

RESOLUTION - SUPERMAJORITY

Circuit Clerk Resolution Authorizing Emergency Appropriation from Circuit Clerk Court Document Storage Fund Balance for Digital Preservation of Historical Court Record Books & Microfilm, plus Development of Online Archive Site (41)

WHEREAS, the Circuit Clerk has approximately 493 older index and court record books, dating from 1838 to 1992, containing over 270,000 pages of records, which are not eligible for destruction due to Illinois Supreme Court requirements that specific types of records must be scanned and/or microfilmed before destruction; and

WHEREAS, the Circuit Clerk also has approximately 190 rolls of microfilm produced by the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints Genealogical Society in the early 1980's, which contain scans of McHenry County Probate, Immigration and Naturalization records dating from 1840 to 1919, which have great historical value for genealogists and researchers; and

WHEREAS, McHenry County has limited space in the Archives facility; and

WHEREAS, the Circuit Clerk's long-range plan is to microfilm older case records to allow for eventual destruction, reducing the amount of space needed by the Circuit Clerk at the Archives facility; and

WHEREAS, older case records have great historical value to the public, genealogists, and researchers, while making these records available on the Circuit Clerk's website would be a valuable resource to the public and all interested parties; and

WHEREAS, vendor Arca Search has successfully developed and maintained online historical record archive sites for other Circuit Clerks in Illinois, namely [Will County](#) and [Richland County](#); and

WHEREAS, the Court Document Storage Fund, which is funded by a fee charged on all court case filings, is statutorily designated to "*defray the expense, borne by the county, of establishing and maintaining a document storage system and converting the records of the circuit court clerk to electronic or micrographic storage*" (705 ILCS 135/10-5(d)(2)); and

WHEREAS, the project is nearing completion, but due to the unknown details of specifically how many pages are contained in each of the books, and specifically how many images are on each roll of the historical microfilm, the initial project amount was not sufficient to complete the project; and

WHEREAS, the Circuit Clerk has additional fund balance available in the Court Document Storage Fund to complete this project, which will achieve the long-range goal to scan/microfilm older court records, making them available for historical research by the public.

NOW, THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, by this County Board of McHenry County, Illinois, that it hereby authorizes the Circuit Clerk to enter into an agreement with ArcaSearch, LLC, 720 St. Germain St., St. Cloud, MN 56301, for the completion of the current digital preservation and back-up of historical original court documents, providing a searchable database of these historical court documents without additional back-indexing of the documents, at a cost not to exceed \$50,000.00; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, by this County Board of McHenry County, Illinois, that said costs will be covered by Dept. 41, Fund 371, Main Account 400100 (Court Document Storage Fund - Contractual Services), with an offsetting entry to Dept. 41, Fund 371, Main Account 099100 (Court Document Storage Fund – Utilization of Fund Balance); and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the County Clerk is hereby authorized to distribute a certified copy of this Resolution to the Clerk of the Circuit Court, the Chief Judge of the 22nd Judicial Circuit, the 22nd Circuit Trial Court Administrator, the County Auditor, the Chief Financial Officer, the Assistant County Administrator, and the County Administrator.

DATED at Woodstock, Illinois, this 21st day of April, A.D., 2026.

Michael Buehler, Chairman
McHenry County Board

ATTEST:

Joseph J. Tirio, County Clerk

RESOLUTION

SUBJECT: Circuit Clerk Resolution Authorizing Emergency Appropriation from Circuit Clerk Court Document Storage Fund Balance for Digital Preservation of Historical Court Record Books & Microfilm, plus Development of Online Archive Site (41)

Board / Committee Action Requested:

To approve a resolution authorizing an Emergency Appropriation for utilization of additional fund balance from the Circuit Clerk Court Document Storage Fund Balance to complete the project of Digital Preservation of Historical Court Record Books & Microfilm, plus Development of Online Archive Site

Background and Discussion: The Circuit Clerk is requesting authorization for the utilization of additional fund balance from the Court Document Storage Fund to complete an ongoing project to digitally preserve approximately 280,000 pages of court index and record books dating from 1838 to 1992, in addition to approximately 275,000 pages of scanned Probate, Immigration and Naturalization records dating from 1840 to 1919 which were microfilmed by the *Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints Genealogical Society* in the 1980s, and the development of a McHenry County Court Online Archive site which will be made available to the public for genealogical and historical research.

This project has been ongoing since January, 2026, and is nearing completion, but due to the difficulty in determining the exact number of pages to be digitized in the historical court index and record books, and inability to determine exactly how many images are contained on each roll of historical microfilm until the project began, the original proposal fell short of the actual number of pages which needed to be reproduced. The vendor has proposed a reduced "per image" pricing on the remaining balance of the project to complete the remaining 90,000+ pages of microfilm images and 8,000+ record book pages.

The Circuit Clerk has sufficient fund balance to complete the project in the Circuit Clerk Court Document Storage Fund, which is funded by fees charged on all case filings specifically created to *"defray the expense, borne by the county, of establishing and maintaining a document storage system and converting the records of the circuit court clerk to electronic or micrographic storage."* *"The fund shall be audited by the county auditor, and the board shall make expenditure from the fund in payment of any cost related to the storage of court records, including hardware, software, research and development costs, and personnel costs related to the foregoing, provided that the expenditure is approved by the clerk of the court."* (705 ILCS 135/10-5(d)(2))

The Circuit Clerk has approximately 493 court index and record books stored in the County Archives facility, which contain more than 280,000 pages of records dating from 1838 to 1992, which contain Civil, Criminal, Family, Juvenile, Probate, Wills and other court records with both personal and historical value to the residents of McHenry County. Many of these books are required to be retained permanently by the Supreme Court, but others can be destroyed after they are digitized.

The Circuit Clerk also has approximately 200 rolls of microfilm which was created in the 1980's by the *Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints Genealogical Society* who came onsite to scan Probate, Naturalization and Immigration records in the McHenry County Circuit Clerk's office dating from 1840 to 1919. Converting both the court record books and the probate microfilm created by the Mormons would improve the customer service ability of the Circuit Clerk to be able to find and share these historical records with interested parties.

The proposal also includes the development of a McHenry County Online Archive Site to house the records which would be linked to the Circuit Clerk's website, which would allow public searching capability for those records in this group which are classified as public records. Non-public records would only be searchable by authorized staff. Arca Search has created and maintains archive websites for a few Circuit Clerks in Illinois, including Will County [Will County, Illinois - Naturalization Record Archive](#) and Richland County [Public Access: Richland County Archive](#).

Impact on Human Resources: The creation of the Online Archive Site would save Circuit Clerk staff time by allowing the public to do their own searching through historic records, which can be a very time-consuming process. This would also save County Archives staff time, who would not have to search through the large, heavy books to find requested records.

Impact on Budget (Revenue; Expenses, Fringe Benefits): There are approximately 90,000+ pages of microfilm remaining to be digitized and an additional 8,000+ pages of record books to be imaged. The project can be completed for less than \$50,000.00 in additional utilization of fund balance from the Court Document Storage Fund.

Impact on Capital Expenditures: none

Impact on Physical Space: This project will have a positive impact on space at the County's Archives facility, reducing the amount of space needed for the Circuit Clerk's records by the number of court record books the Circuit Clerk is able to destroy following their digitization.

Impact on Other County Departments or Outside Agencies: The project will have a positive impact on the storage needs for the entire County by freeing space in the Archives facility. It will also reduce the number of requests from the Circuit Clerk to Archives to retrieve these older court records because the Circuit Clerk will be able to access the records by viewing the digitized record books, rather than requesting the physical books be driven to the Courthouse from Archives. In addition, the Online Archive Site will allow the public to conduct their own search of historical records, saving both Archives and Circuit Clerk staff time from conducting those time-consuming searches of very difficult historic records.

Conformity to Board Ordinances, Policies and Strategic Plan: The Circuit Clerk has discussed this project with the County Purchasing Director. (see attached Procurement Executive Summary). The Will County Circuit Clerk contracted with ArcaSearch to digitally preserve court records as well as provide an online archive site. Based on article 10, S10-101 of the Purchasing Ordinance which authorizes cooperative purchasing agreement participation, the Circuit Clerk and Director of Procurement and Special Services agree to renew Will County's contract with ArcaSearch.

This project conforms with Organization Advancement Strategic Goal 2: Work to update/overhaul the County website, as it would add a new level of interest and record searching capability to the Circuit Clerk's website, increasing the overall usefulness of the website, and ultimately creating more interest in the County's website in general.