Register of Deeds

Stephanie A. Norman, MPA

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Did You Know?

- You can obtain a certified birth certificate if you were born in any county in NC after 1971 from our office?
  - If adopted, you will be able to obtain from local offices effective 1/1/2026
- Burke County is considered a “burn” County (April 1865)
- We are a Passport Acceptance Facility
- We notarize documents for $10.00 per signature
  - Sorry no car titles

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Love. Grow. Serve.

FOR THE LOVE OF BURKE

BURKE COUNTY REGISTER OF DEEDS

STEPHANIE A. NORMAN

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Community Engagement

- Annual Customer Appreciation Event
  - Annual Shred-It Event in September (11th from 3:00pm-6:30pm)
- Veteran's Appreciation
  - Changed from annual event to daily recognition with small gift
- Special Wedding Events
  - Halloween Bash Wedding Event
  - October 2, 2025 from 1:00pm to 7:00pm
  - Total of 9 couples were married
- Passport Fairs
  - We held two (2) Fairs this year
  - Total of 69 applications were processed

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Land Records

On average we are recording roughly 12,000 documents per year

- Our land record numbers remain consistent even with the housing market stabilizing
  - With a slight increase of 0.17% over the previous fiscal year
- Types of documents being recorded are changing
  - Decrease in total number of conveyances
  - Increase in borrowing money (i.e. Deeds of Trusts, Agreements, Contracts)
  - Increase in modification of existing loans
  - Starting to see foreclosures

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Vital Records



- We are processing over 16,000 vital records requests annually (certified copies of birth, death, and marriage licenses

Total vital records processed has increased 14% over last fiscal year

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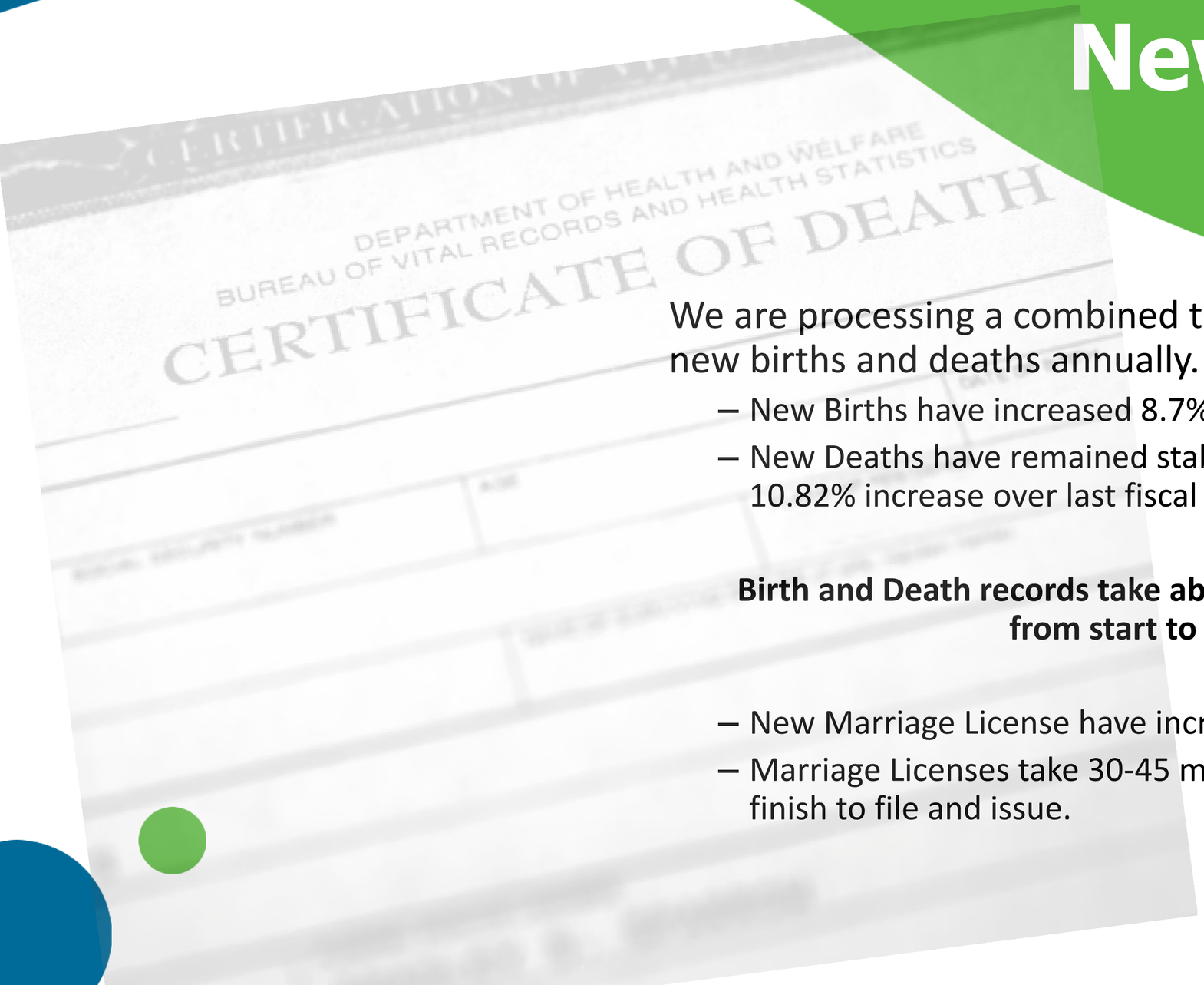
Vital Records

- Vital Record Amendments have increased almost 53% over last fiscal year
  - Variables such as NC Real ID requirements, anti- identity theft security measures, increases in birth rates, especially immigration population birth rates, affect the volume of Amendments.
  - The complexity of the amendment dictates the amount of time it takes to process
- On average it takes up to an hour to complete the paperwork and up to 8-12 months of monitoring the progress of the status before being able to complete the amendment at the local level.



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New Vital Records



We are processing a combined total of 2200-2300 (183-192/month) new births and deaths annually.

- New Births have increased 8.7%
- New Deaths have remained stable over last 5 fiscal years, but showed a 10.82% increase over last fiscal year

Birth and Death records take about 10-15 minutes on average per record from start to finish to file and issue.

- New Marriage License have increased almost 26% over last year.
- Marriage Licenses take 30-45 minutes on average per license from start to finish to file and issue.

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Artificial Intelligence

- We are piloting Artificial Intelligence through our Land Records Management Software Vendor for both vital and land Records recording:
  - We launched “Courtney” on March 31, 2025
  - Purpose is to assist our office with indexing both vital and land records by pre-indexing both vital and land records upon recording
  - It does not replace any of the 5 steps of our quality assurance process, but it is supposed to help make it faster, especially if we are short staffed
  - Courtney is normally very efficient and accurate with indexing vital records. Vital record recordings are a huge, important part of our daily duties and with Courtney’s assistance, it frees us up to work on our other daily tasks.
  - She isn’t always accurate in indexing real estate.
    - Land records indexing is not always black and white.
    - She indexes incorrect names or does not indicate the capacity the person/entity is in (trustee, estate..etc..)
    - Names are left out or are put in incorrectly, at times she adds names that are no where listed in our documents.
    - These errors slow down our indexing process, where Courtney has been designed to do just the opposite.
  - We know that Courtney is in her early stages and will only get better as she learns and grows. We look forward to seeing what the future holds for her in our office.



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Phone Networking Reporting

- We are providing more and more technical assistance to the public concerning vital and land records:
  - We started tracking our phone calls into the office and the amount of time we spend on those calls in February 2025.
  - On average, we receive almost 250 calls per month:
    - Deputy Register of Deeds spend on average at least 20 minutes per call with our customers.
    - Assistant Register of Deeds spend on average 1 hour 20 minutes per call with our customers due to the more complex nature of those calls.
    - This report **does not** take into account any outgoing calls we make to the public.

This may not seem like a lot, but once you factor in the time spend at the counter and the time spent processing documents, I think you can "see" how busy we are.

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Passport Acceptance Facility



We became a Passport Acceptance Facility in February 2023:

- Passports have rapidly increased from FY 2022-2023
- We have an increase of 60.32% in processed application over FY 23-24 in FY 24-25.
- The same is true for Passport Photos. We had a 60.22% increase over FY 23-24 in FY 24-25.

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Passport Inspection



We only had 1.1% “In Real Life” in errors

- On 05-27-2025 we had our annual passport inspection:
- Inspector reviewed all our procedures to ensure proper protocol is being followed for the processing of passport applications.
- Statistics from the US Department of State read as follows:
  - Year 2023 - 293 passports successfully processed
  - Year 2024 - 625 passports successfully processed
  - Year 2025 - 1002 passports successfully processed

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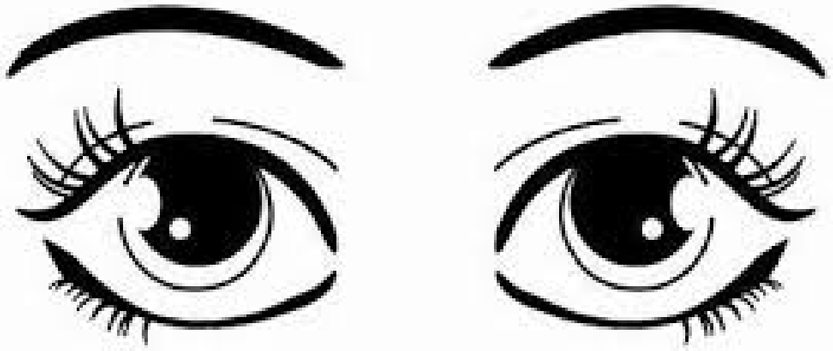
Document Fraud

It is the deliberate act of falsifying information on transactions such as deeds, mortgages, or appraisals for personal gain or to damage another individual

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Would You Know It If You Saw It?

There are numerous types and scenarios of deed fraud and they are only limited by the creativity, abilities, and tactics of the fraudsters



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Types of Fraud

Foreclosure Rescue

- Prey on those already behind on their mortgage payment(s) and proceedings have started for foreclosure
- Enacts a “temporary” title transfer to the rescue company
- Supposed to lease back the property to the original owners, but instead they sell it out from under them

Forging Homeowner’s Name on a Quit Claim Deed or another Deed to a home.

- The deed is acknowledged and signed by a notary public (can be legitimate based on false identification or illegitimate).
- It is then recorded, which transfers the property to the scammer without the knowledge of the true homeowner.
- Often, they will take out a mortgage loan on the home and use the proceeds for their own use.
- No payments are made, and the home eventually gets foreclosed on.

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Types of Fraud

Deed is signed under a power of attorney and recorded.

- The person with the alleged power of attorney will sign a deed on behalf of the grantor.
- The homeowner never actually signed a power of attorney giving authorization to act on their behalf and is not aware of the execution of a new deed.

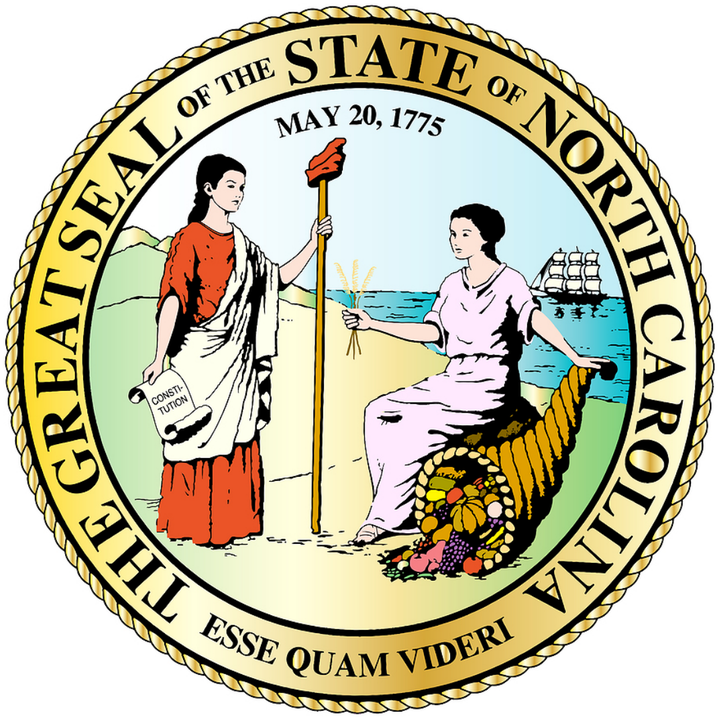
A forged document is filed which steals a security interest from the true owner of the property.

- Additional documents are filed evidencing a fake foreclosure, then a fake foreclosure sale, and finally a fake purchase by a fake buyer.
- The fake buyer ends up appearing to have title by virtue of the foreclosure sale.

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Legislation

Several Bills have been introduced in the House and the Senate this session to increase penalties for recording fraudulent documents, to make it easier to navigate the court system for a court order, and to make it faster to remove a fraudulent document from our permanent records.



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Register of Deeds Office

- Per General Statutes, the Register of Deeds office is not responsible for verifying the validity, authenticity or legitimacy of the document that is recorded:
  - The Register of Deeds office is not responsible for detecting a fraudulent document, as we do not look beyond the document itself
  - We look at the recording requirements only and if they meet those requirements, we record it
  - We cannot refuse to record any document presented unless it does not meet recording standards
  - We have a Fraud Notification Alert System in place for quick response

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Fraud Notification System



- All you need is an active email!
- Sign up from home online or here in our office
- Get notified anytime that a document is recorded in our office with your name on it

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Local Collaboration

We partner with & assist numerous offices:

- **Tax Office**
  - Tax Certification
  - Attorney Statement Report
- **Community Development**
  - Plat Reviews
- **Social Services**
  - Vital Records
  - Child Death Report
- **Board of Election**
  - Death Certificates for Voter Registration
- **Mapping**
  - WEB GIS
- **Sheriff's Department**
  - Death Certificate for Civil Department
- **County Veteran's Office**
  - Military Discharges
- **Financial Institutions**
  - Safe Deposit Box Inventories

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State Collaboration

- **Clerk of Court**
  - Civil Division
    - Affidavits of Parentage
    - Legal Name Changes
  - Wills & Estates
    - Letters of Testamentary
    - Wills/Probate
  - Criminal Division
    - Death Records for Court Dockets
- **Probation**
  - Death Certificates for Parolees
- **NC Secretary of State**
  - Notary Commissions
  - Recording Standards
- **NC Office of Vital Records**
  - Birth & Death Amendments
  - NCDAVE
  - Verifications
- **NC Veteran Affairs**
  - Military Discharges

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Challenges

- We are running out of office space for staff, equipment, and records
- The work volume allows us to only do basic day-to-day operations



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Challenges

- We continue to have issues with obtaining new death certificates in the prescribed time frame:
    - Medical Examiners and Medical Providers
    - Slows our ability to issue death certificates to public

- Communication with NC Vital Records
    - Affects our ability to issue Out-of-County Births, process amendments, obtain records and more in a timely manner

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THANK YOU

Questions?

