

Recording and Surcharge Fee Increase Proposal Summary

Maine Registry of Deeds Association

Recording Fees

Due to rising costs, we are requesting an increase in recording fees for the first time since 2011. In 2011 recording fees were increased by \$6.00 for the first page while all other recording fees remained the same. As part of the process of evaluating our revenues we collected data from other New England States, which demonstrated our fees to be significantly lower than other states.

In reviewing our request, we recognized an opportunity to modify our fee structure to provide efficiencies internally, as well as externally to improve customer satisfaction. This would be achieved by moving to a flat rate of \$45.00 for filing of any document and moving away from ancillary fees such as charges for extra marginal references, extra names, and for additional pages after one. This does not include the Preservation Surcharge as detailed below. Some benefits of this change:

- The current fee structure, with multiple variables for charges, often results in customers submitting inaccurate payment amounts.
- Incorrect payments typically result in a rejection of the submission which can result in frustration, additional costs for mailing and postage, as well as a delay in the filing time. This also causes increased work for the Registry.
- We are confident that a flat fee structure would eliminate the majority of rejections that are due to incorrect payment amounts.
- A flat fee structure is significantly easier to communicate and understand.
- Revenue in excess of expenses is allocated to the general fund of the county to lower tax obligations for the towns.

Preservation Surcharge

The surcharge which, by statute, is collected for the sole purpose of the preservation of records was enacted in 1997 and has never been increased. In the meantime, the costs of preservation have increased significantly. We are requesting a modest increase from \$3.00 per filing to \$5.00 per filing.

- Unlike other governmental fees like motor vehicle registrations that occur annually, the surcharge is a one-time fee that is assessed to permanently maintain and preserve the document.

- Maine State Agencies and Maine municipalities are exempt from the surcharge. Therefore, the surcharge collected from other filers must be sufficient to cover the costs for maintaining and preserving these documents.

Bulk Images

We are also requesting an increase in the per page price for bulk images. The current fee is 5 cents per page for sales in excess of 1000 pages. This fee is unreasonably low. We propose an increase to 50 cents per page to offset expenses. We are requesting that copies obtained via bulk images be for the company's use only and may not be used to sell our copies to others. This would deprive us of our copy revenue. Bulk sales does not include our indexes, which are proprietary and are not for sale.

Free Online Copies

The current free online copies is limited to 500 copies per calendar year. This is far in excess of what most individuals require for copies. In keeping with this, we would like the amount changed from 500 to 10 free copies per year. Although this does appear to be a significant drop there would be minimal impact on most users as most Deeds are 1-4 pages. In addition, if there is an impact it will be minimal as the charge is only 50 cents per page over 10. Attorney's offices could be impacted but most already charge copies to their clients so this also would not negatively impact them.