



**ANNUAL STATE OF THE COURT REPORT**  
**CIRCUIT COURT FOR QUEEN ANNE'S COUNTY**  
**JULY 1, 2024 – JUNE 30, 2025**

Circuit Court for Queen Anne's County  
200 North Commerce Street  
Centreville, Maryland 21617  
410-758-0216  
Honorable Lynn Knight, Administrative Judge  
Katherine Hager, Clerk of Court  
Kara Pollak, Court Administrator

# **TABLE OF CONTENTS**

- I. Executive Summary
- II. Organizational Structure of the Court
- III. Annual Goals and Objectives
- IV. Projects and Initiatives
- V. Operations
- VI. Facilities
- VII. Legislative
- VIII. External Relationships
- IX. Other Concerns

## **I. Executive Summary:**

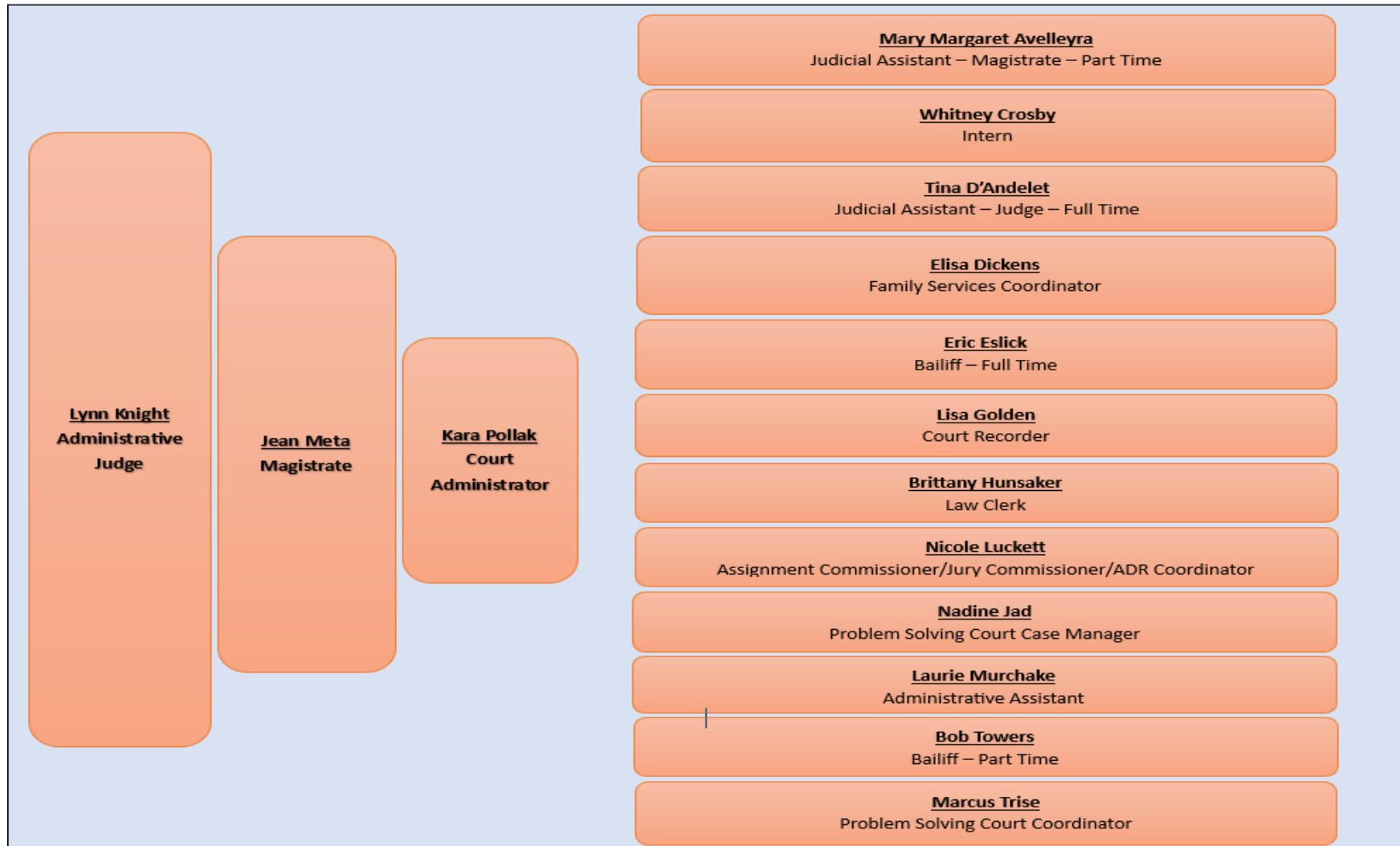
The Circuit Court for Queen Anne's County, located in the county seat of Centreville, is a trial court of general jurisdiction that has one full-time judge and one magistrate. In addition, the court uses Senior Judges that are subject to recall to assist with the trial docket. It is part of the Second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



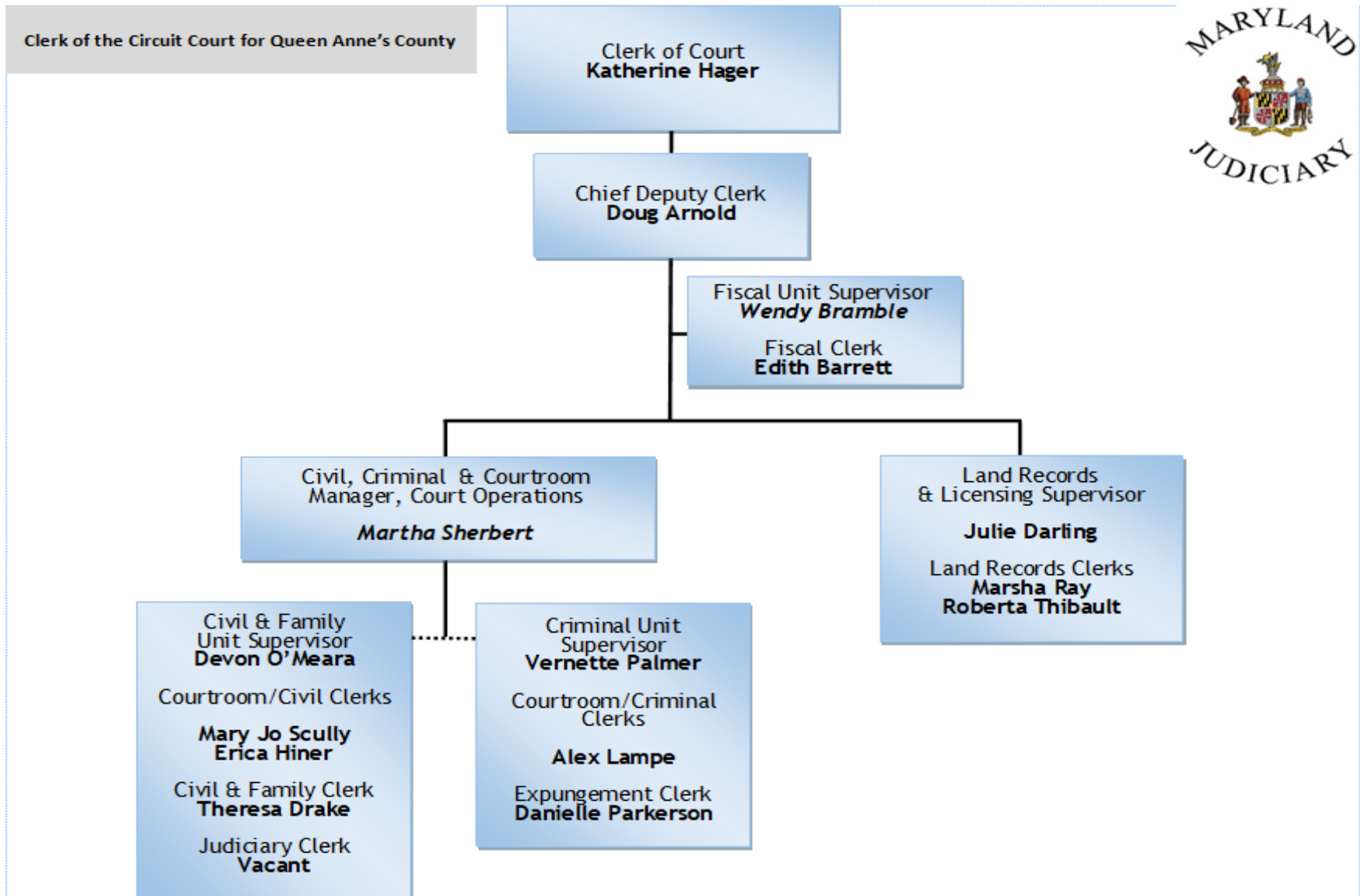
**“Every great dream begins with a dreamer. Always remember, you have within you the strength, the patience, and the passion to reach for the stars, to change the world” – Harriet Tubman**

## II. Organizational Structure of the Court:

### Circuit Court for Queen Anne's County Administration



## Circuit Court for Queen Anne's County Clerk of Court



### **III. Annual Goals and Objectives:**

- Acknowledging that all members of the Circuit Court for Queen Anne's County employees, including the Clerk of the Court Offices and Sheriff's deputies feel that they make a difference to the overall success of the 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 for all.

## **IV. Projects and Initiatives:**

### **o Circuit Court for Queen Anne's County Day**

On April 30, 2025, in correlation with Administrative Professional's Day, the Circuit Court for Queen Anne's County celebrated our third 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 and acknowledge the importance of teamwork and supporting our fellow offices.

### **o Property Alert Notification System**

One of the project initiatives of the Clerk of the Circuit Court for Queen Anne's County is to implement a **Property Alert Notification System** that would notify property owners whenever a document is recorded in the land records that may affect their property. This proactive initiative aims to protect one of the most valuable assets citizens own—their homes and real estate.

In alignment with the **Maryland Judiciary Strategic Plan**, the **Property Alert Notification System project supports** key strategic goals, including:

- **Access to Justice** – by empowering property owners with tools to monitor and protect their legal interests
- **Public Trust and Confidence** – by increasing transparency and fraud prevention in public records
- **Technology and Innovation** – by leveraging digital systems to proactively serve the public

Currently, all land record documents for Queen Anne's County and other counties in the State are maintained and made publicly accessible through MDLANDREC.net, an online platform developed in partnership with the Maryland State Archives. Upon recording, land record documents are electronically transmitted to the State Archives and published to MDLANDREC.net for public access.

With the rise of property fraud and increasing public concern, the Clerks of the Circuit Court across Maryland have begun working towards establishing a statewide, no-cost property alert system. This system would serve as an early warning tool to notify property owners who are registered to receive notice when a transaction involving their property is recorded, helping property owners monitor changes to their property records and take swift action if necessary.

This initiative not only assists in safeguarding one of the most valuable assets citizens own, their property, but it also reinforces the Judiciary's commitment to innovative, citizen-centered service. Several other states currently offer similar services to residents at no cost, and Maryland's Clerks of the Circuit Court are eager to bring this valuable tool to our communities. By registering for alerts through the Clerk's Office, citizens can gain peace of mind knowing they will receive timely alerts if any action is taken that affect their property records.

- o **Self-Help Center Information Enhancement**

In support of the Maryland Judiciary Strategic Plan and Initiative, our Court is offering new ways to enhance our services to the public and to maximize the number of individuals who require attorney assistance regarding family law matters.

Currently, the Self-Help Center in Queen Anne's County Circuit Court is open daily and offers both in-person and virtual services in which local qualified attorneys provide limited representation to those who cannot afford counsel.

- Tasks:
  - Meet with and provide informational flyers to local community resources agencies, along with updating the family services website.
  - Provide better access for attorneys to assist in emergent situations and/or to incarcerated litigants.



- Status Update:
  - Designed informational standard and mini rack cards to be distributed to local community agencies such as the Office of Child Support Enforcement, Board of Education and the Department of Social Services.
  - Mini rack cards will be distributed to local law enforcement so they will have a resource readily available to provide on calls relating to family law, domestic violence and/or emergency evaluations.

## V. Operations:

### o Problem Solving Court Progress & Graduations



Pictured: Left to right: Harley Inzer, Taylor Stacey, Hon. Lynn Knight, Vanessa Clough, Marcus Trise – PSC Coordinator

The Circuit Court for Queen Anne's County celebrated its first Problem-Solving Court (PSC) graduation on September 3, 2024, with 3 participants successfully graduating (pictured above). In attendance were over 60 people, including several County Commissioners, State's Attorney Lance Richardson, along with members of the State's Attorney's Office, Sheriff Gary Hofmann, along with members of the Sheriff Office, Warden Lamonte Cooke of the Queen Anne's County Detention Center, several Senior Judges, Court Staff, and many families and friends of the graduates.

After seeing the dedication and personal successes of the participants, the Queen Anne's County Commissioners decided to fund a full-time contractual case manager to assist in the growth and success of the program. In addition, the Administrative Office of the Courts selected 8 courts to participate in a Governmental Survey lead by the Bureau of Justice Assistance (BJA) group. The selected courts, which included the Circuit Court for Queen Anne's County, displayed correct and consistent use of both the case management software, AutoMon Involvement Management System (AIMS) and the Case Management Tool, Risk and Needs Triage (RANT).

Over the remainder of the fiscal year, two additional PSC Graduations occurred, one on November 12, 2024, and the other on April 1, 2025, bringing the total number of graduating participants in fiscal year 2025 to 6. Our program currently has 13 participants with the next graduation scheduled for the beginning of November 2025.

We are finding that many participants are facing difficulty in obtaining employment along with the ability to complete the required 35 hours of community service. To assist with this, our Court has worked to expand the community service programs to include:

- Washing county vehicles
- Assisting with land maintenance at the local detention center
- Assembling and distributing overdose kits in conjunction with peer support
- Giving care to animals within the humane society
- Assisting the Hope Warehouse and thrift store

The team also encourages participants who are having trouble securing employment, apply for the federal bonding program which assists participants in finding employment opportunities.



Pictured: Nadine Jad, PSC Case Manager; Marcus Trise, PSC Coordinator.

*Upcoming:* **PSC Post Graduate Program**

- We are planning to start a PSC Post Graduate Program which will encourage the graduates to maintain contact with the court along with being a support outlet to current participants.

- o **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). After completing one full fiscal year in this program, much improvement has been seen in the uniformity of process and the communication between the involved court locations and Clerk's Offices. We are thankful for the opportunity to provide this service through our Family Services Grant and are hopeful that in future years, the Regional Trust Clerk will minimize confusion and maximize the quality of services.

## **VI. Facilities:**

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

Major renovations to the Historic Courthouse have been placed on "hold" due to budget constraints; however, the planning portion of the project was budget approved.



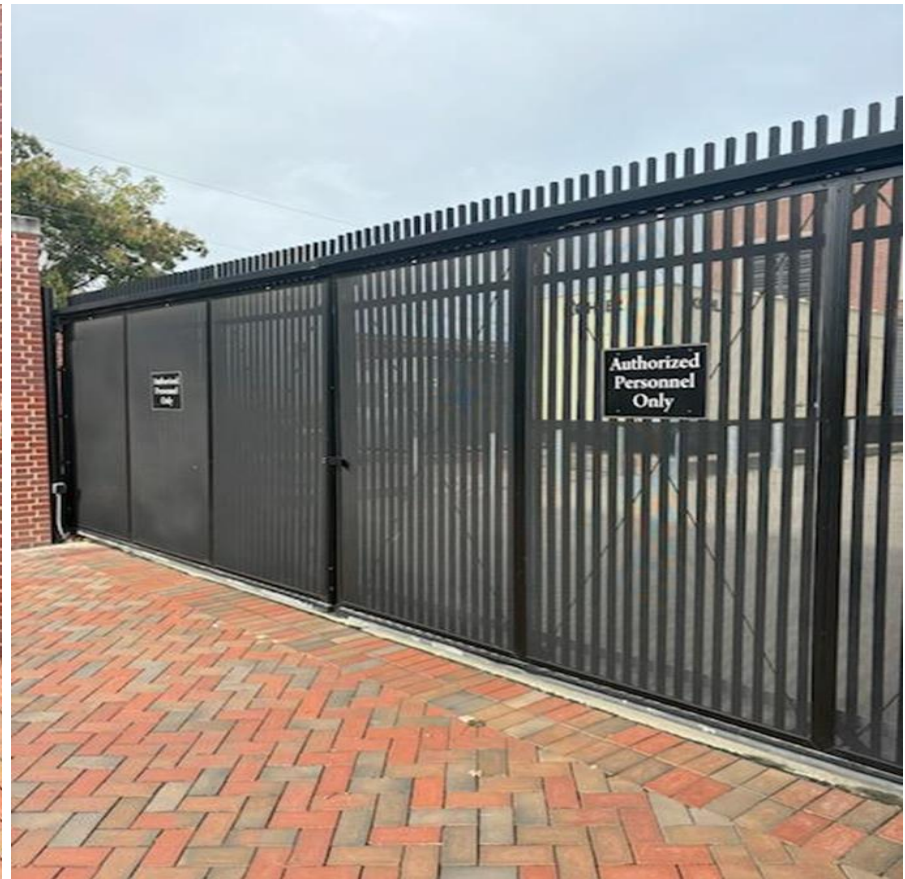


- o *Upcoming:* **Canopy Design**

The canopy design project has been placed on “hold” due to budget constraints.

- o **Screens for Secured Parking Gates**

Through the Administrative Office of the Courts Security Grant, our court was able to purchase and install tensile-tuff stainless steel security mesh over both secured parking lot gates for added security and privacy.



## **VII. Legislative:**

- o No information to report.

## **VIII. External Relationships:**

- o **Annual Conflict Resolution Day Bookmark Art Contest**



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

On Wednesday, April 30, 2025, the Circuit Court for Queen Anne's County was honored to host its 4<sup>th</sup> Annual Bookmark Recognition and Courthouse Tour, showcasing the winners and honorable mentions of the contest, sponsored by the Maryland Judiciary's Mediation and Conflict Resolution Office (MACRO). For this event, students are asked to create bookmarks on the theme of preventing and/or resolving conflicts peacefully.

This event included a tour of the courthouse, meeting court staff and viewing a display of the individual student art submissions at the courthouse Law Library. Students embarked on an adventure that included discussing the history of the historic courthouse, established in 1796 and the history of the courthouse seal. The tour navigated through the current courthouse where the students learned the roles of members of court staff and how helping individuals resolve their conflicts which often brings them to court.

The Maryland Judiciary receives a large amount of bookmark entries from both private and public schools including grades kindergarten through eighth grade. This year, the total number of entries were 3,408, with Queen Anne's County having 3 winners and 8 honorable mentions.

- o **Walktober**

The Circuit Court competed in our first annual Walktober event. Teams included members of the Administration, Clerk's Office and Sheriff's Deputies. Winners were recognized by a total of steps as a team, along with the top two people who achieved the highest number of steps individually. The tree pictured below will be passed along to the next winning team who will proudly display it. This team building event brought people together and encouraged added exercise to our daily lives, along with some fun competition.





Winning Walktober team



o Queen Anne's County Sheriff K-9 Swearing In



Pictured are Katherine Hager Clerk of Court, Administrative Judge Lynn Knight, Sheriff Gary Hoffman, Members of the Queen Anne's County Sheriff Department, and Officers Mac, Splash and Boss



On June 24, 2025, we had the pleasure of officially swearing in Sheriff K-9 Officers Mac, Splash and Boss, who now have their paw prints included in the Clerk's Test Book. Our Court, including Judge Knight, Katherine Hager, Clerk of Court, various members of the courthouse staff, several ranks from the Queen Anne's County Sheriff's Office, along with family and friends of the new deputies honor each new Sheriff's Deputy as they are sworn in

and sign the Clerk of Court Test Book. We recognize and support our local Sheriff's Office and encourage them to visit and familiarize themselves with our court in the event of an emergency.

**IX. Other Concerns:**

- o No further information to report.