

Brazos County Clerk Records Management and Archive Plan

I. Background (Statutory History)

The 77th Texas Legislature passed HB 370 in 2001 to allow *border* county's to assess a \$5.00 Records Management and Preservation Fee for the preservation of older records filed with the County Clerk.

The 78th Legislature passed SB 1731 amending the original legislation allowing *all* county's to collect this fee with Commissioner's Court approval. The County Clerk is proposing to collect this fee at this time.

This legislation amends Local Government Code, Section 118.011 (e), to enable the Commissioner's Court to adopt a Records Archive Fee for the preservation and automation of previously filed and recorded real property and vital statistics records as part of their regularly adopted annual budget.

The 82nd Legislature passed HB 1513 amending Government Code, 118.011 (f) allowing the Commissioner Court to set and collect a Records Archival Fee not to exceed \$10.00 on non-court related filings.

II. Bill Summary

- ***Begins*** on approval of the County of Brazos 2013-14 Annual Budget. The fee must be set and itemized in the county's budget as part of the budget preparation process.
- ***Termination:*** The 79th Legislature extended this bill indefinitely.
- The \$7.00 fee is assessed on any instrument, document, paper, or other record that the County Clerk is authorized to accept for filing or recording (deed or official public records, assumed names, and marriage licenses).
- The \$5.00 fee is assessed on any original civil case filings.
- The fee may be used ***only*** to provide funds for specific records management and preservation, ***including*** for automation purposes – **in accordance with this written plan.**
- Changes to the plan must be approved by Commissioner's Court. The plan may be modified as required.

III. Purpose

Some of Brazos County official records have been computerized and automated in electronic format since the late 1960s. The County Clerk's office is progressive in the preservation of current records, utilizing the original Records Management Fee from

1991 forward. However, this funding *has not been sufficient* to electronically preserve and restore the older documents that have a priceless historical value. In order to preserve and enhance the integrity of the existing system for recording and preserving public documents; the County Clerk seeks to preserve existing original records by restoring or re-creating old volumes, digitizing older microfilm and paper records, re-indexing old handwritten and typed indexed books and converting all older media into an electronic format and importing this newly created data into the existing computer system.

IV. The overall goal and vision of the County Clerk’s office is to:

- Modernize and upgrade old record systems in the office.
- Continue to add records and information to your existing computer system.
- Eliminate or reduce manual lookups and searches.
- Expedite record searching by having more records available for electronic retrieval.
- Create a complete electronic records back-up for disaster recovery.
- Provide more public information to the citizens of the County via the Intra/Internet.
- Continue to eliminate the need for paper records.
- Preserving original records by reducing daily usage.
- Reclaiming much needed space in the public records area.

V. Annual Revenue Estimate

Official Real Property Records	31,000/annually
Marriage Records	1,500/annually
Civil/Criminal Filings	400/annually
Total	32,900 Filings Annually X \$ 7.00 = \$ 230,000.00

VI. Restoration, Preservation and Automation Projects

Real Property Records: Projects include computerized re-indexing and converting all real property records to electronic images and importing new records to the existing real property computer system.

Phase 1:

Electronic conversion of 1999 to 1967 existing microfilm to images, matching to the existing grantor/grantee index and importing to the computer and internet:

Approx 674,000 Instruments filed 1967 to 1999 Estimated \$ 370,700

Phase 2:

Back conversion of 1966 to Volume A of Deed Records existing microfilm to electronic images and loading to computer by Book, Volume and Page.

Approximately 1,167,000 images from 1966 to Volume A. Estimated \$ 167,000

Re-indexing real property records from 1966 back to Volume A using the electronic images of the original record books:

Data entry/conversion of approx 355,000 instruments. Estimated \$ 608,000

Phase 3:

Maps and Plats

Conversion/scanning and reindexing of all maps/plats and importing to existing computer system.

Approximately 4,000 maps and plats Estimated \$ 60,000

Phase 4:

Commissioner's Court Records

Electronic conversion and reindexing of all existing Commissioner's Court minutes and importing this data to existing computer system in a searchable format.

Approximately 190,000 pages and 120,000 index entries Estimated \$ 128,000

VIII. Length of Projects

It is estimated that these projects will take approximately 5 to 6 years to complete and implement. Some projects may be considered as on-going and paid monthly as revenue is collected.

Summary

The Legislature has provided a means to raise revenue for the records management and preservation of older county property and vital records. This “user” fee is an alternative to raising taxes or spending general fund monies to accomplish these important projects. This plan will be implemented in “phases” as money is accrued and deposited into a special revenue account. The completion of the initial phases will preserve the original records, provide more space in the public records area, and continue to modernize the Clerk’s office through available technology.

APPROVED

Duane Peters
County Judge

7/30/13
Date