



"Good Deeds" Update-- May 1, 2024¹

Happy "Law Day" everyone!

Contents

Updated Fee Ordinance:.....	1
Recap of formatting changes:.....	1
Recap of fee changes:.....	2
Recap of the 24/7 professional pass system I approve:.....	2
PAPRRL still potentially being eliminated or moved.....	3
Deeds Computer Flagged/Deeds workload redistribution test ongoing.....	3
"Why Can't I Change my Deed?" public education project.....	3
Property Fraud Alert System is more important than ever before.	4
Feedback and Next Update:.....	4

Updated Fee Ordinance:

The signed Fee Ordinance pertaining to the Recorder of Deeds is attached. I have discussed this with you in several "Good Deeds" Updates, [but here it is](#), signed, sealed, and delivered, as promised!² Once you have accessed the code, visit section 128-44 Recorder of Deeds.

Recap of formatting changes:

- I rewrote it to lump like things together (UCC, mortgage, federal, noncompliant fees, etc.)
- I added ordinances and laws as references.
- I made it a "math problem" A + B + C so it would be earlier for the legal clerks to figure out the fees.
- I lumped all similar recording fees in the first paragraph (A)
- The \$10 per page is next (B)
- The rest are either stand-alone fees or, if it pertains, you know to add other paragraphs.
- I added all the other fees that we collect but were not in the original ordinance, just so there will be a "one-stop shop" for all fees.

¹ Originally published as an email, formatting changed to fit new Website design. Links were updated to reflect what is in the current website.

² Original attachment was my recommendation; however, since that was adopted as I recommended, the link now goes to the actual ordinance.

- I added the Transfer Taxes for Kent County, again, so there is only one place to look about fees or taxes we collect in our office.
- I sent it out in draft form before the public hearing, but none of you commented. I presume you are happy with it! If not, let me know, and I will see what can be adjusted.

Recap of fee changes:

- We only raised two fees because Kent fees are already higher than our sisters to the north and south.
- The copy fee was in the previous ordinance as \$1.00 for the first page \$0.50 for succeeding pages. The new ordinance reads \$1.00 per page, an existing county policy that has been in effect for years.
- The 30-day unlimited download subscription fee for US Land Records was raised from \$50 to \$75. I staffed this change with you last fall, and you wanted to increase the monthly fee rather than add a "day pass" fee or a "per page fee."
- These new subscription fees will take effect on July 1 (we have been charging \$1.00 per copy for several years). When you renew your subscription after July 1, it will be at a higher rate. Thank you all for your participation in crafting this part of the fee ordinance.

Recap of the 24/7 professional pass system I approve:

- This fee was not raised nor eliminated, nor was it even discussed.
- I found the Kent County Policy, approved by the LC, that states the Recorder is the authority for granting or removing passes, and the price of \$65.

§ 4-1 Public use of County Administrative Complex Building.

[Adopted 10-23-1990 (P-1B); amended 2-20-2007]

A. The Kent County Administrative Complex Building is open for public use in accordance with the following times and conditions:

(5) Legal County holidays and special holidays: closed; no access except authorized badge holders...

(c) After-hours building access/entry badges for certain nonemployees may be authorized by the Recorder of Deeds upon payment of a nonrefundable fee of \$65 per year per person. The Personnel Office will issue badges to such authorized persons, including attorneys, surveyors, title searchers, realtors, paralegals, and others who can demonstrate a need for access to the Recorder of Deeds' office in the building after the close of the normal business day. [Amended 3-12-2013 (P13-01)]

- While Levy Court can certainly change this part of the code if they want, it will have to go through the public process, and you will be able to make your feelings known.
- Thanks to all who participated in the political process regarding this issue.

PAPRRL still potentially being eliminated or moved

- The County Executive Officer promised to discuss this issue of moving Register of Wills office into the space currently occupied by the PAPRRL with the Levy Court Commissioners before he gives instructions to the engineers contracted to do a space study. The space study may entail more than just the Public Access Property Records Research Library (PAPRR), as has been hinted.
- I will make my case verbally on May 8 at 5:30 when we workshop capital projects. Ron Smith, Esq, former Levy Court Commissioner, has already agreed to attend the meeting. I do not think he will be allowed to speak, but his presence will be a visual reminder that what we do inside 555 Bay Road impacts the general community.
- My talking points for the Workshop are: 1) The money we collect in Fees for recording deeds pales in comparison to the money we collect based on the conveyance of land. 2) Hence, let's do everything we can to facilitate real estate commerce. 3) Moving or eliminating the PAPRRL would negatively impact real estate commerce, therefore, it should not be done, especially when Kent funds are already tight (\$4.4M deficit); 4) 9 Del C 41 96 says the Recorder is the one who determines what forms the records will take, paper, book, digital, microfilm or any combination thereof
- If a decision is made to move forward with moving the PAPRRL or eliminating it, I will let you know so you can participate in the political process. I will do my best to get the engineer's scope of work to include checking with the Real Estate Bar and KCAR about the topic.

Deeds Computer Flagged/Deeds workload redistribution test ongoing

- The front desk computer and the computer used by the intake clerk were flagged by the Kent IT department as having issues. Both computers were removed and are being cleaned. In the meantime, our E-recording clerk is doing paper docs, and our Verification Clerk is assisting with E-Docs. while the two missing computers were inconvenient, we were able to maintain our "in before 3, recorded by 5" standard. By the time you read this, most likely both computers will be back in our office, fully usable.
- We continue to test out a new configuration of workload, with two clerks doing intake, paper documents and customer service as primary duties vs splitting these duties between two clerks. One of the clerks, Dawn, is still new so she is only doing Indexing at the time. This arrangement is still being tested because we have training ongoing for both clerks. We hope to conclude the test by the start of the new Fiscal Year (July 1). If you have observations or comments about the test while it is ongoing, feel free to give me your opinion. You may have noticed that Cathy is now in a cubicle vs. at the front desk. This is not part of the test, this will be her permanent workstation.

"Why Can't I Change my Deed?" public education project

People mistakenly believe they can change their deeds after a life event by walking or calling our office. This is a question my clerks field multiple times per week. To address this, I wrote a 250-

word article for the [Kent County Community Newsletter](#) I wrote [a factsheet](#) to hand to the general public when they ask about this. Click the hyperlinks to access these two documents.

Property Fraud Alert System is more important than ever before

Are you handing out postcards or factsheets about Property Fraud at closings and other appropriate times? In the last two weeks we had

- 1) a man claiming he was out of state when a Quit Claim Deed was witnessed in Delaware.
- 2) a woman from NY owning vacant land between Felton and Harrington being advised by a real estate agent that the property was for sale on [Realtor.com](#).
- 3) a man in a nursing home whose name was on a deed having his name removed and new deeds made and recorded.
- 4) a woman who satisfied her mortgage was not alerted because she did not register the way the mortgage was written.
- 5) a woman was alerted, but she failed to open the email and the test email sent after her complaint.

Please help spread the word about our Property Transaction Alert software and ensure folks register using their name exactly as it appears on the Deed or mortgage. In addition, we recommend also registering full name, nick names, with full middle name and with just a middle initial. False alerts may occur if there are others with the same name, but better a false alert than no alert. Read more about some of the mistakes people can make when registering for this simple alert system. The target audience is elderly, and those are the folks who have the most trouble registering correctly. Your help is requested.

Feedback and Next Update:

Your suggestions on how I can best serve you are always welcome

The next update will be after the May 8 Capital Project Budget meeting.

.



Gene

Hon. Eugenia Thornton

The Kent County Recorder of Deeds

(302) 744-2321 (direct line)

(302) 744-2314 (office line)