

BROOME COUNTY CLERK

2020 ANNUAL REPORT

Joseph A. Mihalko



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Joseph A. Mihalko
Broome County Clerk

Honorable Jason Garnar
Broome County Executive

Honorable Members of the
Broome County Legislature

Honorable Colleagues:

I hereby submit the 2020 Annual Report of the Broome County Clerk. The duties of the County Clerk are mandated by the New York State Constitution and by federal, state and local law. These duties are carried out by a dedicated staff that works diligently to serve the public.

The work of the Clerk's office impacts the lives of residents and businesses throughout the county. Each deed, mortgage, court record, judgement, and business certification or incorporation is filed and recorded in the Office of the Broome County Clerk.

The Clerk's Office collected \$22,581,019 in revenue in 2020, of which \$1,068,456 was retained by Broome County to be used by the General Fund. More than two-thirds of the revenue our office collects in fees is passed on to numerous state and federal agencies.

I am confident that the County Executive and the County Legislature will continue to provide support to allow the Clerk's Office to meet our mandates and fulfill our fiduciary responsibilities on behalf of the residents of Broome County.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Joseph A. Mihalko". The signature is written in a cursive style.

Joseph A. Mihalko
Broome County Clerk

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2020 By the Numbers

13,113.....Cubic Feet of Records Stored

31.....Departments that utilize the free storage of documents

23,853.....Pounds of paper destroyed

111,0011.....DMV Transactions

112.....Passports Issued

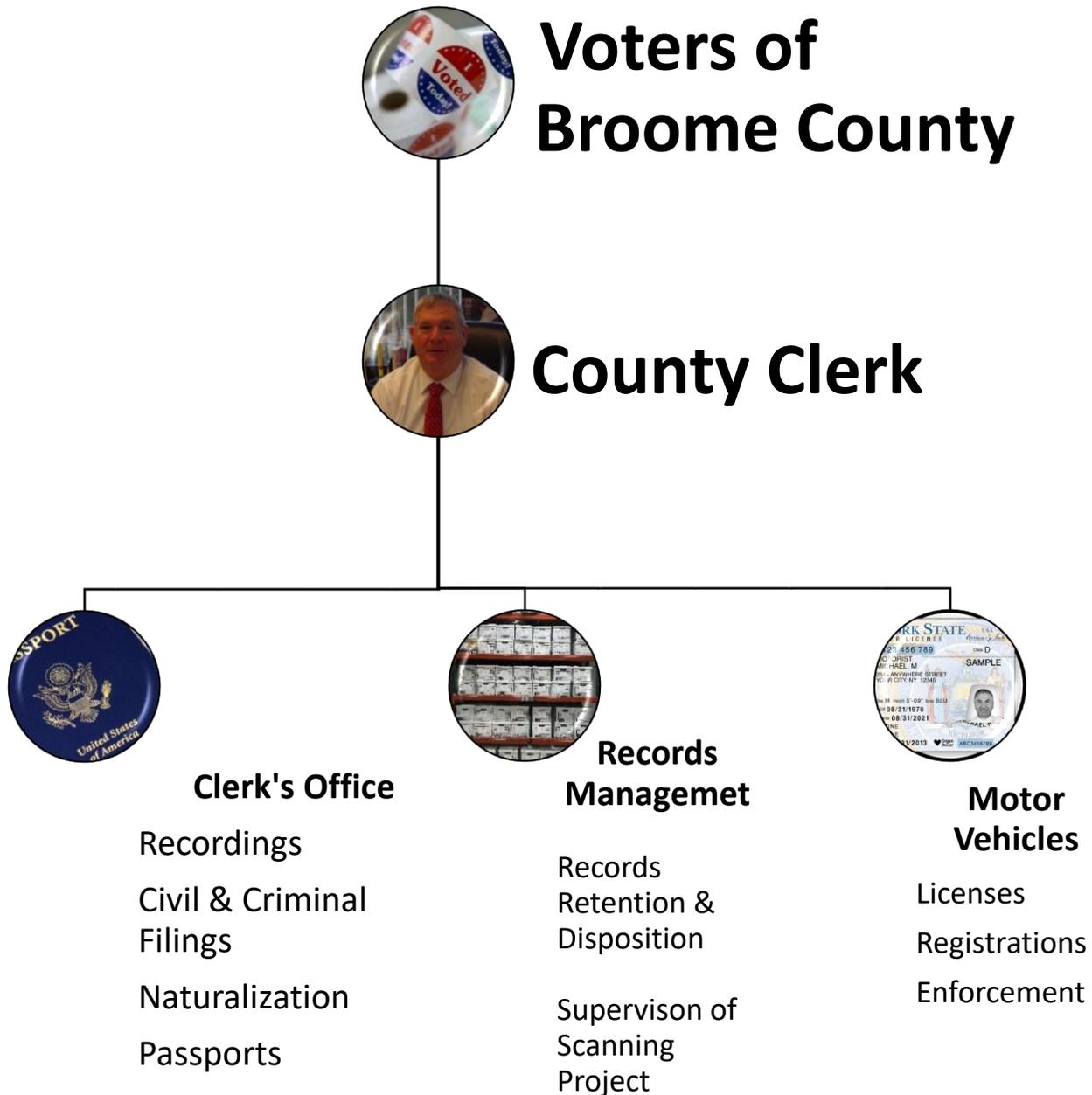
45.....Newly Naturalized American Citizens

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County Clerk Organization Chart



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Our COVID Response

The Broome County Clerk’s Office took decisive action to meet the immediate challenges of the COVID-19 public health crisis. To help flatten the curve and protect public health and safety, we employed a multi-pronged approach to provide our employees with flexible, remote work options while maintaining critical operations, generating a steady revenue stream for Broome County and accommodating our stakeholders who were unable to physically access the Clerk’s Office during the mandatory shutdown.

In accordance with Governor Cuomo’s Executive Orders, the Clerk’s Office took the following density reduction measures for our three departments:

Clerk	Closed to the public:	Tuesday, March 17, 2020
	Reduced to 1/2 staff on site and 1/2 staff remotely:	Tuesday, March 17, 2020
	Reduced to 1/4 staff on site and 3/4 staff remotely:	Monday, April 27, 2020
	Increased to full staff on site:	Monday, June 15, 2020
	Reopened to the public:	Monday, June 22, 2020
DMV	Closed to the public:	Wednesday, March 18, 2020
	Reopened Endicott DMV to the public:	Monday, June 15, 2020
	Reopened Binghamton DMV to the public:	Monday, June 22, 2020

While some functions of the Clerk’s Office can only be performed in-office, others—including the e-filing of court document and e-recording of land records—could easily continue remotely during the temporary workforce reduction. As a courtesy to our stakeholders, our staff copied, scanned and emailed hundreds of older deeds, mortgages, maps, appropriations and other miscellaneous records to law firms and title searchers throughout the shutdown – all free of charge.

Those working from home also tackled several new projects focusing on the indexing, digitization and verification of various public records for the Records Management Department. As a result of their efforts, 21,779 new civil actions were indexed in OnBase, 12 additional mortgage books were imported into IQS and 270 judgment books were redacted and verified, significantly increasing the number of documents that are available remotely to our users. Even before the pandemic, we worked with a vendor to digitize hundreds of deed books and index books to make them available online.

Despite the mandatory closures, the DMV continued generating a significant amount of revenue for Broome County by processing a variety of transactions through the mail and our secure DMV “drop box” in the Broome County Office Building. In addition to the mail we received directly from customers, at Albany’s request, the Binghamton DMV also agreed to process dealer work from other regions since State-operated DMVs weren’t processing any mail during the mandatory closures. On some days, our DMV staff processed as many as 400 transactions from residents in every corner of New York State. In

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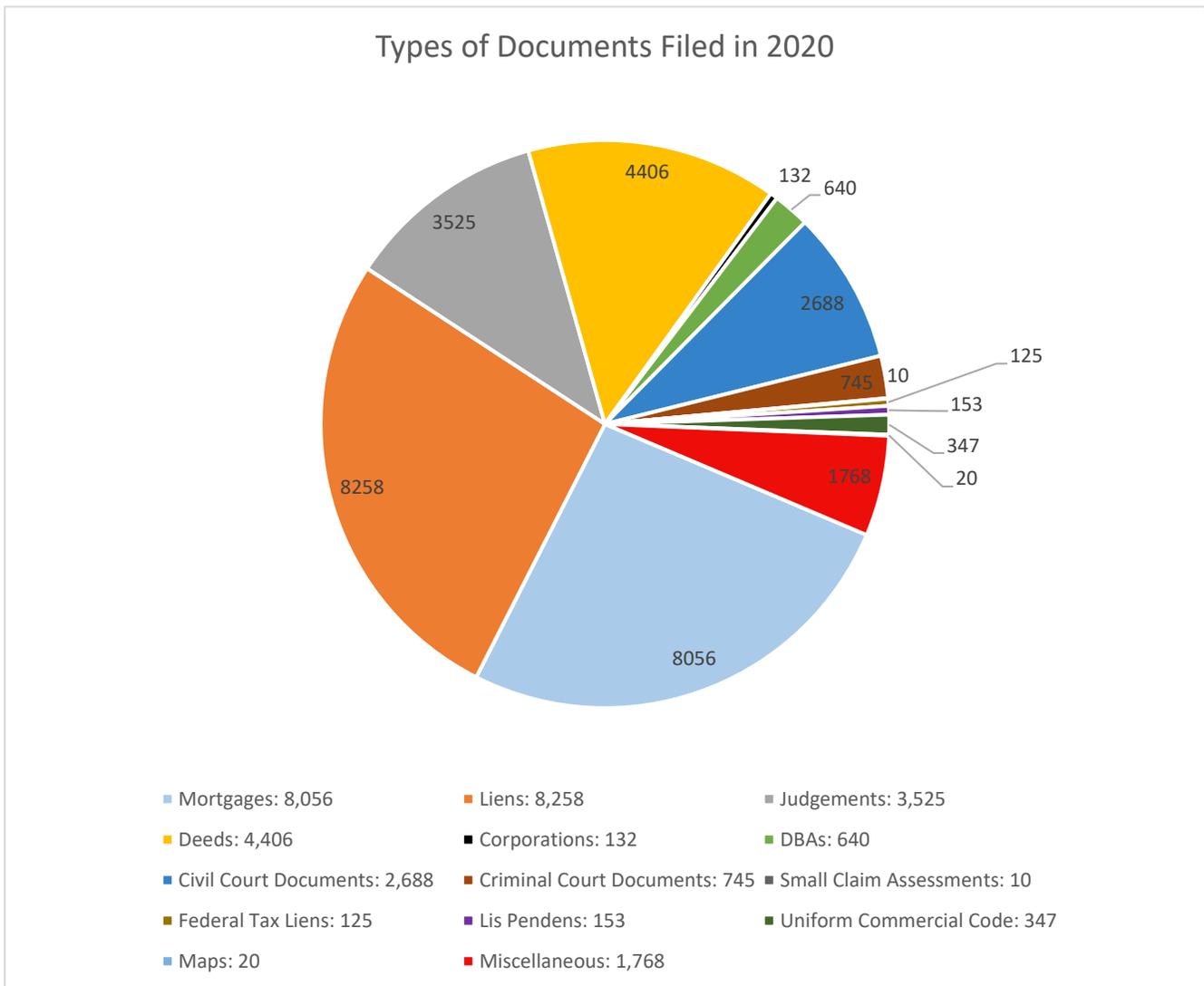
September 2020, residents began booking appointments at the Binghamton and Endicott DMVs using a new web-based reservation system to cut down on lines and wait times.

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Clerk's Office

The Clerk's Office oversees the processing, filing, scanning and storing of thousands of vital property, business and court documents every year. These documents must be maintained for the statutorily mandated length of time. Depending on the type of document this could range from 6 years to permanently. The County Clerk is responsible for safeguarding the vital historical records of the County, as well as the records of other county departments, stored in our Records Center at the former Ramp Industries building in Binghamton.



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Our office moved to a mandatory E-filing of civil actions and E-recording of Deeds and Mortgages in 2016. This process has continued to be successful, while also cutting down on the number of paper documents we physically store on-site. NYS legislation also now authorizes the electronic submissions of survey and subdivision maps.

Additionally, all public record documents that are stored digitally by the Clerk's Office are available to the public online through a contract with Info Quick Solutions (IQS). These documents can be downloaded, for a fee, from the County Clerk's website. As outlined in our contract, IQS retains 20% of the revenue from these downloads as their fee for service. These documents can be downloaded for a fee of \$1.90 per document or by a subscription of \$250 per month for unlimited downloads. The County received \$61,805.76 in revenue from this service in 2020.

In addition to the variety of services that produce revenue for the County, the Clerk's Office also provides several no fee services to members of the public. This includes Notarizations, Oaths of Office, Veterans Discount Cards, and Naturalization Ceremonies.

While a large focus of the office has been to move towards digital documents, there are still thousands of volumes of documents that are located in Clerk's Office on the third floor of the County Office Building. In addition to processing new documents, our staff works to assist people searching for documents in-house. Members of the legal community and title searchers access the documents in our office throughout the week while working on various projects. Some firms have taken advantage of our option to rent a booth within the office, so they have a workspace that is their own.

With the goals of digitization, preservation and access of older records and documents in mind, the Broome County Clerk's Office is working on a set of Capital Projects:

First, to continue to the digitize permanent inactive departmental records that are currently housed at the Records Center (the Ramp Building at 1 North Floral Avenue). The plan is to continue to scan and digitize all permanent paper records. Previous capital projects from 2014, 2015, 2017 and 2019 have started this process however, we have thousands of more documents that require scanning.

Second, with the plan to expand our mobile DMV services, we have purchased a second mobile DMV unit. Besides our two DMV offices in Binghamton and Endicott, we currently have a "mobile DMV" unit which is dispatched to underserved rural communities 5 days a week. We are looking at two new locations and expanding additional days at our current locations with the second "mobile DMV" unit. We have already begun discussions with possible host sites, including the Greater Binghamton Airport staff, to gauge their interest in hosting such the "mobile DMV" unit in 2021. Additionally, the process for purchasing the necessary DMV equipment is underway.

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Boston Purchase Map

In October 2019, the Broome County Clerk's Office discovered the *Boston Purchase Map*, a map from 1793 which depicts an agreement between New York State and 60 proprietors from the Boston, MA area for the settlement of what is now Broome and Tioga County. This map is a founding document of Broome County history and had been missing for 35 years. The map, unfortunately, was found in a warehouse with no temperature, humidity or light controls placed between plastic and two pieces of cardboard.

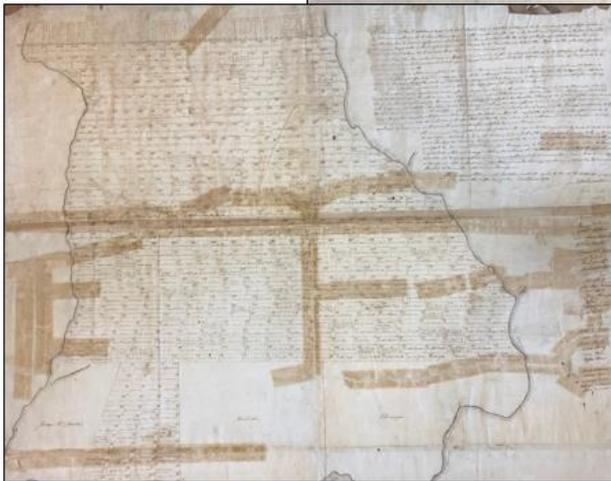
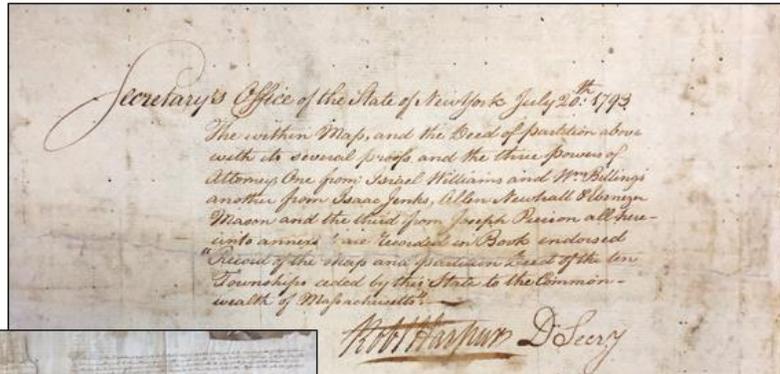
The future for the map is to restore to the best of our abilities, preserve it and frame it for safe keeping. Once the *Boston Purchase Map* is restored and preserved, it will be digitized, and hard copies will be created for educational and historical research purposes. We hope to start this process in July of this year.

Because the map had been missing for 35 years, we are unsure the level of demand for it. We know that historians and members of the public have inquired from time to time if the map had been found. Now that it has been located, we look forward to fulfilling viewing requests. Our recently retired County Historian described the map as "priceless" and the Clerk's Office agrees. This is the sole copy of the map that granted our area to the proprietors who settled the land and made Broome County their

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home. They established many of the communities that are still here today.



Passports

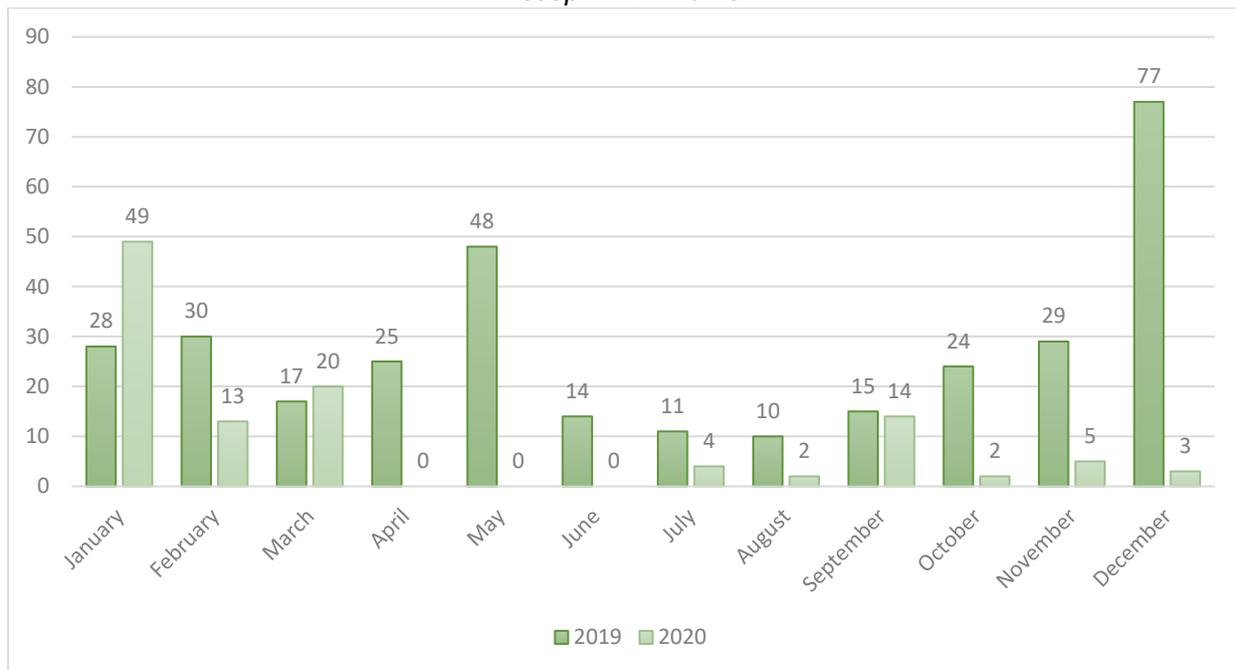
The County Clerk's Office acts as a Passport Acceptance Agent for the Federal Government. All fees and requirements are set by Federal Law. Each Acceptance Agent within the Clerk's Office is required to be certified as such, and their certifications must be renewed annually. In 2020, the entire Clerk's Office staff, including County Clerk Mihalko, were certified Passport Acceptance Agents.

The Clerk's Office offers several optional services when processing a passport. Only about half of the County Clerk's Offices statewide offer passport photo services. Broome County offers this service for the price of \$10. This makes the Broome County Clerk's Office a great resource for its residents.

Number of Passports by Month for 2019 & 2020

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In January 2020, The Clerk’s Office was able to host one Passport Fair. We traveled to Seton Catholic Central and provided services for the convenience of residents and students who needed passports but were unable to visit our downtown Binghamton office during normal business hours. During the fair, the Clerk’s office helped 28 people obtain their passports. We plan to continue to work with local schools, towns and groups in the community to provide more Passport Fairs in the future as the Public Health guidelines allow.

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2020 Passport Revenue

Federal Fees		Fee	#	2020 Revenue
	Expedited Fee	\$ 60.00	14	\$ 840.00
Overnight Return Fee	\$ 16.38	14	\$ 238.52	
Passport Book- Adult	\$ 110.00	84	\$ 9,130.00	
Passport Book- Minor	\$ 80.00	30	\$ 2,400.00	
Passport Card- Adult	\$ 30.00	13	\$ 390.00	
Passport Card- Minor	\$ 15.00	2	\$ 30.00	
			\$ 13,028.52	
Clerk Retained Fees				
	Acceptance Fee	\$ 35.00	115	\$ 4,025.00
Passport Photo Fee	\$ 10.00	91	\$ 910.00	
			\$ 4,935	

In 2020, The Broome County Clerk's Office processed \$13,028.52 in Federal Passport Fees. The County received \$4,935 in acceptance and photo fees. These revenue streams are down significantly from previous years due to the COVID-19 shutdown, during which we were closed to the public, we couldn't host Passport Fairs and the U.S. Department of State stopped processing Passport applications.

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Naturalization Ceremonies

Many people do not realize that one of the County Clerk's duties is the welcoming of newly Naturalized Citizens through a Naturalization Ceremony. This ceremony is a deeply patriotic and meaningful occasion where the Clerk welcomes those seeking the American Dream. **In 2020, the Broome County Clerk's Office participated in the only public Naturalization Ceremony for 45 new citizens from 28 different countries.** The County Clerk has the honor of administering the *Naturalization Oath of Allegiance to the United States of America* to all new citizens as part of the Ceremony.

These citizens undergo testing and background checks performed by the U.S. Department of Homeland Security, Citizenship and Immigration Services Division. Homeland Security, in conjunction with a New York State Supreme Court Judge, lead the ceremonies and presents each new Citizen with their official documentation and credentials.

There was one Naturalization Ceremony in 2020 held in February. County Clerk Mihalko was present to administer the oath at the ceremony.

As part of this ceremony, citizens also have the option to *Petition for Name Change*. The County Clerk certified 7 name changes for our newly naturalized citizens last year.

Argentina	1	Laos	1
Bosnia & Herzegovina	1	Mexico	1
China	2	Morocco	1
Cuba	1	Netherlands	1
Dominican Republic	1	Pakistan	5
Germany	1	Philippines	3
Guyana	2	Poland	1
Haiti	1	Romania	1
Hungary	1	Russia	1
India	1	Spain	1
Iraq	2	Sudan	3
Jamaica	1	Ukraine	5
Japan	1	United Kingdom	1
Kenya	3	Yemen	1

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E-ZPass

We sell E-ZPass tags for private passenger vehicles in our Binghamton and Endicott DMV Offices, as well as the Clerk's Office for \$25. We accept cash, checks or credit cards. Upon purchase, \$25 is credited to the customer's online account. We're offering this service to make the tags more accessible to Broome County residents as New York State moves towards a cashless tolling system.

On November 1st, 2020, all traditional toll booths throughout New York State were replaced with large electronic overhangs equipped with cameras and scanners. Vehicles without E-ZPass tags that pass through these cashless tolling facilities are photographed and a bill for the non-discounted toll is mailed to the vehicle's registered owner. Drivers using E-ZPass typically save 30–50% on every toll.



Last year, between our DMV Offices and the Broome County Clerk's Office, 132 E-ZPass tags were sold. The Clerk's office alone sold 78 tags, while the two DMV offices collectively sold 54 tags. We sell E-ZPass tags at our Passport Fairs as well.

The county retains \$4 for every tag sold, for a total of \$528 in new revenue to Broome County.

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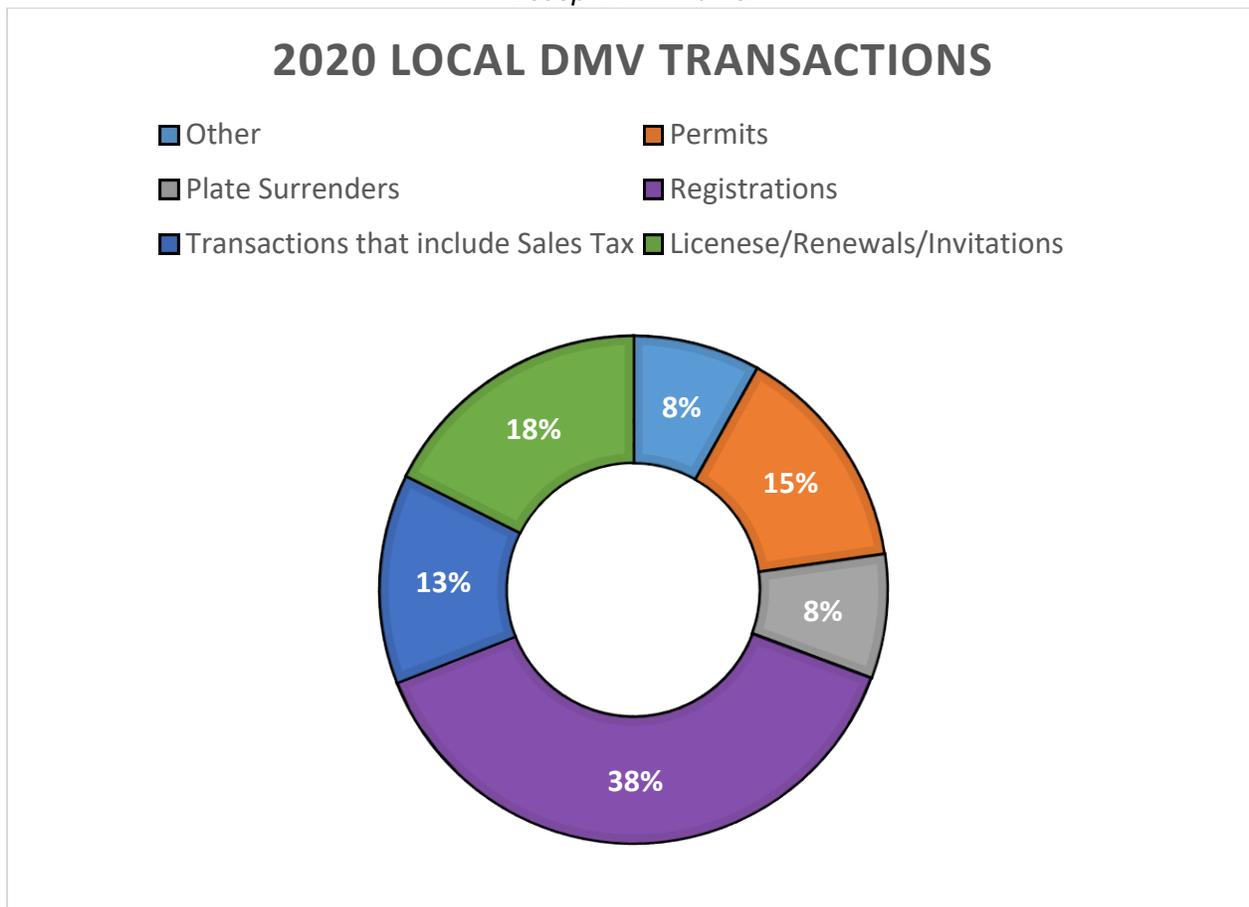
Department of Motor Vehicles

Broome County offers two local Department of Motor Vehicles Offices, operating in Binghamton and Endicott. The Endicott DMV offers both weekday and Saturday hours, while the Binghamton office is open Monday - Friday. Additionally, each weekday there is a Satellite Office that is rotated throughout the rural areas of the county. While the Mobile Office provides most of the same services as our physical DMVs, the Mobiles are unable to offer E-ZPass tags, Enhanced Driver's Licenses, CDL Exams or process Enforcement transactions, including the issuance of Conditional or Restricted Licenses.

Offering the Mobile Office and Saturday hours has become increasingly important as a means of encouraging residents to visit their local DMV Office as opposed to using the internet or mail for their motor vehicle transactions. For all transactions performed at the local DMV Office, Broome County retains 12.7% of the transaction value. These funds are kept locally and help to keep County taxes down by offsetting County expenses, as opposed to transactions performed online or through the mail where revenues are retained 100% by the State. As more and more customers are turning towards online renewals, this source of County revenue could be in jeopardy.

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* Other includes: Abstracts, Boats, Duplicate Titles, Enforcement, Financial Security and Non-Drivers ID

In 2020, 44% of the DMV transactions were processed through the Endicott DMV. The Binghamton DMV processed 53% of the transactions, while 3% was done in the Mobile Offices.

	Location	Hours
Binghamton DMV Office	81 Chenango Street, Binghamton	Monday - Friday 8am - 4:30pm
Endicott DMV Office	137 Washington Avenue, Endicott	Monday - Friday 8am - 4:30pm Saturday 8am - 1pm
Mobile DMV Offices	Conklin Town Hall, Conklin	Tuesday 10am - 3pm
	Triangle Town Hall, Whitney Point	Wednesday & Friday 10am - 3pm
	Windsor Town Hall, Windsor	Thursday 9am - 2:30pm

In 2018, the Broome County Clerk’s Office initiated a variety of outreach efforts to encourage the use of our local DMVs, especially by those in rural and suburban areas. For starters, we installed DMV “Drop Boxes” in 6 different locations throughout the county:

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- Broome West Senior Center: 2801 Wayne Street in Endwell
- Eastern Broome Senior Center: 27 Golden Lane in Harpursville
- Northern Broome Senior Center: 12 Strongs Place in Whitney Point
- Johnson City Senior Center: 30 Brocton Street in Johnson City
- First Ward Senior Center: 226 Clinton Street in Binghamton
- Broome County Office Building: 60 Hawley Street in Binghamton

These Drop Boxes are a real timesaver for residents who want to renew their license and vehicle registrations locally but are unable to visit our Offices during normal business hours. In 2020, **459** renewals were collected in our Drop Boxes. That is up **414** from 2019. This increase is mainly due to our DMV offices being closed to the public during the mandated COVID-19 shutdown. We strongly encourage residents to save their stamps and skip the lines by utilizing this convenient service. To encourage the use of our Drop Boxes, we partnered with the Greater Binghamton Chamber of Commerce on a local gift card giveaway. Residents who mailed their renewal paperwork to the Binghamton DMV or used our DMV Drop Boxes were automatically entered into a drawing to win a gift certificate from a local restaurant. Prizes from Michelangelo's and Food & Fire BBQ were awarded in January and February of 2020 before COVID hit.

Once again, this year we enclosed a flyer with each homeowner's property tax bill reminding residents that they can help lower their county property taxes by using our local DMV services.

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Records Management

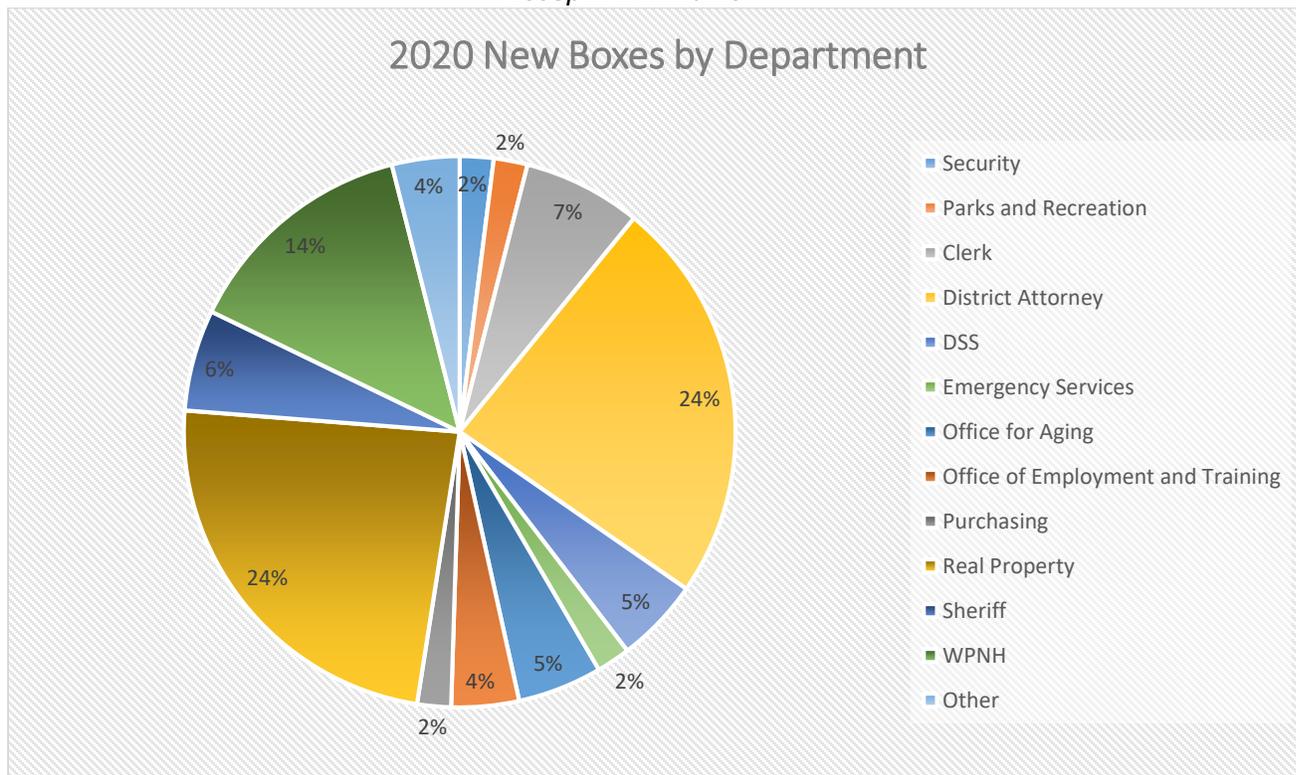
The County Clerk is responsible for safeguarding the vital historical records of the County, as well as the records of other county departments. These records are stored at the County Records Center at the former Ramp Industries building in Binghamton. The Records Center stores boxes of documents for county departments at the former Ramp Industries complex on Floral Ave in Binghamton. The records were moved to this location in 2016 and the space is shared with Board of Elections and the District Attorney's Office; however, the County Clerk is responsible for the building utilities and facilities charges. The Board of Elections stores the county's voting machines and conducts training of poll workers at the facility, while the District Attorney's Office utilizes the space for evidence storage.

Moving forward, the Clerk's Office will be exploring the viability of remaining at the Ramp Building. A number of issues have been brought to our attention including the presence of moisture and mold in the document storage area. With the preservation of documents being the Records Management Division's primary role for the county, our office needs to be sure that these documents will remain unharmed from environmental threats.

The Clerk's Office oversees the storage of over **13,113 boxes of records for the county from 31 different county departments**. In 2020, 641 new boxes were moved into storage from 17 departments. In addition to the storage of these boxes, our Records Management Staff responded to 335 requests for document retrieval from boxes stored at the records center.

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* Other includes: Probation, Personnel, Audit, Planning IT and Law

In October 2017, The Clerk’s Office began a scanning contract with Datrose Inc for scanning services. The contract allowed for in-house services for paper records to be scanned, indexed, proofed and destroyed. All the documents are scanned into the county’s OnBase system. This project has freed up 120 cubic feet of storage space in the Records Center. Through the contract, the Records Management division has had 2-3 full- time scanners on staff working out of the County Office Building. In 2019, the scanners worked on projects for security, DSS, WPNH and the Clerk’s Office. This project was approved to continue through 2020 through the County Capital Projects Budget. In 2020, the scanners worked on scanning Civil Actions for the Clerk’s Office. This increased the availability of Civil Actions digitally through IQS back to January 1, 2006.

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Budget

The Clerk's Office collects several taxes and fees on behalf of other Federal, State and local Departments and Agencies. While the office may retain a portion of some of the fees, for the most part the office acts as a collection or pass-through department for these fees collected.

Real Estate Transfer Tax

In accordance with Article 31 of the New York State Tax Law, this tax is collected on Deeds filed with the Clerk's Office. The tax rate is based on the transaction price on the deed and is \$5 per \$1,000 of transaction price. This tax is split with 80% going to NYS and is dedicated to the Environmental Protection Fund with the remaining 20% going to the Broome County Veteran's Service Department.

Mortgage Recording Tax

In accordance with Article 11 of the New York State Tax Law, this tax is assessed on mortgages for single and multi-family dwellings, commercial property and vacant land through private lenders, individuals or Federal Credit Unions. The tax rate is based on the amount of the mortgage debt or obligation secured and is broken down as follows:

- "Basic Tax" = \$0.50 per \$100 borrowed – the revenue from the Basic Tax is passed to the Town where the property is located.
- "Special Additional Tax" = \$0.25 per \$100 borrowed – the revenue is mostly passed to New York State; however, the County does retain a small portion in an effort to cover the costs of administering this tax
- "Local Tax" = \$0.25 per \$100 borrowed – the revenue is dedicated to the Broome County Office for Aging

Equalization and Assessment

In accordance with §333(3) and §574 of the New York State Real Property Law, a fee of \$250 or \$125 is assessed on each RP-5217 form filed with the Clerk's Office. This fee is then passed to the State General Fund.

Notary Licensing

The Clerk's Office processes Notary Public Commissions on behalf of the New York State Department of State. All notary fees are collected by the Clerk's Office and then sent to the Department of State.

Passports

The Clerk's Office is a certified passport acceptance agency. The Office collects all passport fees and passes them along to the Federal government. The Clerk is able to collect an acceptance fee, for 2020, this fee was \$35 per application. The revenue from the acceptance fee is deposited in the County General Fund.

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2020 Funds Collected and Distributed	
<i>Joseph A. Mihalko</i>	
County Clerk Fees	\$1,068,456.40
County General Fund	
Mortgage Tax	\$17,897,645.96
Towns	\$9,132,651.48
Broome County Office for Aging	\$4,566,325.74
New York State	\$4,198,668.74
County General Fund	\$403,833.86
Real Estate Transfer Tax	\$2,622,324.50
New York State	\$2,063,534.00
Broome County Veterans Services	\$558,790.50
Court Fees	\$613,623.72
New York State	
Commission for Education	\$338,941.00
NYS Records Management Improvement Fund	
NYS Cultural Education Account	
Passport Fees	\$13,028.52
Federal	
Notary	\$9,000.00
New York State	
Total Funds Collected	\$22,581,019.36
Funds retained in the County General Fund	\$ 1,472,290.26
Total Funds passed to other entities	\$ 16,369,447.46