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*Press Release*

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***Bergen County Clerk: A YEAR OF WORKING THROUGH THE PANDEMIC***

**It has been nearly a year since the pandemic upended our lives. Closures, restrictions infection rates, masks...Throughout it all, Bergen County Clerk John S. Hogan and his dedicated, determined staff have worked through the challenges of Covid 19 virus and successfully continued to keep the office functioning, yielding impressive results.**

**With pre-pandemic cross training and contingency plans in place, Clerk Hogan worked with the county administration to secure the necessary technology needed to allow some employees to work from home. This both provided for safety of employees and limited exposure.**

**As Bergen County's real estate market began to boom, Clerk Hogan encouraged land record submitters to do so through E-RECORDING, the secure electronic filing of deeds, mortgages, and other land transactions that the clerk successfully initiated in 2014.**

**Submissions from E-RECORDING increased from 56,057 (46.3%) in 2019 to 65,140 (53.7%) in 2020. It reduced the exposure of the Clerk's staff from the physical handling of documents. However, with preventative measures in place, another 42,883 documents were still processed manually.**

**The closing of the Bergen County Administrative Building presented another challenge—title searchers were prohibited from entering the building. Clerk Hogan quickly sought out and received permission from the Administration to permit title searchers in the building on a rotational, limited basis after**

**preventative measures were established. At one point, the Bergen County Clerk's Office was the only one in the state that permitted titled searchers to continue to conduct business.**

**Bergen County's real estate market continued to flourish, resulting in the processing of 136,052 land record documents processed by the Clerk's Registry Division in 2020—a 5 year high!**

**But, the pandemic challenges didn't end there. The Bergen County Clerk's Elections Division, for the first time ever, was tasked with the role of delivering an all VOTE-BY-MAIL election. This included the design, production and mailing of the ballots to 632,340 active registered voters in Bergen County. An additional 19,344 replacement ballots were re-issued to voters for a variety of reasons, including errors, misplaced and damaged ballots.**

**Since the building was closed to the public, the replacement ballot process was handled just outside the entrance doors. The County Clerk's staff also processed 3152 notary public renewals and issued 541 Business Trade names in the same manner in 2020.**

**The election agencies conducted numerous zoom and media interviews and County Clerk Hogan even rolled out a new, modern elections results system.**

**Working with his colleagues, the Superintendent of Elections and the Board of Elections, and the Administration, Clerk Hogan and his colleagues secured a \$2.7 million grant from a nationally recognized non-profit and an additional state grant to fully fund the added election costs and purchase new technology.**

**Despite the challenges, the 2020 election was successfully delivered, resulting in a 75.1% turnout—503,116 Bergen County voters cast their ballots! This turnout exceeded the last two presidential elections (70.4% in 2012 & 72.5% in 2016). The number of votes cast (503,116) actually exceeded those cast in 2008 (418,459).**

**County Clerk Hogan proudly reported that his office managed to navigate through the obstacles created by the pandemic and closed the year with highly successful revenue results. In 2020, the Office of the Bergen County Clerk brought in revenue totaling \$100,293,803--\$17,398,653 for the county and \$82,895,150 for the state!**

**Clerk Hogan added, “My office, like others, has been greatly challenged during this pandemic. Early on, one part time employee, a transplant recipient, succumbed to the virus. Another lost her husband and two others lost their fathers—one in a VA Hospital. In all, 15 % of the staff was infected by the virus. We all got through the year with compassion and caring and relying on each other to get through the challenging days. Throughout it all, we got the job done for the people of Bergen County.”**

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