

**KAREN E. RUSHING
CLERK OF THE CIRCUIT COURT AND
COUNTY COMPTROLLER**

**FCCC FLORIDA COURT CLERKS AND
COMPTROLLERS**

2011 Special Recognition Award
2010 Excellence in Leadership Award
2009-2018, Chair, Legislative Committee
2008-2009 Chair, Strategic Planning Committee
2007-2008 President
2005, 2009, 2012 and 2013 Clerk of the Year

**CCOC FLORIDA CLERKS OF COURT
OPERATIONS CORPORATION**

2014 Legislative Committee
2014 Florida Courts E-Filing Committee
2011 Co-Chair, Revenue Stabilization Workgroup

**REPUBLICAN PARTY OF SARASOTA,
FLORIDA**

2007 Statesman of the Year

UNITED WAY OF SARASOTA COUNTY

Member, Board of Directors

**29TH ANNUAL WOMEN'S
INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE**

2013 Women of Light Award

UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH FLORIDA

2002 Distinguished Alumni Award

**FLORIDA SUPREME COURT – FLORIDA
COURTS TECHNOLOGY COMMISSION
(FCTC)**

2010-present, Florida Courts Technology
Commission
2003-present, Committee for Electronic Filing

**UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF
COMMERCE**

2002-2007 Advisor, Commercial Law
Department

ACHIEVEMENTS

**GOVERNMENT FINANCE OFFICERS
ASSOCIATION**

2012-present, Outstanding Achievement in
Popular Annual Financial Reporting
1984-present, Excellence in Financial Reporting
Award

**ASSOCIATION OF PUBLIC TREASURERS
OF THE UNITED STATES AND CANADA**

2014, 2018 Certificate of Excellence for Sarasota
County's Investment Policy

UNITED WAY SUNCOAST

2017, 2018 Top 25 Most Generous Workplaces,
Sarasota Area

**FLORIDA GOVERNMENT
COMMUNICATORS ASSOCIATION**

2009-Crystal Award, Online Foreclosures
2008 Second Place Crystal, Annual Report
2007-2009 Special Judges Awards

**ASSOCIATION OF MARKETING AND
COMMUNICATION PROFESSIONALS**

2009 Gold Winner, MarCom Award, Annual
Report

2009 Honorable Mention, MarCom Award,
Photography

TO THE CITIZENS OF SARASOTA COUNTY

It is hard to believe that we are at the start of 2020! It is almost scary how quickly time passes. Yet another year is over, and I take pride in reporting the accomplishments of this office, and its dedicated people who have served hundreds of thousands of citizens over the course of the past fiscal year, beginning October 1, 2018, and ending September 30, 2019.



Fortunately, the economy proved to be healthy with respect to selling and buying homes in our communities. With a three percent increase in land and property-related documents filed into the Official Record of Sarasota County, this office collected \$84 million in recording fees and documentary stamps for the state. With regard to court activity, case filings were steady, with only a very slight decline in criminal cases.

This office's commitment to transparency focused us on enhanced online access to systems that the community relies on for valuable information, while protecting information declared to be confidential by law. In the finance world, a priority to protect the public's financial resources lead to an award-winning investment policy focused on preservation of capital, while maximizing the earnings of a \$1 billion portfolio, also the responsibility of the Clerk and Comptroller. I am very proud of the professionals in my office who contributed to the policy, and of those whose professional efforts contributed to another annual recognition for financial reporting. To have two professional associations award certificates of excellence for our investment policy *and* our annual financial report is a testament to our commitment to transparency and full disclosure, in service to our community.

Florida's Clerks serve their communities with pride and dedication, and provide important services that affect public safety, access to justice, and commerce. It is a privilege to serve as your Clerk and Comptroller, and as public trustee of Sarasota County.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Karen E. Rushing".

Karen E. Rushing

ANNUAL REPORT

SARASOTA COUNTY, FL

KAREN E. RUSHING

CLERK OF THE CIRCUIT COURT
AND COUNTY COMPTROLLER




ANNUAL REPORT

SARASOTA COUNTY, FL

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"I do solemnly swear that I will support, protect, and defend the Constitution and Government of the United States and of the State of Florida; that I am duly qualified to hold office under the Constitution of the State, and that I will well and faithfully perform the duties of Clerk of the Circuit Court and County Comptroller of Sarasota County, on which I am about to enter."

—Karen E. Rushing



CONSTITUTIONAL RESPONSIBILITIES

THE PROVISIONS OF THE FLORIDA CONSTITUTION of 1838 established the Clerk of the Circuit Court as a *Public Trustee*, and set in place, at the county level, a system of “checks and balances” proven to serve the public for more than 175 years.

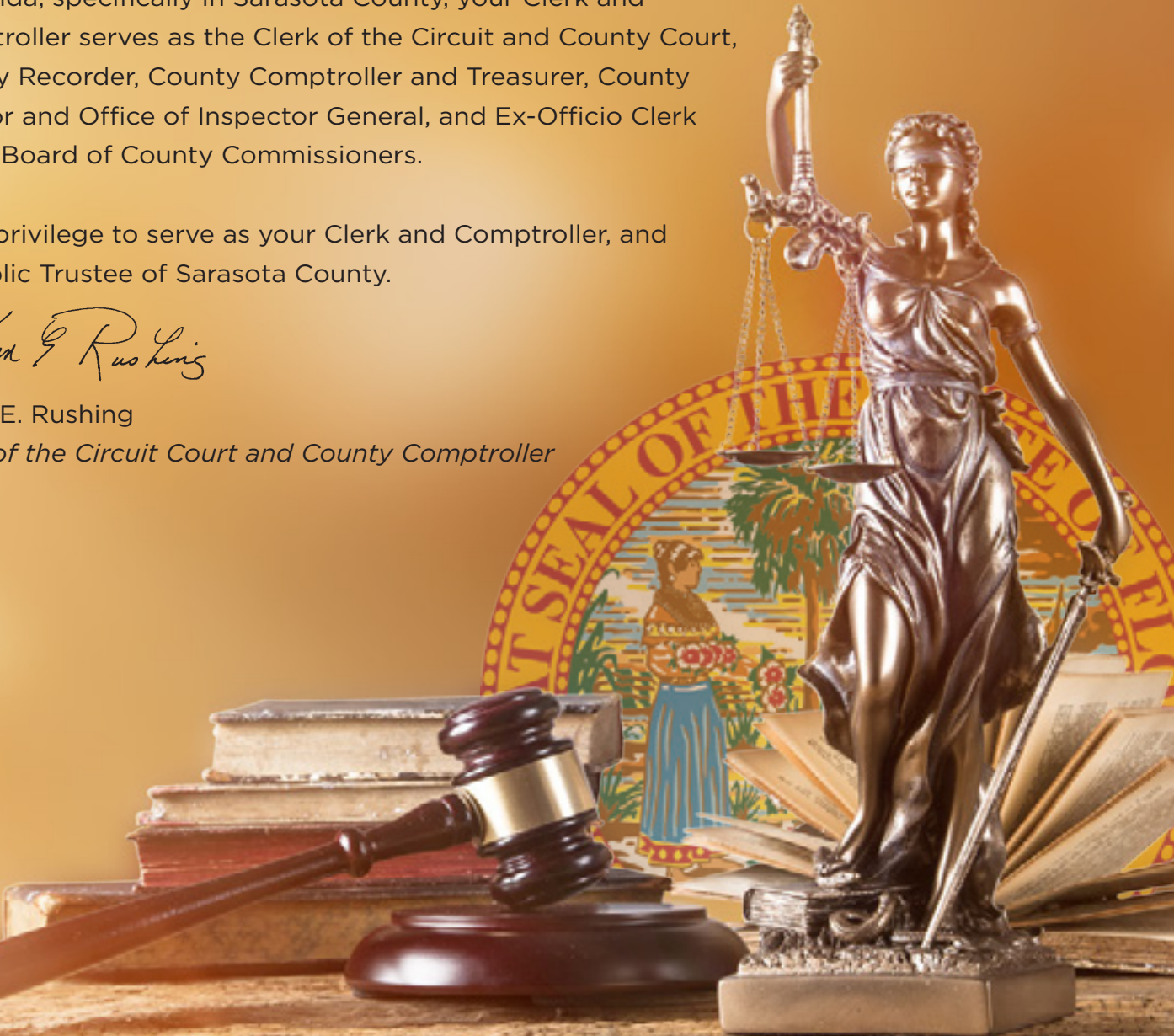
The Office of the Clerk and Comptroller is governed by statutory authority in carrying out duties and functions, in accordance with law, related to record keeping, information management, and financial management for both the judicial system, and county government.

The functions and duties of the Clerk and Comptroller vary from state to state. In Florida, specifically in Sarasota County, your Clerk and Comptroller serves as the Clerk of the Circuit and County Court, County Recorder, County Comptroller and Treasurer, County Auditor and Office of Inspector General, and Ex-Officio Clerk to the Board of County Commissioners.

It is a privilege to serve as your Clerk and Comptroller, and as Public Trustee of Sarasota County.



Karen E. Rushing
Clerk of the Circuit Court and County Comptroller



HOW OUR SERVICE CULTURE STORY BEGAN...

Two questions were asked of the executive leadership team:

“How are we perceived, as an organization?”

“How do we want to be perceived, as an organization?”

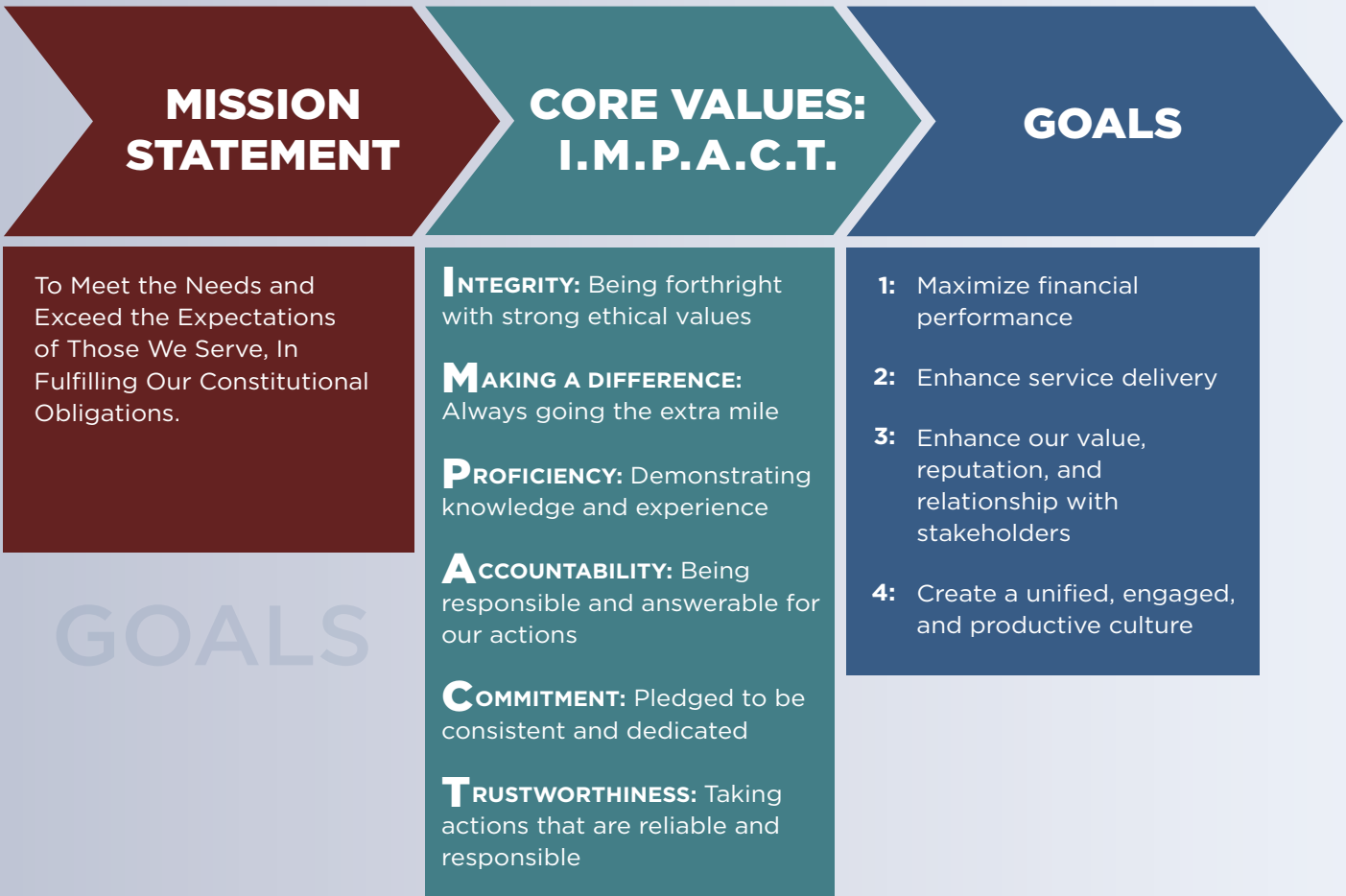
These are typical questions asked of leadership--but what is not typical is what happened next.

Each of the executives were asked to draw a picture that represented how we want to be perceived by both customers, and our employees. The ideas and works of art were compiled into one visual illustration of the desired branded culture, and customer experience.

The start of the story begins at the bottom with the phrase “Own It”. As customers and employees navigate up through the complexity of all the services provided, the customer leaves appreciative of the services provided, and the employee feels confident that they provide the highest level of service to every customer. Ending the journey at the top of the story board—with a sailboat sailing into the beautiful Sarasota sunset—we are reminded to make a difference, “Every Day”.

VALUES

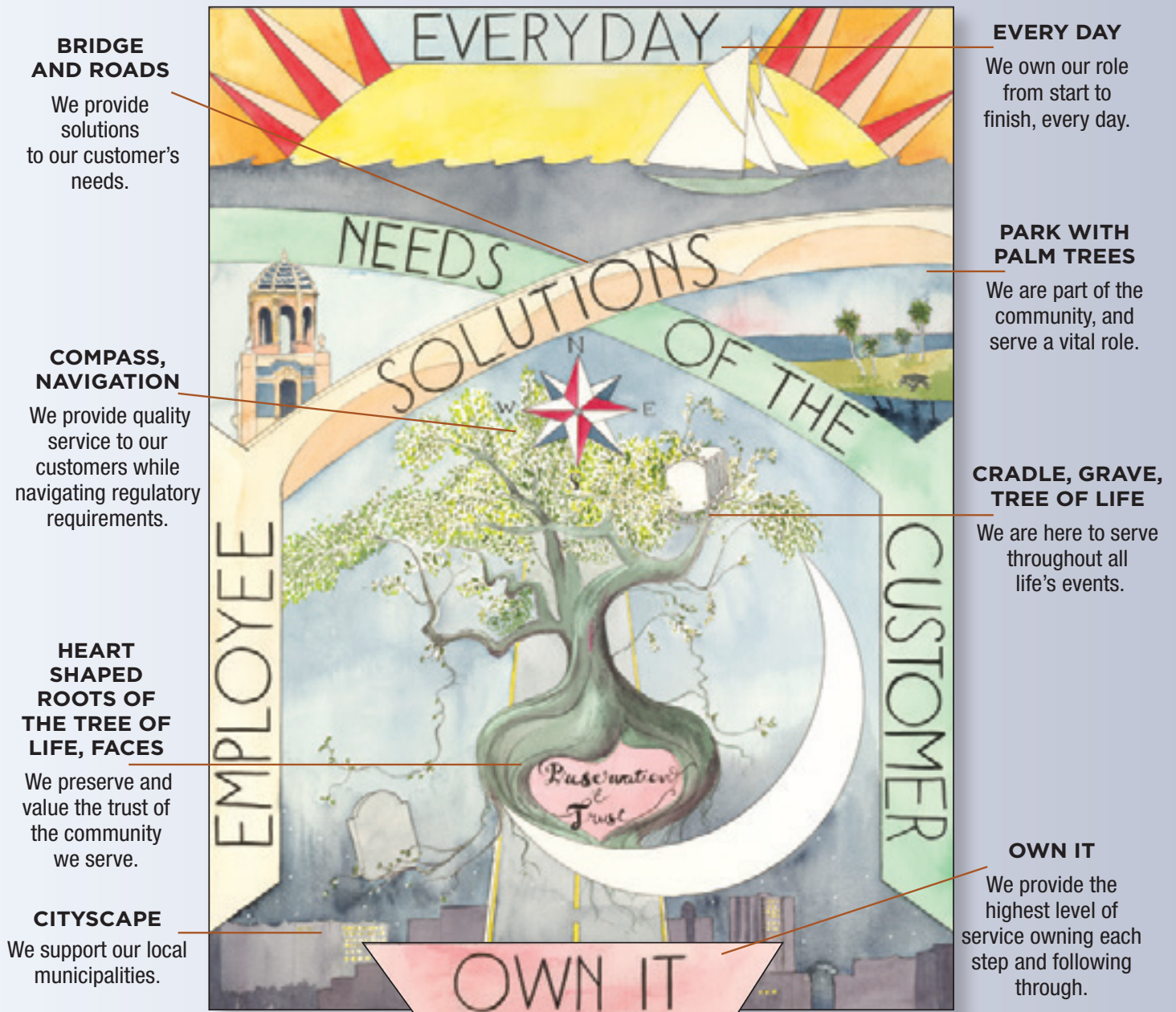
M-I-S-S-I-O-N



GOALS

STRATEGIC PLANNING

OUR SERVICE CULTURE STORYBOARD



SYSTEMATIC APPROACH TO STRATEGIC PLANNING

The Clerk and Comptroller uses a Strategic Planning Committee comprised of the executive leadership team, representing each functional area of the organization: The Chief Operations Officer, Clerk Finance Officer, Human Resources Officer, Enterprise Information Officer, Director of Court Services, Director of Finance and Board Services, Director of Audit and Inspector General, and the General Counsel.

Working as a collective body, the Strategic Planning Committee's role is to establish a strategy framework that focuses on enhancing the service culture of the Clerk and Comptroller's organization.

CLERK OF THE CIRCUIT AND COUNTY COURTS

The Clerk of the Circuit and County Court is an independent elected official responsible for many court related activities. The Florida court system consists of the Florida Supreme Court, five District Courts of Appeal, 20 Circuit Courts, and 67 County Courts. Sarasota is one of three counties in the Twelfth Judicial Circuit, which also includes Manatee and DeSoto counties. Serving as Clerk to both the circuit and county courts, trial court records are maintained in an electronic manner and data sharing of important judicial decisions are reported in accordance with law to many different agencies, including the Internal Revenue Service, Florida Department of Law Enforcement, Department of Children and Families, and Bureau of Vital Statistics, to name a few. It has been said that the Office of the Clerk of the Circuit and County Courts touches the lives in its community from cradle to grave; Cases range from adoptions to estate matters, family law, domestic violence, mental illness, small and large claims, evictions, mortgage foreclosures, and more, which affect every community. Services provided by this office are available to all in need of assistance.

COURT SERVICES - Each case begins with an initiating document, and many subsequent documents to follow. The type of case, the complexity of the case and the number of issues to be resolved drives the level of involvement of the Clerk of the Circuit and County Court, who documents the record electronically, makes it available to all those whom are permitted to have lawful access, attends court hearings and trials, and reports the final disposition of the case to the appropriate authority. Document processing is done with great care, as each document has legal implications to the parties. Warrants for arrest, Incapacity Orders, orders releasing prisoners, certificates of sale from a property sold in foreclosure, and domestic violence orders all require precision in processing.

After trial, all evidence is released to the custody of the Clerk, where it remains until all appeals have been exhausted, and enhanced security is provided for the storage of such evidence. Cases on appeal are prepared by the Clerk and submitted to the appellate court. All fees, fines and costs— including victim restitution and child support—are collected by the Clerk. Assisting self-represented citizens is one of the most important responsibilities the Clerk has to the community. Open 8:30 to 5:00 Monday- Friday, with 24 hour and 7 days per week information available online, self-represented citizens will find assistance at the Clerk of the Circuit and County Court's office.

JURY SERVICES - Trial by jury is a right in this country and serving as a juror when called is a duty. Jury service is designed to be as convenient as possible, and summoned jurors may request a postponement or excusals for cause. Service is completed after serving one day or one trial, with most trials lasting one day. The Clerk summons eligible jurors using the driver's license file, assembles the jury, assists with venire questions, administers the oath, and pays eligible jurors for service.

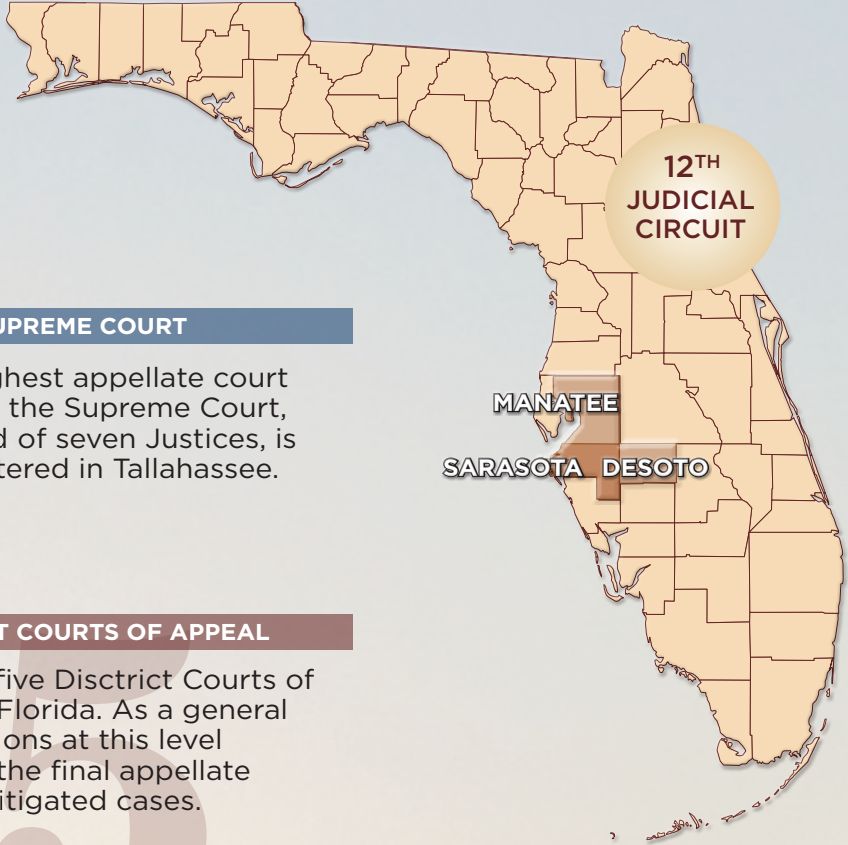
PUBLIC RECORDS - Access to public records has been designed to be convenient, while protecting lawful confidentiality. Florida has a very broad public records law, and while court records are governed by the court most records can be seen by all interested persons. Twenty-four hour access to records is available. Requests to view documents currently not viewable online may be submitted electronically. Visit www.SarasotaClerk.com and see how convenient access to court records can be.



Sarasota's Historic Courthouse

THE FLORIDA COURT SYSTEM

PAYMENT
PLANS



SUPREME COURT

As the highest appellate court in Florida, the Supreme Court, composed of seven Justices, is headquartered in Tallahassee.

DISTRICT COURTS OF APPEAL

There are five District Courts of Appeal in Florida. As a general rule, decisions at this level represent the final appellate review of litigated cases.

CIRCUIT COURTS

There are 20 judicial circuits in Florida. Sarasota, Manatee and DeSoto courts make up the 12th Judicial Circuit Court.

COUNTY COURTS

The Florida Constitution establishes a county court in each of the state's 67 counties.

In the judicial branch of government, Florida's Unified Judicial System consists of the Supreme Court, five District Courts of Appeal, 20 Judicial Circuits, and 67 County Courts. These courts operate under the overall administrative direction of the Supreme Court.

To learn more about each judicial circuit or county courts, visit the Florida Courts website at FLcourts.org.

SUMMONS

COUNTY RECORDER

In Florida, the Clerk and Comptroller also serves as the County Recorder, sometimes known as the Register of Mortgages and Deeds, responsible for creating the permanent record of all mortgages, liens, deeds and other documents having an effect on real property. This responsibility, known as recording, includes collecting state taxes such as documentary stamps and intangible taxes, establishing the priority of liens through assignment of instrument numbers, creating and releasing liens, and other such activities. This record series is titled by law the Official Records of Sarasota County, dating back to 1921 when Sarasota was divided from Manatee County. There are four municipalities in Sarasota County, and Official Records include filings from agencies and residents within these municipalities. In addition to these responsibilities, the office issues marriage licenses, performs weddings, and serves as an acceptance agent for the U.S. Department of State for the issuance of passports.

RECORDING SERVICES - Assisting citizens with ownership searches and providing certifications as to the authenticity of a record is a major responsibility for the office. For the community's convenience, electronic access to the Official Records is provided 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. This access allows records to be copied at no cost to the interested person. Establishment of ownership of land, mortgages, liens, and judgments are recorded and entered into the official recording system.

SERVICES INCLUDE:

- Recording and indexing deeds, mortgages and descriptions of all county property.
- Recording public defender liens, and judgments entered by the court.
- Recording tax liens and claims against an estate, instruments of conveyance, agreements, contracts, maps and plats of subdivisions and surveys.
- Maintaining a public records library.
- Collecting and disbursing intangible taxes and documentary stamp monies.

PASSPORTS AND PHOTO SERVICES - As an acceptance agent for the federal government for passport applications, the Clerk and Comptroller offers both passport book and passport card application acceptance. Photo services are also available onsite, with no appointment necessary.

TAX DEEDS - Florida Statutes provide that the Clerk and Comptroller is responsible for the administration of tax deed sales. A tax deed sale is the sale of property at public auction for back taxes and fees associated with bringing the property to sale. This is governed by Chapter 197, Florida Statutes, and Administrative Code 12D-13.060, Florida Department of Revenue.



TAX DEED SALES
MORTGAGE RECORDS





WEDDING CEREMONIES

The Clerk performs wedding ceremonies at both office locations, including in front of the Fountain Pond in Venice.

MARRIAGE LICENSE APPLICATIONS AND WEDDING CEREMONIES

Sarasota County is a beautiful destination for a wedding. Florida residents and visitors are welcome to apply for and receive a marriage license. Marriage license applications are processed using an electronic, onsite eService.

Wedding ceremonies are performed at both the beautiful 1920s Historic Courthouse in Sarasota or at the Robert L. Anderson Center in Venice, with multiple venues available: The Historic Courtroom, the period-style Marriage Parlor, or garden areas. There is an additional fee for

this service, available Monday through Friday between 8:30 a.m. and 4:00 p.m., with no appointment necessary. Couples may also choose to be married anywhere else in the State of Florida with the marriage license issued in Sarasota County.

Additional resources are available at **SarasotaClerk.com** to assist applicants with required forms, what to bring, how to save time and money when applying, identification, and necessary forms.

COUNTY COMPTROLLER AND TREASURER

While serving as the County Comptroller, the Clerk of the Circuit Court and County Comptroller is custodian of all county funds. Vendors and others who provide services to county government receive payments for their goods and services through this office. We pride ourselves on having a prompt payment process. Although state law establishes 45 days as the threshold for payments, this office has set a goal of five days after receiving a valid invoice approved by Sarasota County Government. Rating agencies, Internal Revenue Service, Securities Exchange Commission and Financial institutions rely on the financial records kept by this office, and the county Comprehensive Annual Financial Report (CAFR) is prepared and published along with other reports designed to support the community's interest. As Treasurer, the Clerk of the Circuit Court and County Comptroller manages the overall banking relationships for county government and invests Sarasota County's surplus public funds to maximize investment earnings while minimizing risk.

ACCOUNTING SERVICES - Oversees all accounts, ledgers and financial reporting systems for Sarasota County, and presents financial reports to federal, state, and local agencies as required by law.

ACCOUNTS PAYABLE SERVICES - Pre-audits expenditures of the Board of County Commissioners prior to payment. This pre-audit insures that the expenditure serves a legitimate public purpose, has been procured in accordance with the procurement code, and that there is sufficient budget authority.

PAYROLL SERVICES - Pre-audits and processes payroll for employees of the Board of County Commissioners, as well as other Constitutional Officers, and ensures all federal and state payroll-related reporting requirements have been met.

TREASURY MANAGEMENT, INVESTMENT, AND PORTFOLIO SERVICES - Invests and earns income on surplus public funds, ultimately reducing the burden on taxpayers. In accordance with the Investment Policy adopted by the Board of County Commissioners, the Treasurer proactively manages the portfolio to maximize investment earnings, while ensuring that tax dollars are protected.

DEBT ADMINISTRATION SERVICES - Participates in the issuance of county debt, monitors debt while outstanding ensuring the timely payment of debt service obligations, ensures accurate accounting for all debt transactions, and ensures post-issuance compliance requirements are met.

INVOICES
ACCOUNTING
PAYROLL
DEBT



POST ISSUANCE COMPLIANCE COMPONENTS AND REQUIREMENTS



This graphic provides a representation of post issuance activities and compliance requirements, broken down into four major categories: Internal Revenue Service, Securities and Exchange Commission, Policy, and Investments.

FINANCIAL REPORTING

Florida Statutes require that each county have an annual financial audit performed by independent Certified Public Accountants, and that an audit report be produced known as the Comprehensive Annual Financial Report (CAFR). In addition, the Comptroller also prepares a Popular Annual Financial Report (the IMPACT Report), an easy to read report on how county tax dollars are managed and spent, and a Consolidated Major Revenue and Debt Report that provides detailed information regarding the county's major revenue sources and debt issued.

COUNTY INTERNAL AUDITOR AND OFFICE OF INSPECTOR GENERAL

The Clerk of the Circuit Court and County Comptroller serves as the Internal Auditor and Office of Inspector General for Sarasota County and establishes compliance testing with internal controls, prioritized with use of a risk assessment tool. Fraud complaints are received through various means, including a fraud hotline. Investigations are conducted as a priority over audits.

AUDIT SERVICES - The Clerk and Comptroller derives audit authority from the Florida State Constitution and Florida law, carrying out the independent service of auditing the Sarasota County Board of County Commissioners and its administration under the guidance of professional audit standards and professional codes of conduct. All members of the Internal Audit/ Office of Inspector General staff are certified in at least one area of expertise: Certified Inspector General, Certified Public Accountant, Certified Fraud Examiner, or Certified Inspector General Auditor or Investigator. Several hold dual certifications. Audits focus on testing for compliance with resolutions, ordinances, contracts and internal controls.

INVESTIGATIVE SERVICES - The Inspector General provides independent, objective and unbiased assessments. It brings a systematic disciplined approach to evaluate operational, compliance, and fiscal risks, and examines management control practices and strategic business governance activities. Suspected fraud, waste and abuse complaints are received through various means, including a fraud hotline.

The office is authorized to investigate citizen or employee concerns regarding fraud, waste and abuse in Sarasota County government. The primary responsibility of Investigative Services is to address reports concerning county resources, but in addition, to conduct investigations concerning guardianship matters as assigned by order of the court.

GUARDIANSHIP SERVICES - The State Department of Elders Affairs, Office of Public and Professional Guardians has entered into a contract with seven Clerks and Comptrollers all of whom has been certified as Offices of Inspector General (OIG). The OIG performs court-ordered guardianship audits on behalf of local and state agencies, in pursuit of the protection of a ward's assets pursuant to Chapter 744, Florida Statutes. Consulting services may be provided under unique circumstances upon approval of the Clerk and Comptroller.

AUDIT GUARDIANSHIP INVESTIGATIVE SERVICES



REPORT
FRAUD, WASTE AND ABUSE
OF SARASOTA COUNTY RESOURCES

CALL TOLL FREE
(855) 506-0304
SARASOTA COUNTY FRAUD HOTLINE

YOU MAY REMAIN ANONYMOUS
(when following proper reporting protocol)

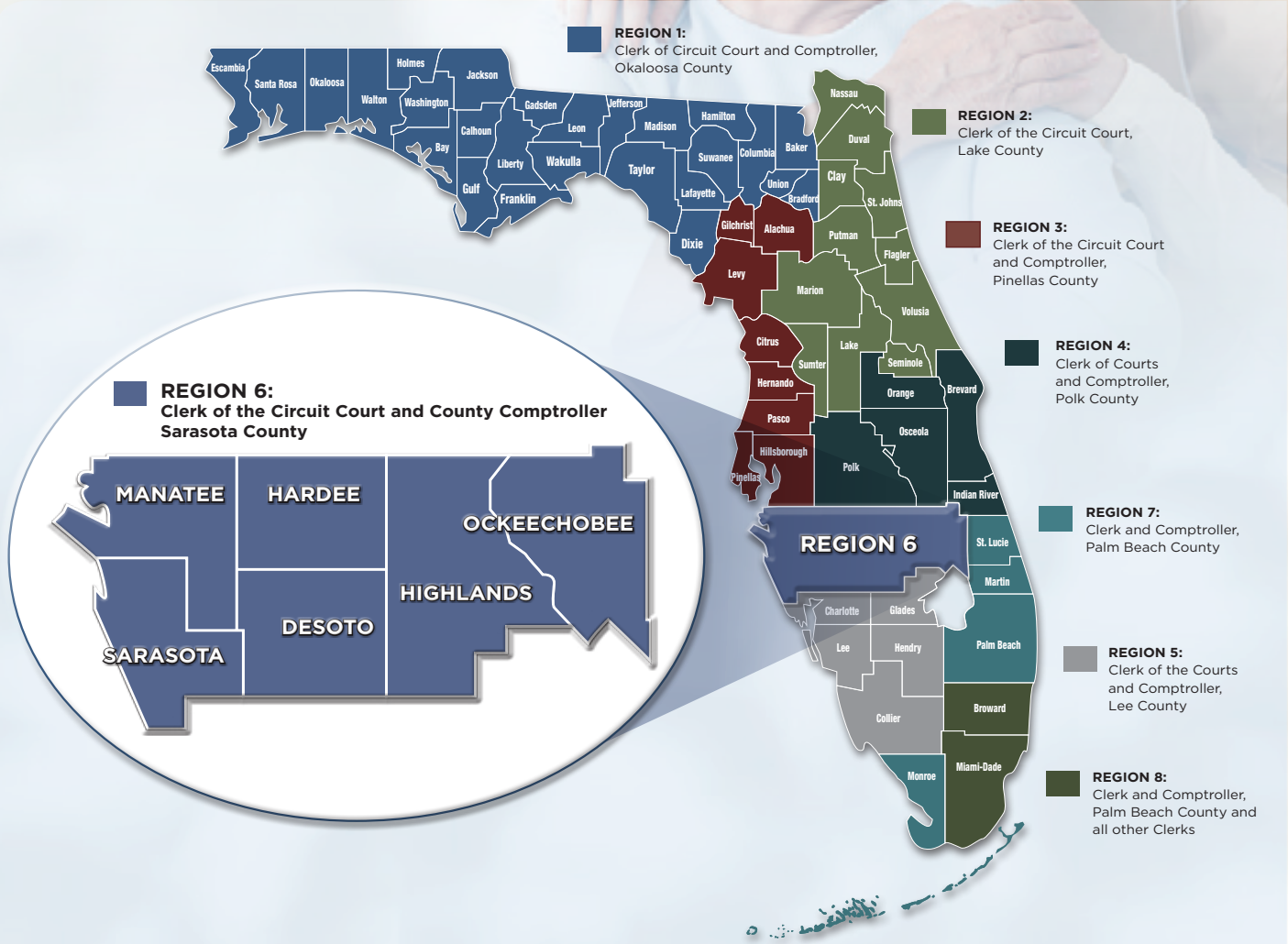
REPORT FRAUD, WASTE AND ABUSE

Audit Reports

Investigative
Reports



OFFICE OF PUBLIC AND PROFESSIONAL GUARDIANS ALLIANCE JURISDICTIONAL MAP



The Office of Inspector General performs court-ordered guardianship audits, pursuant to Florida law.

In October 2016, the Department of Elder Affairs, Office of Public and Professional Guardians, joined into a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the Clerk and Comptroller's Offices of Inspector General for Palm Beach, Pinellas, Lake, Okaloosa, Lee and Polk County. In October 2017, the Sarasota County Clerk and Comptroller became the seventh Office of Inspector General (OIG) to join.

The Sarasota County OIG's jurisdiction covers Sarasota, Manatee, DeSoto, Highlands, Okeechobee and Hardee counties. It is the responsibility of the seven Inspectors General to investigate complaints, to ensure proper care for the ward, and the appropriate accounting of the guardianship funds.

EX-OFFICIO CLERK TO THE BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS

The Clerk of the Circuit Court and County Comptroller also serves as Ex-Officio Clerk to the Board of County Commissioners. In this capacity, the Clerk serves as custodian of the Board's records and minutes taker of commission and other board committee meetings, as designated. As Custodian of Official Board Records, the Clerk has custody of the official seal, and administers it according to law.

BOARD SERVICES - Florida Statutes require the Clerk of the Circuit Court act as Ex-Officio Clerk to the Board of County Commissioners, including attending, digitally recording, accepting and filing documents related to county committee meetings and producing and maintaining the minutes of the Board of County Commission, Charter Review Board, Planning Commission, Utility Rate and Value Adjustment Board Meetings. The Clerk to the Board has custody of the official seal of the Board of County Commissioners and attests to the action of the Board. Board Records also serves as the Clerk and Recorder for Code Enforcement hearings.

The Clerk and Comptroller is the official record keeper of the Board of County Commission, Planning Commission, Value Adjustment Board and Charter Review Board meetings. Records are available on a dedicated website called **Meetings on Demand**, a video and document archive of agendas, minutes and supporting documents.

The Clerk and Comptroller produces an action agenda which is an abbreviated, factual account of the Board of County Commissioners actions during meetings and is published on the Sarasota County **Meetings on Demand** website within 48 hours of the meeting.

VALUE ADJUSTMENT BOARD (VAB)

SERVICES - The Value Adjustment Board (VAB) was created by Florida Statutes and consists of two members of the Board of County Commissioners, one member of the School Board, and two private citizens. The Clerk to the Board is also the Clerk to the Value Adjustment Board. Petitions may be filed with the Clerk, in appeal of decisions made by the Property Appraiser. Hearings are held by Special Magistrates appointed by the VAB.

PERMITTING SERVICES - Florida Statutes require individuals who engage in certain door-to-door solicitation activities that sell, lease or rent consumer goods or services with a purchase price in excess of \$25.00 obtain a Home Solicitation Permit. The Clerk to the Board has the responsibility to collect fees, accept and review applications, and issue approved permits.

CODE ENFORCEMENT SERVICES - The Clerk to the Board provides administrative support to county Code Enforcement, from facilitating hearings to creating and managing electronic files. Staff coordinates information requests, hearing calendars, keeps the record, and follows records and evidence management guidelines for all county Code Enforcement cases.



County Administration Building

MINUTES
MEETINGS ON
DEMAND
VAB



Meetings on Demand – Action Agenda, Meeting Video, Meeting Minutes, Meeting Documentation



EX-OFFICIO CLERK TO THE BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS

The Clerk of the Circuit Court and County Comptroller also serves as Ex-Officio Clerk to the Board of County Commissioners (the Board). In this capacity, the Clerk and Comptroller serves as the custodian of the Board's records and minutes-taker of Board meetings and other board committee meetings, as designated. As Custodian of official Board records, the Clerk has custody of the official seal and administers it according to law.

CLERK TO THE BOARD ACTIVITY FY2019

MEETINGS ON DEMAND

Access records of Board and other county meetings on demand, on your device. Video and document archives of agendas, minutes and supporting documents are available 24/7 at SarasotaClerk.com



INFORMATION AT YOUR FINGERTIPS

Online e-Products and Services offer you access to records, forms, and hearing information when you need it, where you need it, online, anytime.

- Information requests
- Petition filing and follow up
- Manuals and guides
- Meeting schedules, agendas and minutes
- County Charter and other resource documents.



PUBLIC MEETINGS AND HEARINGS



74

Meetings attended (Board of Commissioners, Charter Review, Planning Commission)

32

Code Enforcement hearings attended (609 cases filed)

VALUE ADJUSTMENT BOARD SERVICES



548

VAB petitions filed

331

Hearings coordinated and scheduled

3

Public meetings attended and official minutes produced

OFFICIAL DOCUMENTS PROCESSED



265

Resolutions

61

Ordinances

317

Contracts

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

BOARD RECORDS

How can I watch a board or board committee meeting?

The Clerk and Comptroller offers access to these public records through a web application called ***Meetings on Demand***, available 24/7 on SarasotaClerk.com. ***Meetings on Demand*** is a video and document archive of agendas, meeting minutes and supporting documentation from County Commission and other board committee meetings. Citizens can access meeting agendas, documentation minutes or watch video recording of meetings from the comfort of their own home.

How can I request a copy of a board meeting record?

Board Records staff attends, digitally records, accepts and files paperwork related to meetings, and produce and maintain minutes of the Board of County Commissioners, Charter Review Board, Planning Commission and Value Adjustment Board meetings. Board Records also serves as the Clerk and Recorder for Code Enforcement hearings.

Board Records serves citizens, the Board of County Commissioners, county administration, and county staff by providing copies of meeting minutes and other official documentation upon request.

Contact us by sending your request to BoardofRecords@SarasotaClerkandComptroller.com, by calling(941) 861-5279 from 8:30 a.m. to 5:00 p.m., Monday through Friday, or by visiting our business office at 1660 Ringling Boulevard, Suite 210, in Sarasota, Florida.

VAB

What is the Value Adjustment Board?

The Value Adjustment Board (VAB) was created to provide a forum for property owners to appeal decisions made by the Property Appraiser concerning exemptions, valuations and classifications of property. VAB consists of two members of the Board of County Commissioners, one member of the County School Board, and two citizen members. A petition for valuation issues can be filed any

time during the taxable year on or before the 25th day following the Property Appraiser's mailing of the assessment (Truth in Millage or TRIM notice). Citizens may choose to file a petition with the VAB, who appoints Special Magistrates to conduct hearings in a quasi-judicial setting, and makes recommendations.

How do I file and check the status a VAB petition?

For convenience, a taxpayer can file a petition electronically through an online portal available on SarasotaClerk.com. The VAB portal allows a property owner to file a petition, remit payment for the petition filing, access the petition's progress, and upload evidence directly into the case. The portal also provides links to commonly used websites, such as the Property Appraiser, Tax Collector, Florida Department of Revenue and other resources.

OTHER SERVICES

How can I apply for a Home Solicitation permit?

An individual can obtain a Home Solicitation Permit Information packet either in person in the Clerk and Comptroller's Board Records Department or email at BoardofRecords@SarasotaClerkandComptroller.com. Upon completion, the applicant must appear in person with the application, two color passport size photographs, and the filing fee of \$101.00, (\$77.00 - check or money order made out to the Board of County Commissioners; and a money order for \$24.00 made payable to the Florida Department of Law Enforcement (FDLE). The Clerk will verify the applicant's identity and attest to their signature, and a packet will then be processed and sent to the FDLE, for a criminal background search, along with a complete set of fingerprints taken by an authorized law enforcement agency.

Where can I find the Sarasota County Charter?

The official and most current issue of the county charter is posted on SarasotaClerk.com, in an easy-to-browse electronic format. Flip through or jump directly to any page of interest. You can also download, share or change your viewing format with a click.

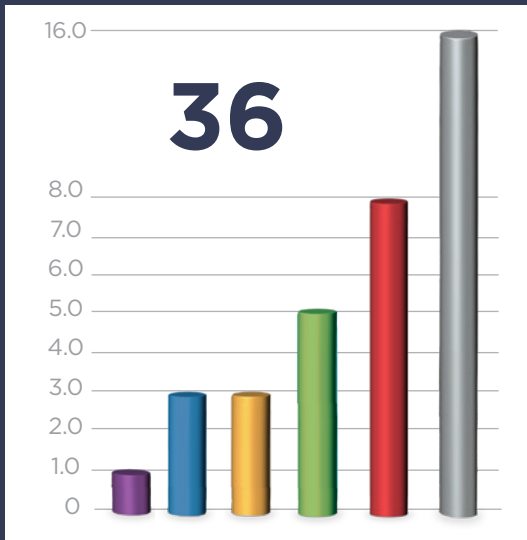


COUNTY INTERNAL AUDITOR AND OFFICE OF INSPECTOR GENERAL

The Clerk of the Circuit Court and County Comptroller serves as the Internal Auditor and Office of Inspector General for Sarasota County and establishes compliance testing with internal controls, prioritized with use of a risk assessment tool. Fraud complaints are received through various means, including a fraud hotline. Investigations are conducted as a priority over audits.

AUDIT AND INVESTIGATIVE ACTIVITY FY2019

36 Opportunities for Improvement were presented to County Administration



- 16** Compliance - Policy and Procedure
- 8** Internal Control - Lack of Policies and Procedure
- 5** Internal Control - Insufficient Contract Monitoring
- 3** Internal Control - Financial - Other
- 3** Internal Control - Oversight/Monitoring
- 1** Internal Control - Segregation of Duties

36 Total

AUDITS



8

Audits

3

Investigations

5

Guardianship audits

FRAUD AWARENESS



4

Fraud Awareness and
Prevention training
presentations

TRAINING



273

County
employees
trained

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

AUDITS

How are departments selected for an internal audit?

The Internal Audit /OIG team performs a risk assessment each year to determine where the greatest risks lie for inappropriate activity which could lead to adverse impacts—and where they are likely to occur. Input is also requested from senior management and county commissioners. Factors that are considered include the type of activity, potential financial and operational impact to the county, management risk, and the length of time since the previous audit.

INVESTIGATIVE SERVICES

What happens after you receive a complaint or notification of suspected fraud, waste or abuse?

The Investigative Services Team reviews the allegations and determines if an investigation is warranted. The team gathers information and makes recommendations.

What happens when an investigation is complete?

All complaints receive a final determination based upon investigative activities, and conclusions based on facts or findings. Evidence will be gathered and reported in a fair, unbiased manner in an effort to determine the validity of alleged improprieties, or evaluate the likelihood of violations of statutes, rules, policies, regulations, or contract provisions.

Are all complaints investigated?

All complaints are reviewed by the Investigative Services Team. If it is determined that no investigative steps will be performed, a complaint may be referred to another department or agency—for example, to Sarasota County Human Resources, or to Ethics and Compliance. Referrals are made to the proper law enforcement agency when evidence suggests that a criminal activity is occurring, or may have occurred, that warrants a criminal investigation.

GUARDIANSHIP AUDITS

What are guardianship audits?

Required annually by Florida Statute, a guardianship audit reviews the accountings of a ward's property over which a guardian has control. It includes reviews of the income, expenses and analytics to the prior year accounting, if applicable.

Are all guardianship audits the same?

The best practice established by the Florida Association of Court Clerks and Comptrollers recognizes three levels of audits. Level One is a general audit of guardianship reports and supporting documentation, required annually by Florida Statute, unless the requirement is waived by the court. Level Two is a review of transactions and activities that may be questionable. Requests and review of supporting documentation may be required to resolve issues. Level Three is a comprehensive examination and attempted verification of all significant items pertinent to the guardianship report. A detailed review of accounts and transactions that may require third party confirmations is involved in a Level Three audit.

REPORT
FRAUD, WASTE AND ABUSE
OF SARASOTA COUNTY RESOURCES

CALL TOLL FREE
(855) 506-0304
SARASOTA COUNTY FRAUD HOTLINE

YOU MAY REMAIN ANONYMOUS
(when following proper reporting protocol)

REPORT FRAUD, WASTE AND ABUSE



COUNTY COMPTROLLER AND TREASURER

COMPTROLLER

While serving as the County Comptroller, the Clerk of the Circuit Court and County Comptroller is custodian of all county funds. Vendors and others who provide services to county government receive payments for their goods and services through this office. We pride ourselves on having a prompt payment process. Although state law establishes 45 days as the threshold for payments, this office has set a goal of seven days after receiving a valid invoice approved by Sarasota County Government. Rating agencies, Internal Revenue Service, Securities Exchange Commission and financial institutions rely on the records kept by this office, and the county Comprehensive Annual Financial Report (CAFR) is prepared and published along with other reports designed to support the community's interest. As Treasurer, the Clerk of the Circuit Court and County Comptroller manages the overall banking relationships for county government and invests Sarasota County's surplus public funds to maximize investment earnings while minimizing risk.

COMPTROLLER AND TREASURER ACTIVITY FY2018* AND FY2019

The Comptroller accounts for millions of dollars in public funds, which are managed and used in Sarasota County.

ACCOUNTS PAYABLE FY2019



70,307

Invoices pre-audited and paid on behalf of Sarasota County Government

15,552

Deposits verified and entered into the county accounting system

PAYROLL SERVICES FY2019



68,223

Payroll direct deposits processed on behalf of the Clerk and Comptroller, Tax Collector, Property Appraiser, Supervisor of Elections, and Board of County Commissioners

3,422

Approximate number of employees paid bi-weekly

INVESTMENT SERVICES FY2018*



\$21 Million

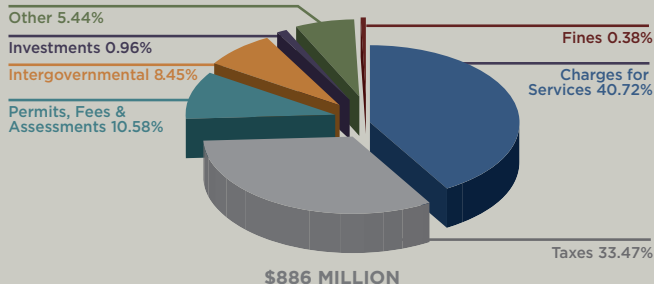
Interest earned in treasury performance

\$970.5 Million

Average investment portfolio

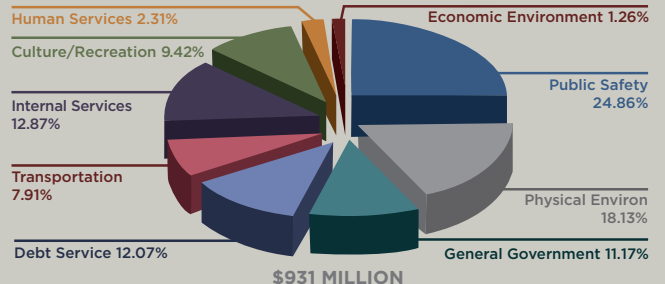
FY2018 REVENUE BY FUNCTION

This graph illustrates the County's fiscal year ended September 30, 2018 revenues of \$886 million accounted for in major revenue categories.



FY2018 EXPENDITURES BY FUNCTION

Total expenditures for fiscal year 2017 totaled \$820.7 million, which has decreased from the prior year by \$5.4 million. The largest percentage of expenditures is in Public Safety, which includes Sheriff and Fire Departments.



*FY2018 represents fiscal year 2018 data of October 1, 2017 through September 30, 2018, pending final FY2019 audited numbers.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

FINANCIAL AND ACCOUNTING SERVICES

What is debt administration?

From time to time, Sarasota County will borrow money to pay for the construction, replacement, expansion or acquisition of a major facility. This allows the county to repay the debt over the life of the assets and its use. A majority of the county's debt is in the form of bonds issued, however the county also issues commercial paper and bank term loans for debt expected to be paid down during a shorter timeframe. The Clerk and Comptroller actively participates in the issuance and monitoring of the county's debt.

Where can I find the county's financial reports?

Electronic copies of Sarasota County's monthly and annual financial reports are available on the Clerk and Comptroller's website, SarasotaClerk.com. If you would like a printed copy of the reports, stop by either of our offices (Sarasota or Venice).

Where can I find information regarding a county bond issue?

The Comptroller provides "one-stop shopping" through Digital Assurance Certification for all information related to a given county bond. Simply visit DACbond.com and search for bond issues of Sarasota County.

How can I request a copy of a Board financial record?

An electronic request for a Board financial record can simply be emailed to PublicRecords@SarasotaClerkandComptroller.com, or a requestor can contact the Finance Department at 941-861-5867.

INVESTMENT SERVICES

Why does the Comptroller invest Sarasota County's surplus funds?

As custodian of county funds, pursuant to Sarasota County Ordinance 2018.045 and State Statute Ch 218.415, the Comptroller invests surplus public funds to produce the best and safest possible returns, ensuring that tax dollars are protected, ultimately reducing the burden of taxpayers. An investment professional proactively manages the county portfolio, and is also responsible for managing banking relationships and cash flow forecasting process.

Where can I find the county's investment reports?

The Sarasota County Investment policy governs investments and provides guidelines for risk management and reporting requirements. The policy can be found at SarasotaClerk.com, along with the monthly investment report containing information regarding the portfolio composition, portfolio statistics and yield comparison. It is intended to provide the reader with a high-level summary of the investment strategy and portfolio performance.





COUNTY RECORDER

RECORDER

In Florida, the Clerk of the Circuit Court and County Comptroller also serves as the County Recorder, sometimes known as the Register of Deeds, responsible for creating the permanent record of all mortgages, liens, deeds and other documents having an effect on real property. This responsibility, known as recording, includes collecting state taxes such as documentary stamps and intangible taxes, and the recording of liens through assignment of instrument numbers. The official records of the county date back to 1921, when Sarasota was divided from Manatee County. There are four municipalities in Sarasota County, and Official Records include filings from agencies and residents within these municipalities. In addition to these responsibilities, the office issues marriage licenses, performs weddings, and serves as an acceptance agent for the U.S. Department of State for the issuance of passports.

OFFICIAL RECORDS ACTIVITY FY2019

RECORDED, INDEXED AND VERIFIED INTO THE OFFICIAL RECORDS OF SARASOTA COUNTY



DOCUMENTS RECORDED

173,131

Documents recorded include 17,521 mortgages, 30,888 deeds, 1,866 liens, as well as 31,083 court documents.



FEES COLLECTED

OVER \$84.3 MILLION

Fees collected include \$79 million in Doc Stamps and Intangible Taxes, as well as \$5.3 million in other fees.

TAX DEED SALES

493

Sales held through Tax Collector, Florida Department of Revenue, and Clerk collaborations

MARRIAGE SERVICES

2,884

Licenses issued

874

Ceremonies held

PASSPORT ACCEPTANCE AGENT, FRAUD PREVENTION

8,865

Applications processed

6,937

Passport photos taken

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

GETTING MARRIED IN SARASOTA COUNTY

We're getting married! What should we do first?

Go to SarasotaClerk.com to learn about required documents and current fees. If one or both applicants are Florida residents who voluntarily complete the Florida-approved premarital provider course, the state offers a reduced license fee, and waives the three-day waiting period. Present a printed copy of the course completion certificate, including the name of the provider and number of hours attended, with your application. The list of approved providers is available on SarasotaClerk.com.

We are from out of state. How do we apply for a marriage license here?

Non-Florida residents can go to SarasotaClerk.com to learn about required documents and current fees. There is no waiting period for non-Florida residents.

Are witnesses necessary and is a blood test required? No.

Is our marriage license only valid in Sarasota?

No, it may be used anywhere in the state of Florida. Once married, you must return it to the county where it was issued.

Does our license expire?

Your marriage license is valid for sixty days from the date you applied.

Does the Clerk of Court provide foreign language interpreters?

No. You must bring your own translator if either applicant does not sufficiently understand English when the Deputy Clerk is giving the Oath.

Does the Clerk of Court provide sign language translators?

Yes. A 24 hour notice is requested in order to make arrangements for an interpreter to administer the oath and perform the ceremony.

What is required after the ceremony?

Once married, the executed license must be returned to the Clerk of the Circuit Court and County Comptroller's office within 10 days, in person, or by mail (P. O. Box 3079, Sarasota, FL 34230).

Can I get married if I am younger than 18 years of age?

Yes, you can. However, effective July 1, 2018, you must be at least 17 years of age and provide the notarized written consent of your parents or legal guardian. The older party to the marriage may not be more than two years older than the younger party to the marriage.

RECORDING

What documents can be recorded?

Bills of sale, Agreements, Mortgages, Notices or Claims of Lien or other instruments relating to the transfer, ownership, encumbrance of or claims against real property or any interest in it. Refer to Florida Statute 28.222(3) for additional details.

Can I record any document via eRecording?

Most documents can be processed using eRecording. The most commonly eRecorded documents are deeds, mortgages, assignment of mortgages and satisfaction of mortgages. However, certain document types that require additional processing cannot be eRecorded. A list of available eRecording vendors is provided on our website. Once you create an account with the vendor of your choice, you may submit documents from any computer with Internet access and a scanner

TAX DEEDS

What is a tax deed sale?

A tax deed sale is the sale of property at public auction for back taxes and fees associated with bringing the property to sale. This is governed by Chapter 197, Florida Statutes, and Administrative Code 12D-13.060, Florida Department of Revenue.

What are some of the things that I should know before a sale?

All properties are sold at public auction to the highest bidder. Anyone may bid on the property. A bidder must be able to demonstrate their ability to post a non-refundable deposit for each file at the time of the sale. Per Florida Statute 197.542(2), the total amount of the bid, plus recording fees, must be received by the Clerk within 24 hours after the advertised time of the sale. Payment must be made by cash, cashier's check or money order only.

Why must I post a deposit equal to 5 percent of the bid or \$200, whichever is greater, for each file?

The high bidder of each file must post a non-refundable cash, cashier's check or money order deposit of 5 percent of the bid or \$200.00, whichever is greater, at the time of the sale. The deposit will be applied to the sale price upon receipt of full payment. If full payment of the final bid and of documentary stamp tax and recording fees are not made within 24 hours (excluding weekends and holidays) the Clerk and Comptroller will pay the costs of re-advertising the sale and pay all costs of the sale from the deposit.

What happens if I am the high bidder?

Once all fees have been paid, a Tax Deed is issued and recorded in the name you request for the property on which you were the high bidder. According to Florida Statute 197.562, "any person, firm, corporation, or county that is the grantee of any tax deed under this law shall be entitled to the immediate possession of the lands described in the deed."

How often are the sales held?

Tax Deed sales are conducted several times per month. This can vary from month to month, based upon the number of applications received from the Tax Collector.

How do I find a list of the upcoming Tax Deed sales?

A list of upcoming sales can be accessed through SarasotaClerk.com.

PASSPORT NOTIFICATION

How do I find out the status of my passport application?

Customers who have passport questions or who wish to check the status of their passport applications can access the following website: www.travel.state.gov.

How much does it cost to get a passport?

Two separate payments are required. For current fee information go to www.SarasotaClerk.com.



CLERK OF THE CIRCUIT AND COUNTY COURTS

CLERK OF COURTS

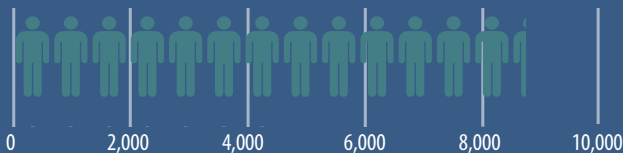
The Clerk of the Circuit and County Courts is an independent elected official responsible for many court related activities. The Florida court system consists of the Florida Supreme Court, five District Courts of Appeal, 20 Circuit Courts, and 67 County Courts. Sarasota is one of three counties in the Twelfth Judicial Circuit, which also includes Manatee and DeSoto counties. Serving as Clerk to both the circuit and county courts, trial court records are maintained in an electronic manner and data sharing of important judicial decisions are reported in accordance with law to many different agencies, including the Florida Department of Revenue, Florida Department of Law Enforcement, Department of Children and Families, and Bureau of Vital Statistics, to name a few. It has been said that the Office of the Clerk of the Circuit and County Courts touches the lives in its community from cradle to grave; cases include adoptions, estate matters, family law, domestic violence, mental illness, small claims, evictions, mortgage foreclosures, and more, which affect every community. Services provided by this office are available to all in need of assistance.

CIRCUIT AND COUNTY COURT ACTIVITY FY2019

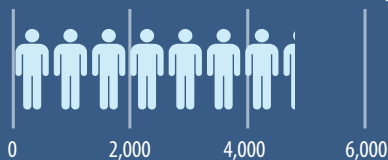
CRIMINAL LAW CASES are governed by the Florida Rules of Criminal Procedure. The Florida Constitution provides that Circuit and County Courts may hold criminal trials within the jurisdiction of the Court as designated by the Circuit's Chief Judge. Circuit Criminal data includes 424 juvenile delinquency cases.

CIVIL LAW CASES are governed by the Florida Rules of Civil Procedure, Family Law Rules of Procedure, Probate Rules and Small Claim Rules. The Circuit Court is responsible for family, probate, and other matters exceeding \$30,000. Circuit Civil data includes 3,216 circuit cases, 3,625 family cases, and 209 juvenile dependency cases. Probate includes probate, guardianship and mental health cases.

COUNTY CRIMINAL 8,542



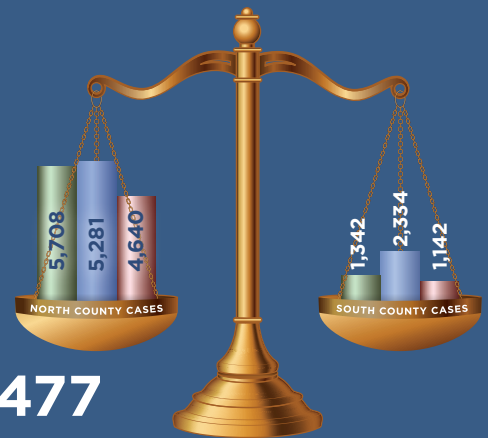
CIRCUIT COURT 4,731



CRIMINAL LAW 13,273
CASES FILED

CIVIL LAW 20,477
CASES FILED

■ CIRCUIT CIVIL
■ COUNTY CIVIL
■ PROBATE COURT



THE COURT

11 Circuit Judges
5 County Judges
6 Magistrates/Hearing Officers



CIVIL CITATIONS

51,105
48,178 Traffic infractions
1,666 Parking tickets
1,261 Civil infractions



FINES & FORFEITURES

\$9,940,910

Total fines, forfeitures,
court costs and
service charges

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

ACCESS TO PUBLIC RECORDS

What is the definition of a public record? Public records are defined by Florida law as all documents, papers, maps, books, tapes, photographs, films, sound recordings, data processing software, or other material regardless of the physical form, characteristics, or means of transmission, made or received pursuant to law or ordinance, or in connection with the transaction of official business by any agency. {Chapter 119, Florida Statutes}.

What kind of records can I see and where can I see them?

Public court records, official records, and marriage records are available and may be viewed on SarasotaClerk.com, or in either of our offices' Public Access department. Access to court records is governed by Supreme Court of Florida Administrative Order 19-20 and Rule 2.420, Florida Rules of Judicial Administration. Depending on the level of secure access, records may be redacted, or may not be viewable without additional requirements. Official Records from 1990 to present day are available electronically. Official Records from 1921 through 1989 are available on microfilm.

COURTS

I need help getting a restraining order. What should I do?

Petitions for a restraining order, also known as an Injunction for Protection, are made through the Office of the Clerk of the Circuit Court at either the Sarasota, FL or Venice, FL business office locations. For details, resources, and forms, go to SarasotaClerk.com and select Court Services from the menu, then *Restraining Orders*.

What about after hours filing?

If a petitioner needs to file an injunction after normal business hours or on a holiday or weekend, contact the Sarasota County Sheriff's Office at (941) 861-5800 or go to the Sarasota County Main Jail at 2020 Main Street, Sarasota, FL for assistance.

JURY DUTY

How does jury selection work?

Prospective jurors are randomly chosen from a Department of Motor Vehicles list of those with a driver's license or ID card living in Sarasota County who are at least 18 years old. The list also includes citizens who have asked to be included in the juror pool.

How long will I be expected to serve?

If you receive a summons, your attendance is required. In Sarasota courts, required service is one day or one trial.

Why are some people excused?

State law determines juror eligibility. A potential juror may be automatically excused by law, or may be excused for hardship reasons, as authorized by the Court.

Why was I summonsed but not chosen for a trial?

Rules governing the selection process require a sufficient number of jurors be summonsed based on scheduled court events, with judges and attorneys determining jury needs. Since cases can be resolved right up to the last minute before starting a trial, the fact that jurors are waiting and available is important to the process. Whether you are selected for a trial or not, your service is valuable.

I received a phone call demanding I pay a fine because I missed jury duty. I never received a summons. Is this legitimate?

Jury duty scams come in many versions, with callers using deception, threats, and intimidation. If you receive such a call, just hang up, then report it to the Clerk or law enforcement. Clerk and Comptroller employees do not initiate phone calls requesting payments for missing jury service. Warnings and alerts are posted on our website, or you can subscribe to all Clerk and Comptroller messages by signing up for eNews through the SarasotaClerk.com website.

TRAFFIC

How do I pay a ticket?

Online at SarasotaClerk.com or in person at either office location.

Sarasota Main Office:

Historic Courthouse,
2000 Main Street,
Sarasota, FL

or

Venice Full Service Branch:

R. L. Anderson Administration Center,
4000 South Tamiami Trail,
Venice, FL.



The Clerk to the Board attends commission meetings both in Sarasota, and in Venice (R. L. Anderson Administration Center, left.)



Created under the supervision of Karen E. Rushing
 Clerk of the Circuit Court and County Comptroller
 Janet C. Cantees, Chief Operations Officer
 Alicia C. Accardi, Communications Manager
 Lisa R. Finkelstein, Manager of Executive Administrative Services

MAIN OFFICE

Historic Courthouse

2000 Main St.
 Sarasota, FL 34237-6022

From I-75, take the FL 780/Fruitville Rd.
 EXIT 210 toward Sarasota/St. Armands.
 Turn onto FL-780/Fruitville Rd.;
 left onto S. Washington Blvd./US-301,
 left onto Main St.

FINANCE, INTERNAL AUDIT/OFFICE OF INSPECTOR GENERAL, AND BOARD RECORDS

Sarasota County Administration Center

1660 Ringling Blvd
 Sarasota, FL 34236-6808

From I-75, take the FL-780/Fruitville Rd.
 EXIT 210 toward Sarasota/St. Armands.
 Turn onto FL-780/Fruitville Rd.;
 left onto N. Orange Ave., left onto Ringling Blvd.

JURY OFFICE

Judge Lynn N. Silvertooth Judicial Center

2002 Ringling Blvd.
 Sarasota, FL 34236

From I-75, take the FL-780/Fruitville Rd.
 EXIT 210 toward Sarasota/St. Armands.
 Turn onto FL-780/Fruitville Rd.;
 left onto S. Washington Blvd./US-301,
 left onto Ringling Blvd.

VENICE BRANCH FULL SERVICE OFFICE

R.L. Anderson Administration Center

4000 S. Tamiami Trail
 Venice, FL 34293

From I-75, take the Jacaranda Blvd./County
 Hwy – 765 EXIT 193 toward Englewood/Venice.
 Travel south on Jacaranda Blvd.; turn right onto
 Tamiami Trail S./US41 N./FL-45, left onto Annex Road.

941-861-7400 • 8:30 a.m. - 5:00 p.m. • Monday - Friday
 Online access 24/7 • www.SarasotaClerk.com