

Deeds can be filed by computer

CANTON - You've chosen your home. You've settled on the price. You're ready for the real-estate agent to give you the keys. You just have to wait for the county to accept the property deed transfer.

Until recently, that meant at least a day's worth of work for title office companies.

"We'd have to drive the recording to downtown," said Danielle Herzog of First American Title, whose office is in Belden Village. "We would have to wait in line at the (Stark County auditor's) map office, wait in line at the auditor's (transfer) office and then go to the recorder's office."

First American Title handles about 45 transactions a month, she said.

The county became a "rusty cog in the machine," said Stark County Recorder Rick Campbell. "Things would get bogged down here."

But a new electronic filing program implemented by Campbell and Stark County Auditor Kim Perez could reduce the amount of time to transfer deeds to just hours.

"That gets the keys into the home buyer's hands a lot quicker," Campbell said.

The electronic filing system — the first of its kind in the state — gives Perez's office the ability to accept property transfer records and deeds filed electronically.

Campbell's office already has been using an electronic recording program to accept documents that didn't have to be reviewed by the auditor's staff for tax purposes. The offices have been testing the new electronic filing program for the last three months.

MAJOR SAVINGS

"This is groundbreaking," Campbell said. "It's going to mean a cost savings and time savings for everyone."

No longer do mortgages, deeds, easements and other real-estate documents have to be submitted in person or sent through the mail. Banks, real-estate attorneys and title-search companies can scan and send that paperwork to the county auditor and the county recorder from their own desks using software supplied by the county recorder.

"It used to take three days to two weeks (when someone sent a document through the mail)," said Campbell, who estimated the office receives an average of 50 pieces of mail a day.

County employees also can return incomplete documents to the real-estate companies within minutes using the program. They no longer have use a typewriter to fill in information or a calculator to compute fees, Perez said.

"Instead of getting up to look for information, it will be on the computer. Everything will be at



STARK COUNTY RECORDER
RICK CAMPBELL

our fingertips,” Perez said. “It will improve our efficiency.”

About 20 companies, including First American Title, are using the system. The recorder’s office is receiving about 30 documents a day electronically, Campbell said.

Herzog said the electronic filing system has helped the title company “free our abstractor up ... (so he) can turn around the deeds faster.”

She said the company is able to notify real-estate agents that the deeds have been recorded faster than before.

STAFF HELPS USERS

Users who want to do electronic filing or recording must set up an escrow account with the recorder’s office to pay fees due to the recorder and auditor. The recorder said his staff will install necessary software on users’ computers and train them.

Perez said the electronic filing helps his office “in efficiency, eliminating paperwork and duplication” and will save the county when he’s able to reduce his staff by not replacing employees who leave. Campbell said he’s been able to freeze his staffing levels over the past five years due to the new technology.

Campbell also said the documents are stored electronically, saving the county paper and toner costs.

But the new system won’t lower the cost of filing fees, which are set by state law. Document Technology System of Cuyahoga Falls, which wrote and maintains the county’s filing and recording systems, is paid \$2.80 for each document filed, which is covered by recorder’s fees, not tax dollars. The county recently renewed its contract with the company for another five years.

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