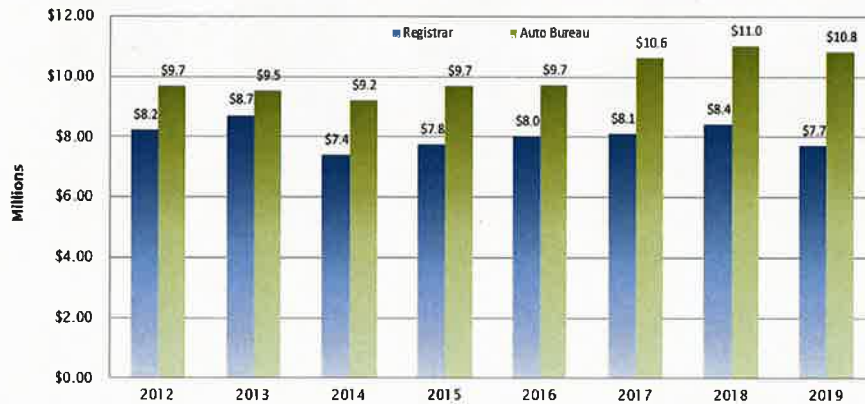
On average, over the last eight years, revenues have steadily increased year over year. Previous to 2019, the prior four years revenues had increased three percent due to the renewal cycle of New York State driver's licenses. Expenses have increased on average 3.7% due to contractual obligations and increases in staff at the auto bureaus to meet the demand of the license renewals and the Federal Real-ID Act.

Over the past eight years, revenues have exceeded expenses at an average of 81%, resulting in a revenue surplus. The County Clerk's Office has generated \$145 million in operating revenues and expenses totaling \$80 million over the past eight years, resulting in a **surplus of \$66 million**. The significance of \$66 million in surplus is that it is used to directly offset tax increases for the residents of Erie County, support local cultural activities, and provide public services.

ERIE COUNTY CLERK'S OFFICE Historical Operating Budget



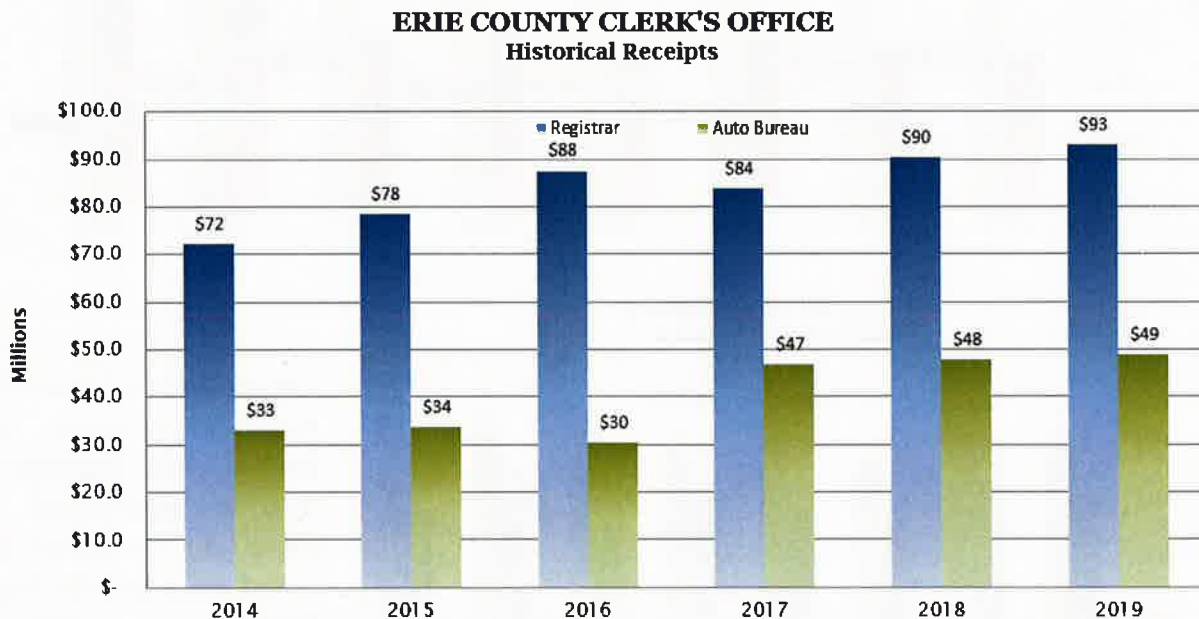
ERIE COUNTY CLERK'S OFFICE Historical Revenues by Division



The graph to the left shows historical revenues by division. The Registrar's Division experienced a slight dip compared to recent years and the Auto Bureau's continued growth is due to the renewal cycle of licenses and the Real ID Act.

RECEIPTS

While the Clerk's Office generated \$19 million in revenues for the County this does not reflect the total receipts collected through the Clerk's Office. In 2019 the Clerk's Office processed over \$141 million in transactions, \$93 million in the Registrar's Division and \$49 million through the Auto Bureaus. These receipts are then distributed on a monthly basis to various agencies including the State DMV, State Tax Department, NFTA, and various local towns and villages. Over the past six years the Clerk's office has generated over \$745 million. The graph below is a historical summary of total receipts collected over the past six years.



EMPLOYEES PRODUCTION

There are a total of 143 fulltime equivalent employees (FTE) staffed in the Clerk's Office, 59.5 FTEs within the Registrar Division and 83.5 working at the Auto Bureau. During 2019, the 143 FTEs completed over **812,000** transactions, averaging 5,700 transactions per FTE. Further, each FTE processed over \$972,000 in receipts or \$130,000 in revenue for the Clerk's Office.

ERIE COUNTY CLERK'S OFFICE 2019 Employee Production

	2019		
	Registrar	Auto Bureau	Office
Full Time Equivalents (FTE)	59.5	83.5	143
Transactions	226,599	585,113	811,712
Transactions per FTE	3,808	7,007	5,670
Receipts	\$ 90,283,637	\$ 48,654,999	\$ 138,938,635
Receipts per FTE	\$ 1,517,372	\$ 582,695	\$ 971,599
Revenues	\$ 7,709,573	\$ 10,834,939	\$ 18,544,512
Revenues per FTE	\$ 129,573	\$ 129,760	\$ 129,682

REGISTRAR DIVISION

The Registrar Division is responsible for recording, filing and maintaining records related to land transactions or affecting title to real estate, corporations, assumed name certificates, court papers and the Uniform Commercial Code filings affecting title to real property. It provides a central repository for legal documents which require recording or filing. It also serves as a repository for documents requested, but not necessarily required, to be filed by customers of the office. Responsibility for maintaining the records is required by State and local law once the document or record is accepted by the Registrar's Office.

As Clerk of the Supreme and County Courts in Erie County, the County Clerk is responsible for filing and maintaining all court records of the New York State Supreme and County Courts, in accordance with State law and regulations of the Administrative Office of the Unified Court System. This obligation was transferred to the County from the State Court System in 1986. In addition, the Clerk is responsible for those duties set forth in the New York Civil Procedure Law and Rules, which include the granting of default judgments.

Responsibility for the processing of pistol permits and administration of the application files was transferred to the County Clerk from the State Court System in 1987. Accordingly, the Division accepts and processes pistol permits in addition to hunting and fishing licenses in the Pistol Permit Department.

All revenues attributed to the operation of the Division of the Registrar are derived from mandatory fees collected for the recording, processing and filing of legal documents and records and the issuance of licenses and permits. Mortgage and Real Property Transfer Taxes are collected by the Registrar and distributed to the appropriate state and local agencies.

PROGRAM AND SERVICE OBJECTIVES

The Erie County Clerk's Office is responsible for the following procedures:

- To record and file documents required or entitled to be filed under New York State law including deeds, mortgages, powers of attorney, certificates of incorporation, certificates of partnership, doing business under an assumed name, liens, real estate brokers entitlements to commissions, bail bond liens, local laws, wage assignments and pistol permits.
- To provide efficient, effective customer service to taxpayers and residents of Erie County.
- To provide access and assistance to the public for inspection of all filings and recordings.
- To record all judgments entered in Erie County and the New York State Supreme Court as well as maintain current status of judgment records.
- To process all court papers submitted for civil actions and proceedings, and criminal cases on appeal.
- To administer the processing of pistol permit applications, the issuance of pistol permits upon the direction of an Erie County Court Judge and maintain existing permit files.
- To issue certificates, exemplifications, certified copies, executions, against real and personal property and notary public commissions.
- To serve as an agent of the state government with the sale of hunting and fishing licenses, the collection of mortgage, real property transfer taxes, capital gains taxes and the collection of court fees.

- To serve as an agent of the federal government by administering declarations of intent for individuals seeking U.S. citizenship.
- To accept United States Passport Applications for the U.S. Department of State.
- To administer and file oaths of public officials, notaries public and Commissioner of deeds.
- To properly collect, record, deposit and monitor all fees and taxes collected, and to assure required distribution as prescribed by law, regulation or agreement.

CORPORATION AND DBA FILINGS

There were over 6,200 Corporate and DBA filings in the County Clerk's Office in 2019, down 4.3 percent from 2018 and down 2.7 percent over 2017 total filings. Business filings have taken a slight downward trend compared to the previous two years which were higher due to Erie County's resurgences. Over the last four years there have been nearly 25,000 business filings in Erie County.

ERIE COUNTY CLERK'S OFFICE

DBA & Corporation Filings

Corporations
DBA
DBA Discontinuance
Total
Annual Growth

Annual Recordings			
2016	2017	2018	2019
2,271	2,637	2,773	2,631
3,365	3,478	3,409	3,335
367	298	344	277
6,003	6,413	6,526	6,243
	6.8%	1.8%	-4.3%

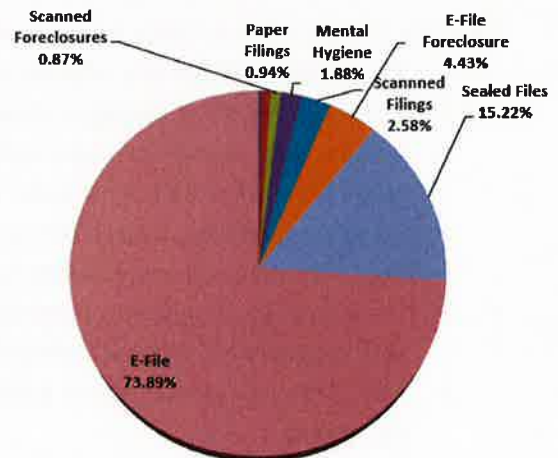
INDEX NUMBERS AND COURT FILINGS

ERIE COUNTY CLERK'S OFFICE

Actions & Proceedings

Small Claims
Paper Filings
Scanned Foreclosures
Mental Hygiene
Scanned Filings
E-File Foreclosure
Sealed Files
E-File
Total
Annual Growth

Annual Case Filings			
2016	2017	2018	2019
64	73	70	36
188	58	141	167
248	291	245	155
305	300	339	334
390	386	424	458
1,120	921	962	787
3,181	2,826	2,827	2,706
8,979	10,941	12,639	13,137
14,475	15,796	17,647	17,780
	9.1%	11.7%	0.8%



JUDGMENTS AND LIENS

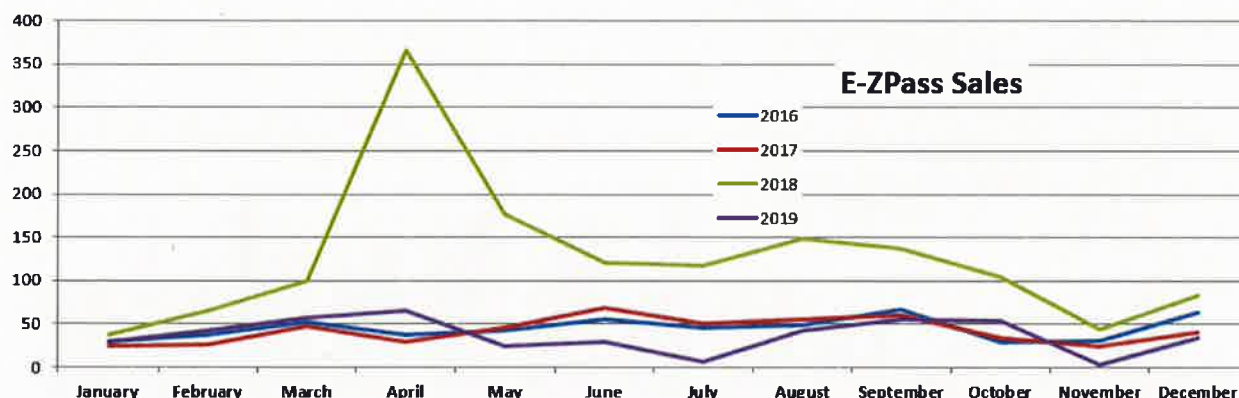
ERIE COUNTY CLERK'S OFFICE

Judgements & Liens

	2016	2017	2018	2019
Judgments	37,137	41,061	41,017	35,243
Liens	4,369	3,753	3,194	2,965
Satisfaction of Judgments	28,436	27,378	30,937	57,724
Total	69,942	72,192	75,148	95,932
<i>Annual Growth</i>		3.2%	4.1%	27.7%

E-ZPASS

The Clerk's Office sells New York State E-ZPasses for passenger and commercial vehicles for use on New York toll roads and other state toll roads. The cost of the E-ZPass is \$25, in which the County Clerk's Office receives \$4.00 for each unit or 16% of the total cost. The County Clerk's office sold 448 E-ZPasses in 2019, down 70.2 percent from the 2018 sales of 1,503 units. The sharp decrease is mainly due to the higher than expected 2018 sales based on the elimination of the Grand Island tolls, requiring commuters to have an E-ZPass.



NOTARY PUBLIC & COMMISSIONER OF DEEDS

The County Clerk's Office is responsible for processing notary public applications and commissioner of deeds for the State, along with annual renewals. The commissioner of deeds are valid for two years depending on when the applicant first applies, regardless all applications expire on December 31st of an odd year. Notary public certifications are valid for four years, expiring four years from the certification date.

ERIE COUNTY CLERK'S OFFICE

Notary Public & Commissioner of Deeds

	2016	2017	2018	2019
Notary	632	544	609	577
Notary Renewals	1,056	2,995	4,456	3,217
Commissioner of Deeds	1,376	448	1,356	347
Total	3,064	3,987	6,421	4,141
<i>Annual Growth</i>		30.1%	61.0%	-35.5%

DEEDS & MORTGAGE FILINGS

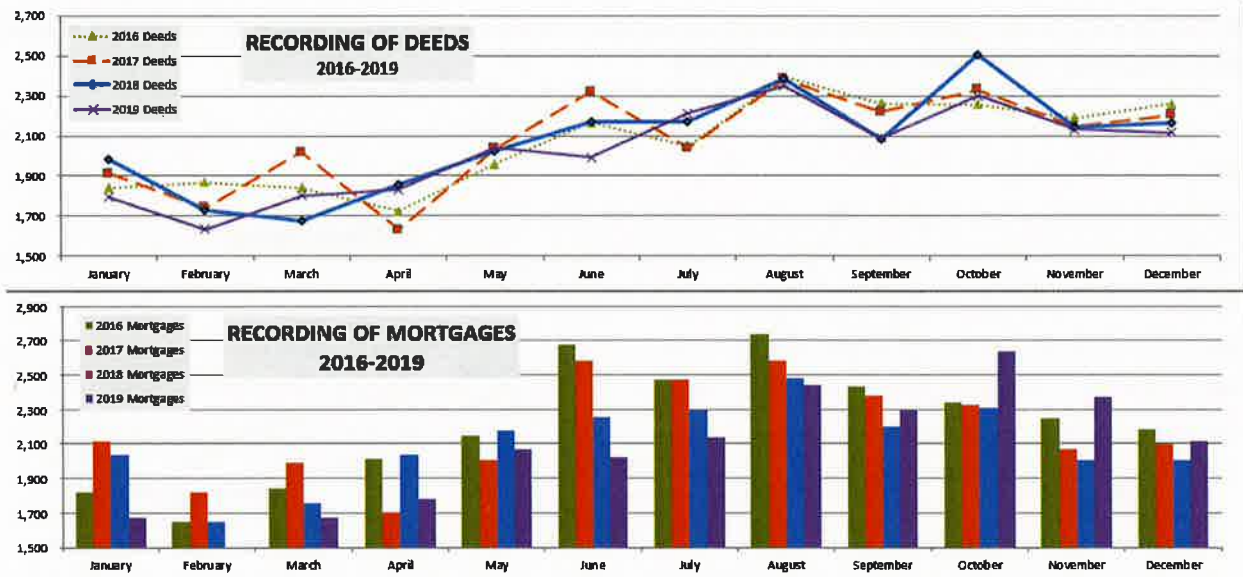
ERIE COUNTY CLERK'S OFFICE

Deeds & Mortgage Filings

	2016	2017	2018	2019
Deeds	24,801	24,971	24,886	24,290
Mortgages	26,577	26,145	25,220	24,676
Mortgage Release & Discharge	27,395	29,551	27,527	25,809
Other Mortgage Filings	10,006	1,721	5,661	5,433
Total	88,779	82,388	83,294	80,208
Annual Growth		-7.2%	1.1%	-3.7%

All real-estate transactions such as deed and mortgage filings are processed through the County Clerk's office. There were over 80,200 real-estate transactions recorded in the County Clerk's office during 2019, down from 83,295 in 2018. The year to year decrease gives an indication of the real-estate market in Erie County.

The graph below shows a comparison of the last four years of new mortgages recorded and the exchange of properties.



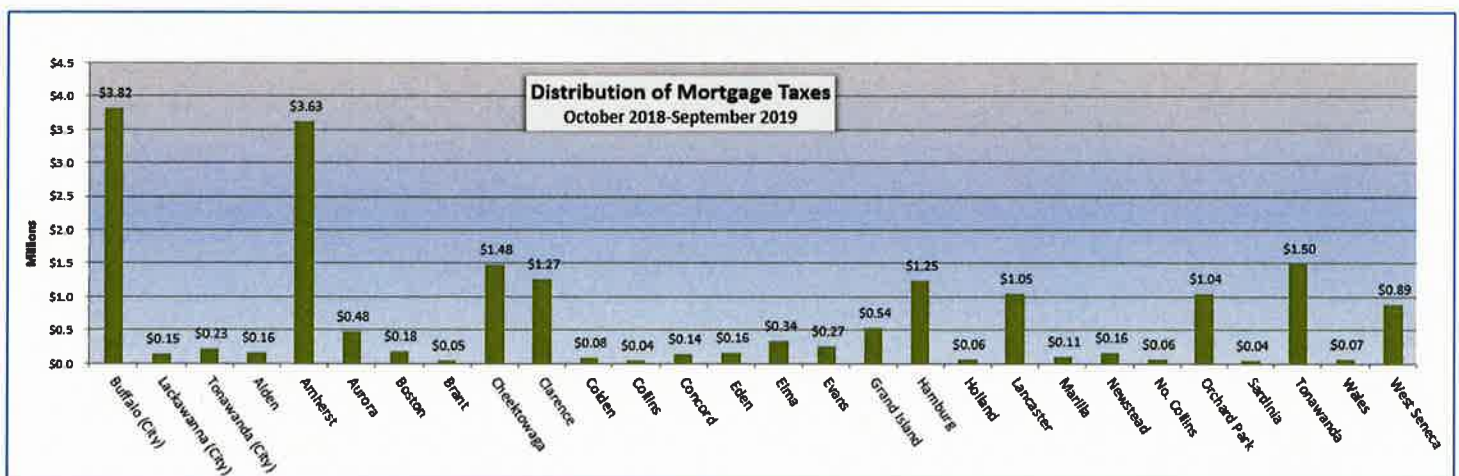
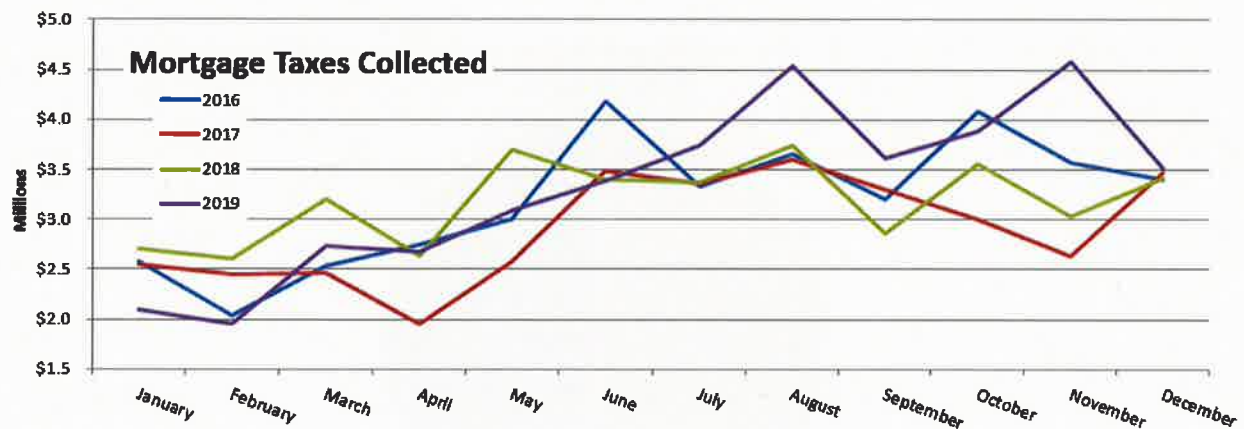
MORTGAGE TAX

Erie County Clerk's Office

Mortgage Tax Distribution

	Annual			
	2016	2017	2018	2019
Basic Tax	\$ 19,444,000	\$ 17,616,000	\$ 19,311,000	\$ 20,506,000
NFTA	\$ 15,416,000	\$ 14,717,000	\$ 15,652,000	\$ 16,733,000
SONYMA	\$ 2,969,000	\$ 1,986,000	\$ 2,723,000	\$ 2,560,000
Total	\$ 37,829,000	\$ 34,319,000	\$ 37,686,000	\$ 39,799,000
		-9%	10%	6%

\$39.8 million in mortgage taxes was collected in 2019, up 6 percent from 2018. Of the \$39.8 million, \$20.5 million is distributed to local cities and towns, \$16.7 million to the Niagara Frontier Transit Authority (NFTA) and \$2.6 million to the State of New York Mortgage Agency (SONYMA). The charts below are a summary of the mortgage taxes distributed to the local cities and towns and a comparison of the mortgage taxes collected over the past four years.



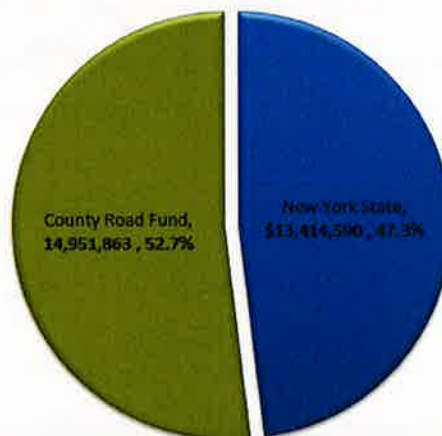
TRANSFER TAX

For every \$500 of the property's recorded deed's sale price the County Clerk's Office collects \$4.50 of which \$2.00 is transferred to New York State and \$2.50 is collected for Erie County's Road Fund. In 2019, transfer taxes collected were up 4 percent over 2018. During the last four years, the County Clerk's Office has collected over **\$58 million** for the County's Road Fund.

Erie County Clerk's Office Transfer Taxes

	Annual			
	2016	2017	2018	2019
New York State	\$ 13,006,490	\$ 12,430,656	\$ 13,414,590	\$ 14,217,116
County Road Fund	14,056,172	13,147,052	14,951,863	15,344,460
Total	\$ 27,063,000	\$ 25,578,000	\$ 28,366,000	\$ 29,562,000
		-5%	11%	4%

Transfer Taxes 2019 Collections



PISTOL PERMIT DEPARTMENT

The Pistol Permit Department issues new pistol permits and dealer permits. This department also registers new gun purchases, transfers ownership and processes permits that are transferred in or out of Erie County.

In addition to the issuance of pistol permits and other related matters, the department also issues hunting and fishing licenses. The department issued 47 hunting and fishing licenses during 2019, an increase of 15 percent from 2018.

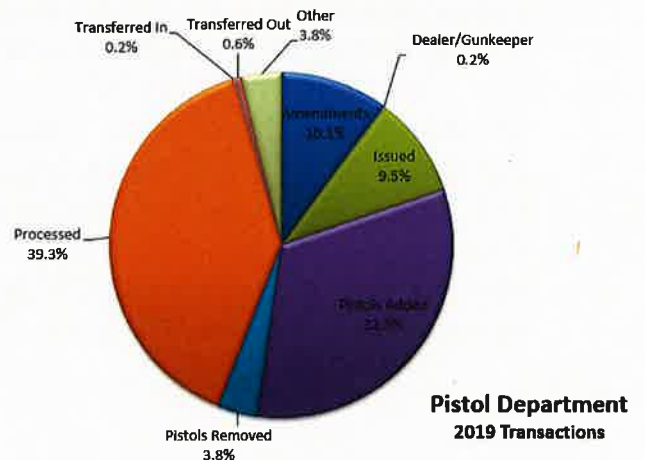
- **Pistol Permit Application Appointments:** All application appointments are submitted online with email reminders which allow for cancellations and / or rescheduling. Appointments are set in 30 minute intervals and are visible via Microsoft Outlook Calendar.
- **Barcode & Scanning Process:** Implementation of barcodes assigned to each incoming application that allow for them to be scanned and recorded during each step of the process: Incoming Application, Fingerprints Completed, Mental Health Check Completed, Assigned / Waiting for Police Agency Pickup, Sent to Police Agency, Returned from Police Agency, Reviewed/Ready and Sent to Judge, Returned from Judge, Final Decision Letter Sent to Applicant. Additionally, Crystal Reports were set up to allow for better reporting of "live" applications and turnaround time.
- **Police Agency Assignment Consolidation:** With approvals from the Erie County Sheriff's Office and corresponding police agencies, a significant reduction in the number of police agencies assigned to conduct interviews and background checks of applicants and references was implemented, streamlining the process and improving turnaround time.
- **Scanning & Digitizing Archived Pistol Permit Applications:** With 81,000+ pistol permit files in storage, the process to scan and digitize was implemented to reduce paper and needed real estate for storage. The process has begun with archived files and will coincide with new incoming applications beginning in 2020.

ERIE COUNTY CLERK'S OFFICE

Pistol's Office

Pistol Permits

	Annual Transactions			
	2016	2017	2018	2019
Amendments	2,795	4,050	3,842	2,897
Dealer/Gunkeeper	37	41	41	48
Issued	3,800	2,294	2,200	2,702
Pistols Added	6,917	8,672	8,463	9,279
Pistols Removed	975	1,371	1,246	1,087
Processed	8,107	10,773	10,711	11,235
Transferred In	71	78	95	64
Transferred Out	115	135	350	182
Other	1,027	1,284	1,125	1,072
Total	23,844	28,698	28,073	28,566
Annual Growth		20.4%	-2.2%	1.8%



ERIE COUNTY AUTO BUREAU

The Auto Bureau is an agent for the New York State Department of Motor Vehicles. The Auto Bureau receives and processes motor vehicle applications, issues vehicle registrations and driver's licenses (including Enhanced Driver's Licenses), handles financial security transactions, and enforces DWI sanctions in accordance with the Vehicle and Traffic Laws of New York State. Additionally, boats, motorcycles, snowmobiles and trailers are registered and non-driver photo identifications are issued by the Auto Bureaus. Responsibilities include the collection and monitoring of all fees related to the issuance of auto registrations and driver's licenses, along with sales taxes collected on the private sale of automobiles.

The central office is located in Buffalo with other full service offices in Cheektowaga, Tonawanda, Clarence, Orchard Park/West Seneca, Evans, and the Auto Bureau's Mobile Unit offers services in the following towns one day a week - Grand Island, Elma, Concord and West Seneca / Hamburg.

REVENUES & RETENTIONS

ERIE COUNTY CLERK'S OFFICE

2019 Budget Summary

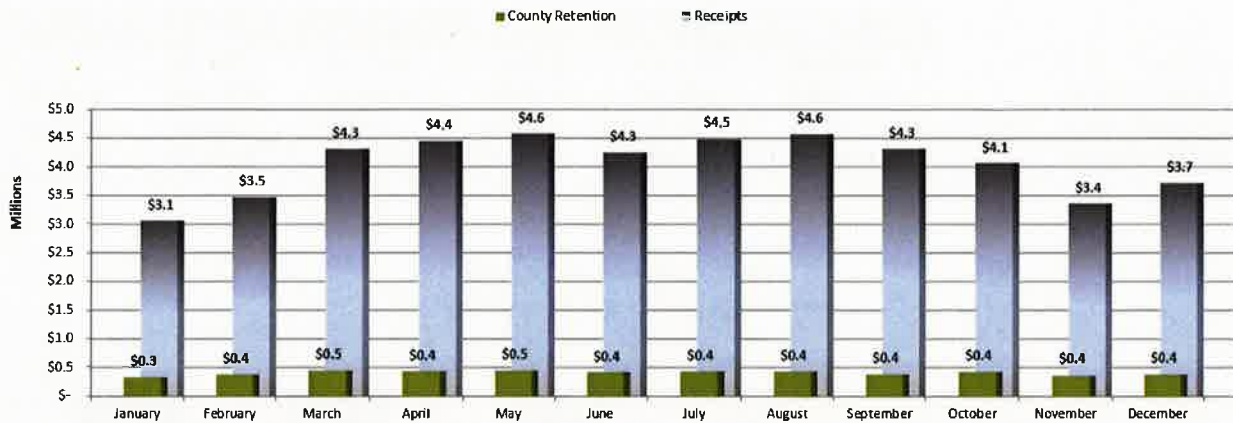
	2019		
	Budget	Actuals	Variance
Revenues			
Vehicle Use Tax	\$ 6,185,735	\$ 5,724,983	\$ (460,752)
Auto Fees	5,494,800	5,109,954	(384,846)
Total Revenues	\$ 11,680,535	\$ 10,834,937	\$ (845,598)
Expenses	7,264,822	6,872,079	\$ (392,743)
Commitment	\$ 4,415,714	\$ 3,962,858	\$ (452,856)

The Auto Bureau retains a portion of its transaction fees from registering vehicles, issuing permits, licenses, non-driver identification and other miscellaneous transactions. The fees collected for these transactions is 12.7 percent, including the collection of sales taxes on vehicles, which is less than 1 percent.

The first bar chart below is a comparison of the total receipts collected from transactions processed at the various Erie County Auto Bureau locations. The second bar chart is a summary of transactions done online through the State's DMV website. The smaller green bars on both bar charts show the County's revenue share of the transactions. For 2019 the County kept \$4.9 million or 10.1 percent of the \$49 million in receipts processed at the Auto Bureaus, including sales taxes collected.

The Auto Bureau generated \$11 million in revenues for the County, processing over 585,000 transactions at the various Auto Bureau locations. The Auto Fee revenues also include revenue sharing from the State for transactions completed online through the State's DMV website. The County retains 3.25 percent of all online revenues *exceeding* a \$12 million threshold. The County's online revenue sharing totaled \$315 thousand for 2019 or 1.5% of the \$21.7 million in online revenues.

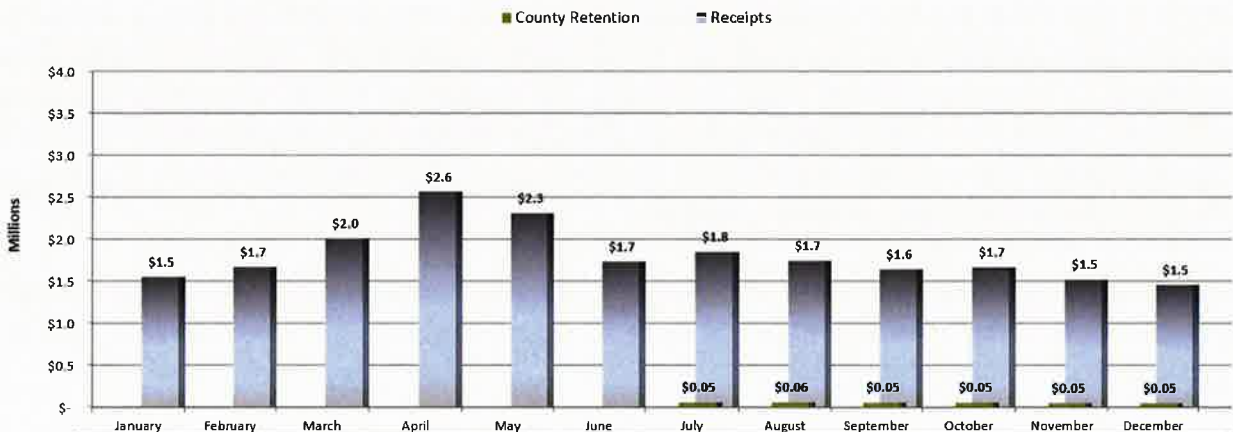
Erie County Auto Bureau 2019 Receipts & County Retention



*Receipts includes State sales taxes collected

The Clerk's Office retains 3.25 percent of all online receipts that exceed a threshold of \$11,999,580. Simply put, the first \$12 million in online transactions completed by Erie County residents ***all*** goes to New York State. From 2015 through 2019, County residents have completed over \$96 million in online transactions: ***the County's share is \$1.15 million or 1.2% of \$96 million.***

Erie County Auto Bureau 2019 On-line Receipts & County Retention



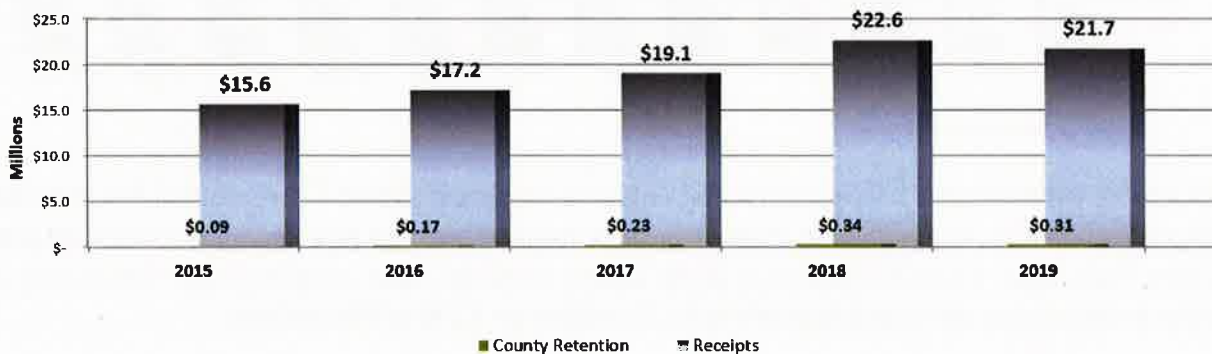
For the past three years the number of transactions made online through the State's website has grown on average 13 percent annually, this resulted in less revenues for Erie County. The table below is a summary of the lost revenues or "lost opportunity" when Erie County residents completed transactions online through the State's website instead of completing their transactions at one of the six County Auto Bureaus. Erie County residents have completed \$74 million in online transactions over the past four years, resulting in \$8.6 million in lost revenues to the County.

Erie County Auto Bureau

Historical Internet Shared Revenues

	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	5 Year Total
Threshold	\$ 11,998,583	\$ 11,998,583	\$ 11,998,583	\$ 11,998,583	11,998,583	
Annual Receipts	15,628,118	17,151,985	19,057,522	22,613,766	21,687,667	96,139,058
Shared Revenues	90,738	167,486	229,416	344,993	314,895	1,147,528
Lost Opportunity	\$ 1,866,811	\$ 2,010,817	\$ 2,190,890	\$ 2,526,955	\$ 2,439,438	11,034,911

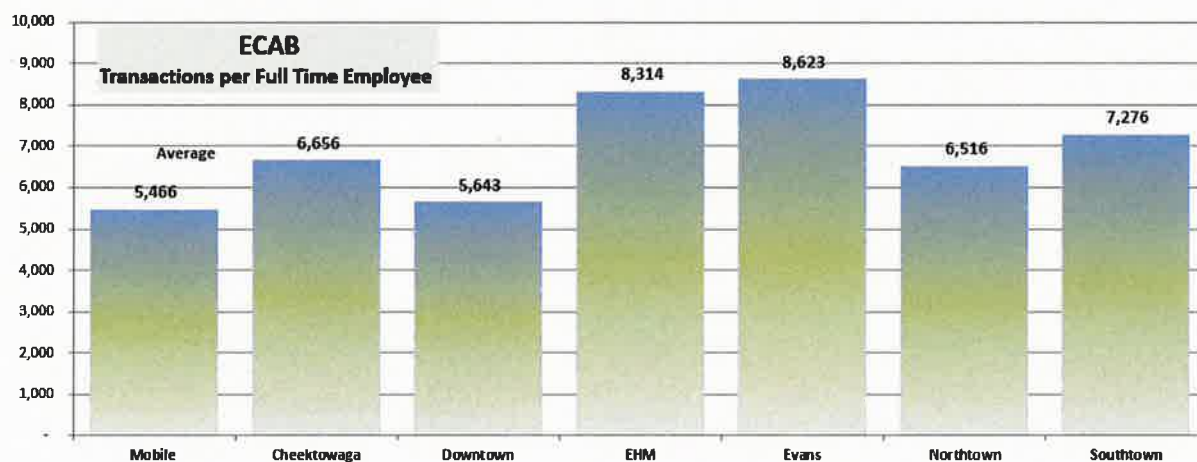
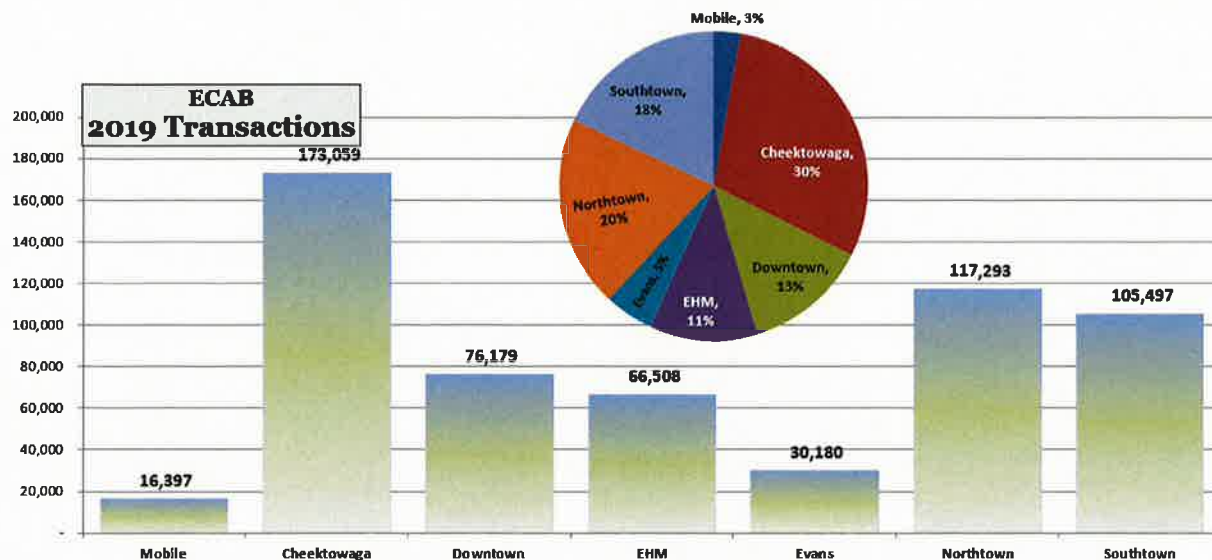
Erie County Auto Bureau Historical On-line Receipts & County Retention



TRANSACTIONS

At the end of 2019, the Erie County Auto Bureaus processed over 585,000 driver and non-driver identifications, vehicle registrations and other DMV related transactions. The annual transactions are down .5 percent over 2018. The chart below is a breakdown of the number of transactions processed at each of the Auto Bureau locations. The Cheektowaga location processed 30 percent of the total number of transactions completed at the Auto Bureau, in part due to the vehicle registrations processed for the local Erie County dealerships.

There are 82.5 full-time equivalent ("FTE") employees, including management who staff the six auto bureau locations and mobile unit. Based on the total number of 82.5 FTEs, on average each FTE processes 7,127 transactions a year.



INCOMING CUSTOMERS

The Auto Bureaus use a queuing system called NEMO-Q that issues a ticket to incoming customers based on service type. The queuing system is beneficial for management in that it appropriately staffs the Auto Bureaus based on customer traffic. The system tracks; the number of customers served, average wait times, average service times and other metrics. The biggest benefit of the NEMO-Q system is that it allows customers visiting the auto bureaus to make a reservation online beforehand, minimizing the customer's wait time.