

Notice of Public Hearing
On a Plan for the Preservation and Restoration of the
County Clerk's Records Archive

Notice is hereby given that a public hearing on a plan for the preservation and restoration of the Panola County Clerk's records archive will be held pursuant to Local Government Code 118.025(g), at a special meeting of the Panola County Commissioners' Court, in the Commissioners' Courtroom, Panola County Courthouse, 110 South Sycamore, Carthage, Texas, on Tuesday, August 21, 2018 at 1:30 PM.

Dated this 24th day of July, 2018.

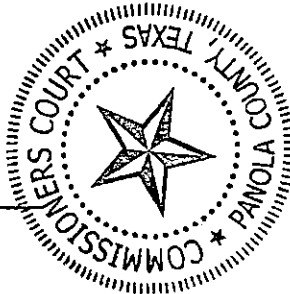


Lee Ann Jones
County Judge, Panola County

Attest:



Bobbie Davis
County Clerk, Panola County



Panola County Clerk
**Records Archive Preservation and Restoration Plan
2019**

Purpose

The purpose of this plan is to outline the preservation and restoration of the County Clerk's records archive for the upcoming fiscal year. Our goal is to digitally image all records stored in the County Clerk's office in a standardized, universal format, while simultaneously restoring and preserving the original records. This process will provide access, minimize deterioration of existing records and assist in developing the County Clerk's disaster recovery capabilities. Funding is necessary and legislation has been enacted to provide the collection of fees for this purpose.

The **County Clerk Records Archive Fee**, LGC 118.011(f)(1) and LGC 118.025, provides for "...the preservation and restoration services performed by the county clerk in connection with maintaining a county clerk's records archive" and authorizes the collection of up to \$10 per recorded document, with Commissioners' Court approval. The County Clerk's Office currently collects \$10 per recorded document. This fee is scheduled to be reduced to a maximum of \$5 per recorded document on September 1, 2019. The funds generated from the collection of the Archive Fee may be expended only for the preservation and restoration, including automation, of the County Clerk's records archive.

The **Records Management and Preservation Fee** provides for "...records management and preservation services performed by the county clerk after the filing and recording of a document in the records of the office of the clerk" and authorizes the collection of up to \$10 per recorded document [LGC 118.011(b)(2) and LGC 118.0216]. Effective September 1, 2019, the \$10 fee per recorded document is scheduled to be reduced to a maximum of \$5. In addition, Section 2, Art. 102.005 CCP(f-h) provides for \$2.50 per conviction in a criminal case filed in the County Clerk's Office. These fees are designated as the County Clerk Records Management and Preservation Fund, and are to be used for specific records management and preservation purposes in the County Clerk's Office. Additionally, the collection of \$5 per new civil or probate case filed in the County Clerk's Office [LGC 118.052(3)(G), LCG 118.0546 and LGC 118.0645], and \$22.50 for each conviction in a criminal case filed the County Clerk's Office [Section 2, Art. 102.005 CCP(f-h)] is authorized. These fees are designated as the County Records Management and Preservation Fund, and may be used for specific records management and preservation purposes county-wide, including automation purposes. The County Clerk's Office currently collects \$10 per recorded document, along with the mandated fee amounts in court cases.

The **Court Record Preservation Fee** (GC 51.708) provides for "...a filing fee of not more than \$10 in each civil case filed in the court to be used for court record preservation for the courts in the county." The Panola County Clerk currently collects a Court Record Preservation Fee of \$5. Funds generated by this fee may be used only to digitize court records and preserve the records from natural disasters.

In FY 2017, recording and filing generated approximately \$140,286 from these three fees combined. During the first half of 2018, these fees have generated approximately \$88,093.

Designation of Records

Open/Public Records

Panola County real property records range in date from approximately 1850 to present, and contain over 2,100 books of recorded documents and indexes. All original land record books and indexes have been microfilmed and reproduced in book format. Land records dating from 1947 to present have been available in-house and online since 2014. In FY 2016, Commissioners' Court approved spending, using the Records Management Fund and County Clerk Archive Fund, for digitization of our land records going back to sovereignty, which is nearing completion at this time.

Probate, mental health, civil and criminal cases date from approximately 1850 to present. Probate, civil and criminal case records are open to the public. With the advent of mandatory e-filing in civil and probate cases, and our determination to be paperless, we are creating very few new paper case files. The County and District Clerk offices recently opted to implement criminal e-filing, prior to the mandatory go-live date of summer 2019. Criminal cases account for the majority of new cases opened in the County Clerk's office, and e-filing will allow for less paper and faster filing into existing criminal cases. Additionally, County Clerk staff will continue to preserve and convert older paper case files to digital files to conserve space and enable the public to access those open records electronically.

Commissioners' Court Minutes are currently created and recorded electronically, and have been scanned and indexed back to 1996. Our plan is to continue to digitize these records, as personnel and equipment are available.

Livestock Marks and Brands record books date to 1882. These books are currently with the vendor approved for preservation and restoration of the vital statistics books, and are expected to be completed and returned to the county later this year.

There are a number of miscellaneous books that are frequently referenced by staff and/or the public that would benefit from being digitized, so that the original books may be preserved. Our plan is to begin the restoration and conversion of our miscellaneous books in the next few years, as personnel, equipment and funds are available.

Closed Records

Birth, death and marriage records date prior to 1900, and military discharge records date to early 20th century. *The original books have been the only records available in most cases.* In 2017, Commissioners' Court approved funding the preserve and digitize 72 of our birth, death and marriage books. The preservation and restoration phase of this project is expected to be completed in 2018, and indexing will be done by County Clerk staff as time allows. These records aren't entirely open to the public, but digitization would make it much easier to track and retrieve these records when necessary.

Summary

Finally, significant progress has been made this year in digitization of the records, and making those open records available to the public electronically. Records remaining to be digitized and books to be restored and preserved have been inventoried, and careful consideration is being given to the importance of the records of County Clerk's office. It is our desire to preserve the history of Panola County and its citizens in the best way possible, with the most efficient use of fees collected. With approval of funding by Commissioners' Court, we will continue to implement, in phases, the preservation of records in our care.