



PROTHONOTARY OF BERKS COUNTY 2018 ACCOMPLISHMENTS

The year 2018 was a very productive and successful year for the Berks County Prothonotary's Office.

The first year of my term of office began with the appointment of **Chief Deputy Prothonotary Ann L.R. Fitzgerald** and **Office Manager Donna J. O'Donnell**. Ann has worked in the Prothonotary's Office for over twenty years and Donna was previously the account clerk for the office for five years. Both Ann and Donna hit the ground running in implementing the vision I laid out for the office when I was elected.

My vision for the Prothonotary Office is that it is an office that is:

- *Efficient and effective*
- *Customer-friendly and technologically savvy*
- *Always mindful that the Berks County taxpayers' money and the money we receive in user fees should always be spent wisely.*

Here are highlights of what has been accomplished in the Prothonotary Office in 2018:

1. IMAGING OF IMPORTANT GENEALOGICAL AND HISTORICAL RECORDS

As Prothonotary, one of my primary responsibilities is ensuring the safe and proper keeping of the office's records which go back to 1752. Right after I was sworn in, I made the decision to have digitally imaged the following very important and historically significant records:

- **Naturalization Records** – These are our most frequently requested and researched records, especially by genealogists. In 2018, a total of **28,667** pages of naturalization records were imaged. This project continues.
- **Historical Prothonotary Records** – These are our oldest and most vulnerable records. They are also very historically significant. In 2018, a total of **113,177** pages of historical records were imaged. This project continues.

2. STAFF REDUCTION THROUGH ATTRITION SAVING BERKS TAXPAYERS MONEY

By creating efficiencies and cross-training our staff, **3 ½ Prothonotary staff positions were eliminated through attrition in 2018**. This decision created a savings of **\$57,658** for 2018 and will create a savings of **\$179,265** for 2019. A total savings to Berks County taxpayers of **\$615,979** will be the result of these staff eliminations over the course of my term of office.

3. BEGINNING JANUARY 1, 2019 THE PROTHONOTARY'S OFFICE IS PAPERLESS

We worked hard behind the scenes in 2018 to prepare the office to go paperless beginning 2019. Now, documents not e-filed and filed in paper form in our office are **immediately scanned** and given back to the filer. We no longer create paper files or keep paper filings in the office. Our new filings, other than mental health filings which are governed by state statutes, are completely digital and will be so from now on.

4. REMODELING OF THE PROTHONOTARY OFFICE

The entire hallway of the second floor of the Courthouse was repainted as were certain areas of the Prothonotary Office. The new paint has brought a bright, fresh look to the office. More painting will happen in 2019 as well as a major remodel of different sections of the office to make the office more customer friendly. The remodel will also make our staff areas more handicapped accessible as well as allow more room for Prothonotary staff to more efficiently perform their duties. New and better signage is also planned to make it easier for our customers to navigate our office and the second floor of the Courthouse.

5. ENHANCED SOCIAL MEDIA PRESENCE

I began a twitter account for the Prothonotary Office in 2018. This is a good way to get information out to our customers and to the citizens.

2018 OFFICE FILING STATISTICS

Following are counts of some of the higher profile filings our office processed in 2018:

Federal Tax Liens	-	362
State Tax Liens	-	1,176
State Unemployment Compensation Liens	-	344
Municipality Claims & Liens	-	6,672
New Divorce Complaints	-	1,023
New Custody Complaints	-	547
New Protection From Abuse Filings	-	1,528
New Civil Filings	-	3,173

AS A PASSPORT AGENT FOR THE U.S. DEPARTMENT OF STATE, WE ALSO PROCESSED 952 NEW PASSPORT APPLICATIONS IN 2018.