

# FY 2023 ARCHIVE PLAN

## **Introduction**

Currently, this office is the custodian of records dating back to the mid 1800's. We are transferring records that were initially only on paper, and those on microfilm, into a digital format and into one program that can be easily retrieved for county and public use. Our ultimate goal is for the District Clerk, Judges and Attorneys to use a more efficient and "paper-on-demand" system. With our current and rising workload, the instilment of a paper-on-demand system with efficient, easy retrieval will be pivotal to the success of the program. The Supreme Court mandated that all counties in Texas (Navarro County by January 1, 2016 and criminal by January 1, 2019) accept electronic filings starting January 1, 2014.

## **Designation of Court Documents subject to the plan:**

All civil and criminal case files, pending, final or disposed. Any other document filed in this office that is subject to the District Clerk's retention schedule.

## **The Process**

To accomplish the disposition of records dating back 160+ years, different methods will be considered.

The archiving of the continuity of records filed daily is done through our software program. Items are scanned to the case management system as they come in and are categorically linked to case numbers and names as an index. Most are captured automatically through e-file. Older records that are only on paper are not secondarily stored anywhere else. If they are damaged, lost or destroyed; they are gone.

Our current process digitizes documents, but leaves us with the task of delegating different retention dates of records to see what can be destroyed. The Texas statutes are very complex on the subjects of what documents can be destroyed and when those said documents can be destroyed.

With my office, the Judges, the D.A. and the County Clerk with the same software solution, I see no reason why this initiative would not lead to a more efficient process and help with the reduction of paper and efficiency in court.

### **The Goal**

I, as Clerk of the 13<sup>th</sup> Judicial District, hope to reproduce and archive all documents, regardless of type, as efficiently as possible. I want to achieve, produce and maintain a navigable and organized records vault. The District Clerk's office is also planning the process of restoring historical hand-written records, suspending their deterioration and improving public access.

To complete our efforts toward electronic storage of all case files, we envision maintaining closed cases on our shelves for a short period of time and using computers to access information instantly. This would ultimately lead to a paperless process.

With less cost to the county taxpayers long-term, we will continue this ongoing and efficient process by using the archive and technology fee, coupled with assets allocated to records management by the Navarro County Commissioner's Court, to cover the cost of scanning paper source documents. In addition to preserving the documents, the images will be added to our case management system. This will improve our customer service relations and allow for ease of access to Public Information. Additionally, significant space savings will be realized once paper documents are destroyed.

A portion of the closed cases have been scanned and preserved. Older tri-fold cases (1850's and up civil and tax) are a little more hands on. Our retention schedule requires us to keep everything prior to 1951. The approximate cost of this program **currently** is \$1.25 per document. If the documents are placed in a flat, acid free folder, indexed or styled with the cause number(s) and name(s), it is estimated at \$.45 per document. This includes restoration, a digital and the hard copy sent back to me in the acid free folder in plastic tote boxes, and they keep a secured microfilmed copy on record at the company headquarters. It costs roughly \$1000.00 to fully restore a hand-written, leather bound minute or index book. Several of these as well as an original indictment from infamous outlaw John Wesley Hardin were recently restored. With a competitive market and a fiscally

conservative plan, there is no way to know an exact figure that it would take to get our records entirely in order. With the courthouse restoration complete, I plan to use the funds collected from filing fees provided under these statutes, to digitize and consolidate as many permanent records as possible. The renewal of the state mandated fees are imperative to the integrity and accuracy of our archival program.

**Possible Expenditures, including but not limited to:**

Computer hardware, including any and all peripherals necessary,  
Computer software,  
Service provider and other outsourcing services,  
Relevant staff salary  
Data storage supplies  
Travel expenses to and from a service provider to deliver and pickup case documents, if necessary.  
Offsite storage unit costs  
Document restoration

**\*UPDATE:**

We have already received our electronic copy of the data from Kofile and we hope it will be integrated into our CMS. They will be working on the remainder (as funds allow) and will be returned to me (electronic and hard copies) upon request. Those and other historical records are being stored at Ideal Storage. The above data pertains to civil cases, from 1855 – 1900. The next project will focus on the criminal cases from the same period. Any and all other funds appropriated will be used for the purpose of electronic indexing, integration and document restoration. New shelving is required in the felony division and will be purchased this year.

HB 2182 effective September 1, 2015 allows for the District Clerk to accept the same fees for County Court at Law cases as District court cases, therefore assessing the District Court Archive and Technology fee to County Court at Law cases. There is now one fee schedule for my office rather than two. (one for each court). The fee will remain at \$10.00

SB 41 effective January 1, 2021 will once again realign our fee schedules, but we anticipate the records management fee to remain the same. Archive fee will not be charged on new cases. The fund will be spent according to prior statutes.