



ANNUAL STATE OF THE COURT REPORT
CIRCUIT COURT FOR QUEEN ANNE'S COUNTY
JULY 1, 2023 – JUNE 30, 2024

Circuit Court for Queen Anne's County
200 North Commerce Street
Centreville, Maryland 21617
410-658-6411
Honorable Lynn Knight, Administrative Judge
Katherine Hager, Clerk of Court
Kara Pollak, Court Administrator

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I. Executive Summary:

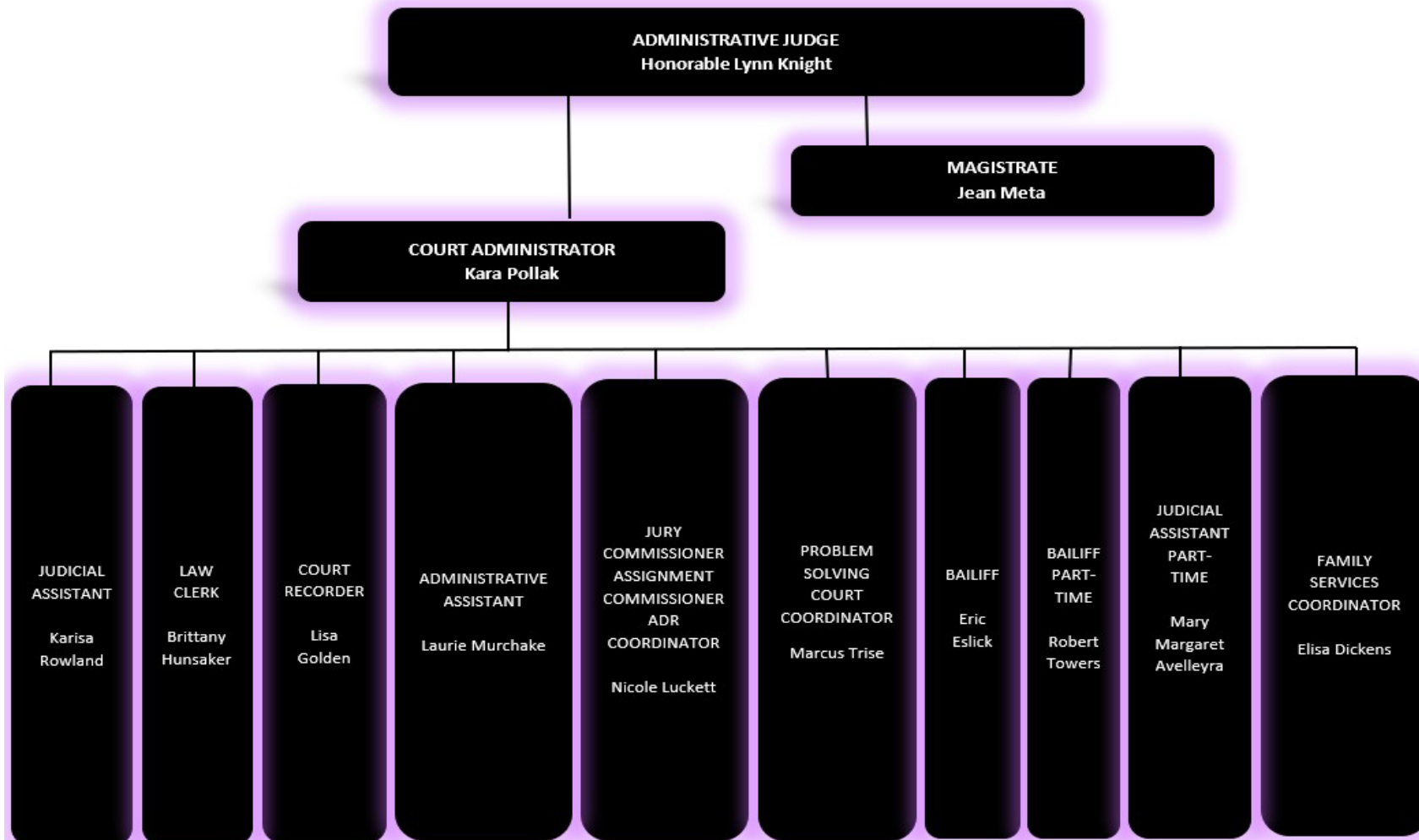
The Circuit Court for Queen Anne’s County, located in the county seat of Centreville, is a trial court of general jurisdiction that has one full-time judge and one magistrate. In addition, the court uses Senior Judges that are subject to recall to assist with the trial docket. It is part of the Second Judicial Circuit to include Caroline, Cecil, Kent, and Talbot counties.

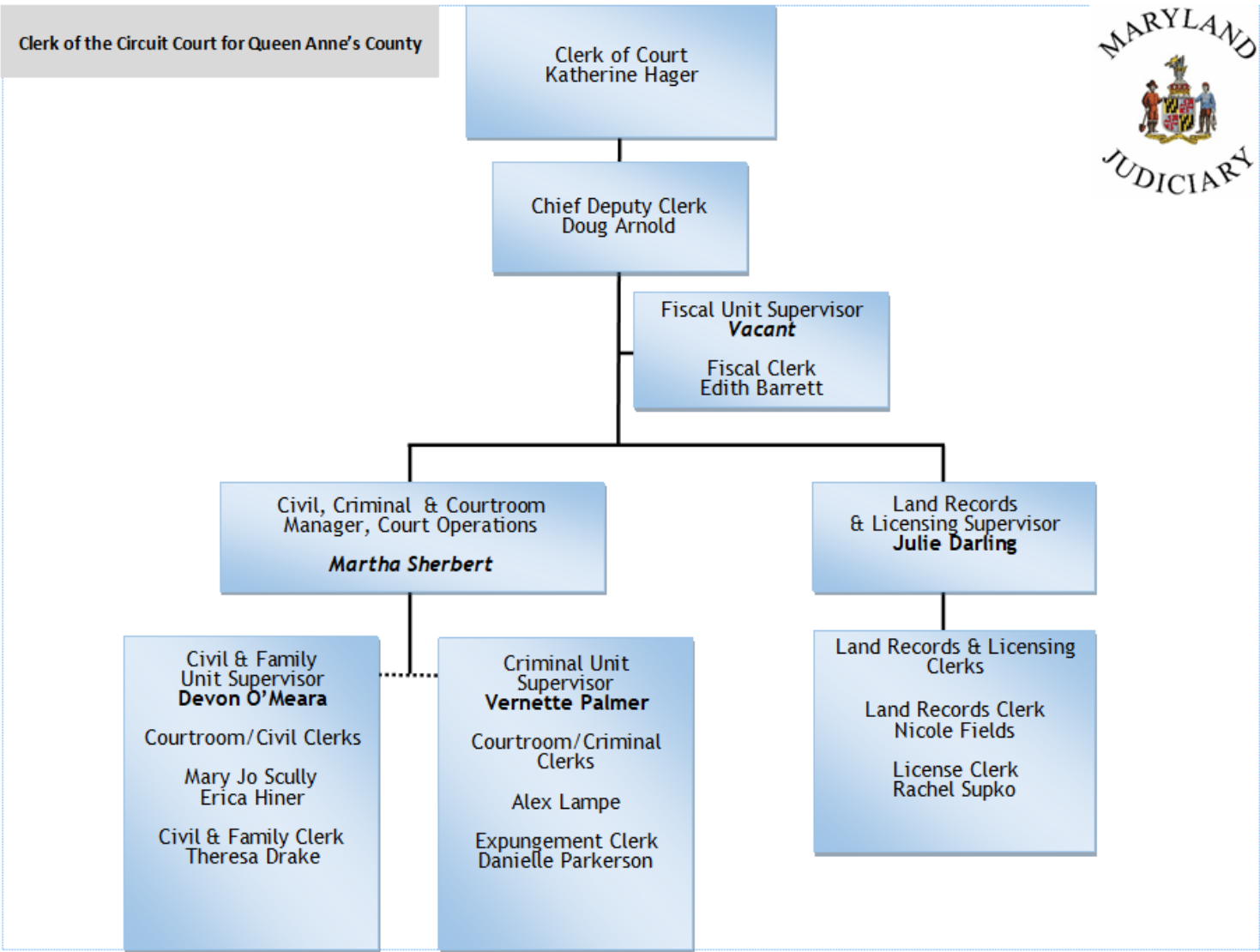


“Unity is strength...when there is teamwork and collaboration, wonderful things can be achieved.” – Mattie Stepanek

II. Organizational Structure of the Court:

CIRCUIT COURT FOR QUEEN ANNE'S COUNTY





III. Annual Goals and Objectives:

- Acknowledging that all members of the Circuit Court for Queen Anne's County employees, including the Clerk of Court Offices and Sheriff's deputies feel that they make a difference to the overall success of our organization.
- Monitor case time standards to ensure all cases are disposed of timely.
- Maintain open communications with other agencies to promote good business practices.
- Maintain a high level of customer satisfaction and access to justice.
- Provide citizens and staff members with a safe and secure environment.
- Always providing fair, efficient, and effective justice to all.

IV. Projects and Initiatives:

- **Circuit Court for Queen Anne's County Day**

On April 24, 2024, in correlation with Administrative Professional's Day, the Circuit Court for Queen Anne's County celebrated our second annual Circuit Court for Queen Anne's County Day. The entire building, including the Administration, Clerk's Office, and Sheriff's Deputies celebrated together to build overall moral and to remember the importance of teamwork and supporting our fellow offices.

V. Operations:

- *Upcoming:* **Problem-Solving Court Graduation**

We are excited to prepare for our first Problem Solving Court (PSC) Graduation of three participants. Queen Anne's County PSC court hearings began in December of 2022, with two participants. Over the course of 2023, the program grew to eight participants, and at the end of the 2024 fiscal year, finished with eleven participants. The Court, along with many members of our local community, highly support this program, and help to encourage assistance in continued treatment to qualified members of our community. Since this program has shown such growth, together with the County, we will be adding a Case Manager position that will offer assistance and support to our Problem-Solving Court Coordinator.

- **The RecordXchange**

Our Courthouse has partnered with The RecordXchange (TRX) to assist in the production of both transcripts and audio download requests. Customers are now able to visit our website, place orders and make payments directly on-line. TRX offers excellent communication, along with the flexibility in which customers can choose product turnaround times at various costs.

- **Yondr Buyout**

In June of 2023, the Circuit Court for Queen Anne's County incorporated the policy of Yondr pouches, which holds and locks cell phones of visitors attending court proceedings. Our Court was having a problem with inappropriate cell phone usage and the Yondr pouches have helped this issue tremendously. The onset of the Yondr program, was a contracted term program, with the option of renewal once the term expired. However, Yonder received enormous feedback from their court partners, who preferred to purchase their products outright, which is what we decided to do in June of 2024.

- **Part-time Magistrate Judicial Assistant**

Working together with Queen Anne's County, our Court has added a Part-time Judicial Assistant to assist the Magistrate with her busy docket. Over the past few years, Family Law, Juvenile and Children in Need of Assistance (CINA) cases have become more and more complex requiring multiple hearings, written Orders, and coordination with attorneys and litigants on a myriad of issues.

- **Regional Trust Clerk**

The Circuit Court for Queen Anne's County was selected to lead a pilot program that would involve a Regional Trust Clerk for the Maryland Judicial Second Circuit (excluding Cecil County). Rather than each county having their own trust clerk, the idea of a Regional Trust Clerk is cost effective for the members of the regions, it also offers uniformity and consistency of all cases moving through the court system.

- **Summer Interns**

We were lucky to welcome two summer interns who showed initiative and dedication to our Court. Offering internships for students allows them to build their business portfolio, enhance partnering relationships and overall preparation for what they can expect in the working world.

- **Court Recorder**

Our Courthouse added a new Court Recorder position. This position works collectively with the courts recording system to tag key parts of a court proceeding. This tagging makes it easier to identify when cases begin, end, and other important information relating to the proceeding. The Court Recorder

provides information to The RecordXchange company who then prepares requested transcripts and/or audio downloads for customers.

VI. Facilities:

- *Upcoming:* **Historic Courthouse Renovation**



Circuit Court for Queen Anne's County Historic Courthouse

Renovations of the Historic Courthouse are due to begin in mid to late 2025, which will include upgrading the first floor, which will become the Orphans Court and Register of Wills Offices. The second-floor main courtroom will also be updated and will provide as a back-up to the existing Circuit Courthouse. The basement will consist of various offices, with hopes to incorporate additional space to utilize when needed.

- *Upcoming:* **Canopy Design**

Working with the County, we will be adding an outdoor canopy for our rear secured entrance. The canopy design plans to enhance the building, while offering added security and protection from weather elements.

- **Holding Cell Modification**

The Courthouse holding cell modification is complete. This modification included removing one of our private conference room concrete walls which is adjacent to a section of our holding cells and adding a bench. This project provides a safe private conference area for incarcerated persons to communicate with counsel while maintaining the safety of the courthouse.

VII. Legislative:

- **Chief Justice Fader Visit**

On December 6, 2023, our courthouse was excited to have a visit from the Hon. Chief Justice Fader and Justice Booth.



Pictured: Chief Justice Fader, Justice Booth, Hon. Lynn Knight, Clerk of Court, Katherine Hager, and members of the Clerk's Office staff.

VIII. External Relationships:

- Annual Conflict Resolution Day Bookmark Art Contest

On May 8, 2024, the Courthouse hosted a tour for the Queen Anne's County students that were winners of the 18th Annual Conflict Resolution Day bookmark art contest. I am proud to share that this year, Queen Anne's County had nine winning students from five different schools. The students, their parents, and teachers were treated to a behind-the-scenes look at courthouse operations, including question and answer session with Hon. Lynn Knight, Magistrate Meta, Clerk of the Court, Katherine Hager, courthouse staff, and Security.



Pictured are: Honorable Lynn Knight, Magistrate Jean Meta, Clerk of Court Katherine Hager, and our bookmark winners.

- **Haven Ministries Donation**

In December of 2023, our Court extended support to our local community through the Haven Ministries Donation program. This program provides shelter, clothing, food and support to families in need. It is important to get involved and offer support, as it makes a difference to those who have experienced difficult times and the ability to give back to the local community.



Haven Ministries Donation

- **Adopt A Family**

The Circuit Court for Queen Anne’s County Court Administration, along with the help of the Department of Social Services, participated in the adopt a family for the Holidays program. This heartwarming program provides support and hope to assist families in need during the Holiday season.



Adopt a family donation.

- **Recognition of Family Law Clinic and Best Interest Attorneys**

Our self-help center is open daily, with both in-person and virtual times offering legal access to individuals of the public by local qualified attorneys who provide limited representation to those who cannot afford legal counsel. This year, our

Court recognized the hard work and effort that our Family Law Clinic and Best Interest attorneys provide by giving gift baskets as a thank you.

- *Upcoming:* **Queen Anne's County to host Shore Legal Access Annual Meeting**

Our court is excited to announce that we will be hosting the upcoming Shore Legal Access annual meeting. Shore Legal Access is important to our community as it connects low-income families with civil legal help and attorneys who offer assistance at little or no cost.

IX. Other Concerns:

- No further information to report.