



MELISSA WILK

ALAMEDA COUNTY

AUDITOR-CONTROLLER/CLERK-RECORDER

January 2022 Newsletter

Message from Melissa

Dear Alameda County,

It is hard to believe that 2022 is already upon us and that it has been seven months since we re-opened our downtown Oakland Clerk-Recorder office to the public. Since then, we have been honored to serve approximately 35,000 customers from all over Alameda County, including many who have traveled from South and East County.

When we ask for feedback from our customers, one of the most frequent questions we receive is: **When will you re-open your Tri-Valley Office in Dublin?**



The response to this question is that while we would like to already be re-open and serving you, due to current public health conditions, setting a firm re-opening date has been difficult. We are diligently exploring options to modify our space and working with our Labor organizations and staff to ensure the health and safety of our employees and customers. I will be sure to update you again when we have more progress to share.

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In the meantime, for those of you who need our services, and are planning a visit to our Oakland office, please consider these tips:

- **Visit us online!** You can order copies of your birth, marriage, and death certificates from the convenience of your mobile device. Our online services are available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week!
- **Take public transit.** Our Oakland office is conveniently located just a few blocks from the Lake Merritt BART station. There are also 10 AC Transit stops within a few blocks of our office.
- **Visit us during off-peak hours.** Our busiest times are 11am-2pm, especially on Mondays and Fridays. Visit us from 2pm-4pm on Tuesdays, Wednesdays, and Thursdays to reduce your wait time.
- **Get discounted parking.** If you have to drive, please consider parking at the Oakland Museum of California garage at 11th Street and Oak Street. You can obtain a validation sticker at our service window for a reduced parking fee.

Plan Ahead

All County Offices will be closed on Friday, **February 11** in observance of Abraham Lincoln's birthday and Monday, **February 21** in observance of President's Day.

Our Clerk-Recorder services are always available online. [Click here if you need to order vital documents.](#)



Rest assured, we are working diligently and vigilantly monitoring health conditions with the goal of re-opening our Tri-Valley Office as soon as we can. Thank you very much for your patience. We look forward to serving you in the year ahead.

Best,

Melissa Wilk

Honoring Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.



The Auditor-Controller/Clerk-Recorder Agency is proud to celebrate Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. and the profound, lasting impact of his life. Shortly after his death in 1968, advocates began rallying to make Martin Luther King, Jr. Day a federal holiday to honor the fallen civil rights leader. Immense efforts were made by communities across the country to launch the campaign forward, which played a pivotal role in the holiday's approval 15 years after Dr. King's death.

In 1983, the measure to make Martin Luther King, Jr. Day a federal holiday was passed by the Senate and signed into law by President Ronald Reagan on November 2, 1983. In 1994, Congress passed the *King Holiday and Service Act*, appointing the federal holiday as a national day of service to celebrate Dr. King's life and legacy. Observed annually as "a day on, not a day off," Martin Luther King, Jr. Day is the only federal holiday designated to encourage volunteering in our communities.

To honor Dr. King's legacy and his spirit of service, Melissa Wilk joined the Piedmont Anti-Racism and Diversity Committee's 25th Annual MLK Celebration on January 17. The event was held virtually, and featured remarks from Congresswoman Barbara Lee. While the service opportunity associated with this event was cancelled due to the ongoing Omicron variant surge, we look forward to supporting future opportunities.

"Everybody can be great, because everybody can serve." – Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

Redacting Unlawful Restrictive Covenants



One of the most unfortunate legacies of our country's history has been how restrictive covenants in housing deeds have been used to exclude people out of homes and neighborhoods. Restrictive covenants are agreements or stipulations in housing deeds that prohibit the purchase, lease, or occupation of a piece of property by a particular group of people. Despite restrictive covenants being declared illegal by both the federal and state governments over 70 years ago, the historical language can still be found in many housing deeds because the

covenants were never redacted from their original documents.

Last year, the California state legislature unanimously passed Assembly Bill (AB) 1466, which directs the state's county recorders to establish a program to assist in the redaction of unlawfully restrictive covenants. This bill was signed into law by Governor Gavin Newsom. As a result, the Alameda County Clerk-Recorder's Office will establish a program by July 1, 2022 to redact unlawfully restrictive covenants from Alameda County property records.

Establishing this program will be a massive undertaking for the County. There are more than 25 million documents archived at the Clerk-Recorder's Office. Also, numerous documents are hand-written and over 100 years old. This means that current technologies are not equipped to scan for keywords and phrases identifying restrictive covenant language in many of our documents. The volume and age of our documents will make building a program to redact unlawful restrictive covenants from our records a multi-layered effort that will require significant cooperation from many of our partners.

Despite these challenges, the Alameda County Clerk-Recorder's Office will follow the leadership of California's Governor and state legislature to fully implement AB 1466. As part of this effort, we encourage members of the Alameda County community to alert us of restrictive covenants to assist us in identifying language for redaction. We are exploring a number of options that would facilitate members of the public to help us as part of the implementation plan that we are currently developing.

In the meantime, customers can alert us to restrictive covenants by emailing us at our general customer service email address at CROCustomerService@acgov.org. Stay tuned for future updates on the development and progress of this important program.

Meet our Internal Audit Team



Internal Audit staff members left to right: Gershon Hughes, Senior Auditor; Jennifer Chan, Division Chief; John Shannon, Senior Supervising Auditor; and Tanya Sengupta, Senior Auditor (not pictured).

A critical division within the Auditor-Controller's Office is the Internal Audit Division (pictured above). The Internal Audit Division conducts independent and objective internal control and compliance audits of County departments to ensure compliance with applicable policies, procedures, laws, and regulations. Its main goals are to safeguard County assets, maximize efficient operation of all County departments, and achieve the highest degree of public accountability.

One of the most comprehensive and important audits this division is responsible for every year is called the Single Audit. In general terms, it is a County-wide financial statement and federal awards audit. It is facilitated by the Internal Audit Division and completed by a certified public accounting firm. It is a complex, annual process that requires all County departments to report their federal grant expenditures every fiscal year.

For Fiscal Year 2020, the Single Audit found that Alameda County spent \$455 million in federal grant funds. The Fiscal Year 2021 federal grants funds total is slated to be significantly more since CARES Act funding, alone, will be \$273 million. We are very proud that for the past four fiscal years, Alameda County has received **zero** audit findings for its Single Audits – an incredible accomplishment considering the number of grant programs managed and the amount of funding received. (You can look forward to reading more about the latest Single Audit, which the Internal Audit team will publish in the late spring or early summer, in an upcoming newsletter.)

In addition to the Single Audit, the Internal Audit Division also performs federal- and state-mandated assessments, as well as discretionary projects that might benefit from a more formal examination. For example, the Internal Audit Division examines department policies and

procedures such as those established for County department usage of credit cards to make purchases for official County use. This work is important to ensure that all County departments are being responsible stewards of taxpayer resources. The areas of highest risk often include financial, legal or safety risks; risk of theft or fraud; and/or inefficient and ineffective policies and procedures.

Jennifer Chan, the Internal Audit Division Chief, summarized the work they do saying, "You want to make sure the right safeguards are in place to identify potential vulnerabilities *before* they become problems." There is often a perception that an auditor's role is to find something wrong. While Internal Audit works to identify deficiencies, it is all done for the benefit of protecting taxpayer funds through process improvement, minimizing risks and maximizing efficiencies.

"Our work is focused on improving operations by bringing an objective, systematic and disciplined approach to evaluation and improving the effectiveness of risk management and internal controls," said Jennifer.

A key method used by the Internal Audit Division to perform its work is to identify the areas of highest risk in order to maximize impact. This means taking the time to thoroughly research best practices, examine operations through observation, and interview staff at all levels. The acquired knowledge and feedback are critical to obtaining a thorough understanding of operations, programs, and policies and procedures in order to ensure their work is most impactful for Alameda County's taxpayers.

Apply for the ARTSFUND Grant from the Alameda County Arts Commission: *Deadline is Tuesday, February 8*



2022 Online Application is Now Available
Application Deadline is Tuesday, February 8, 2022, 5:00 pm

The ARTSFUND Grant Program supports Alameda County nonprofit arts organizations that present arts programs such as dance, music, theater, visual arts, literature, media arts, and other forms of creativity. Standard grant awards are \$1,000 - \$2,500 each. [The 2022 ARTSFUND Online Application is now available.](#)

Organizations Funded by the Arts Commission

Eligible applicants must be Alameda County nonprofit organizations that provide arts programs to the public. The programs may be offered in-person, online, or virtually. The intention of the ARTSFUND Grant Program is to support arts organizations that provide the majority of their programs to Alameda County community members.

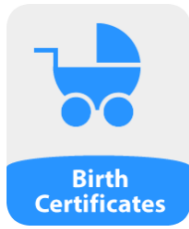
Funding for the ARTSFUND Grant Program

Support for this program is provided by the County of Alameda, individual contributions submitted to the ARTSFUND with County property tax payments, and donations to the Foundation for the Arts in Alameda County.

The Office of the Arts Commission is a division of the County's Auditor-Controller/Clerk-Recorder Agency led by Melissa Wilk. The support and leadership provided by Melissa Wilk is critical to the work of the Arts Commission. The Auditor-Controller/Clerk-Recorder Agency has an extensive leadership role with the County government and the Arts Commission.

SAVE TIME AND ORDER ONLINE

Need your birth, marriage, or death certificate? Save yourself time and order online! Select our *pick-up option* and we can typically turn around your order within a few days. Click below to get started.



Presenting our Resources to the Community

The screenshot shows a virtual presentation slide for Melissa Wilk, Auditor-Controller/Clerk-Recorder of Alameda County. The slide features the Alameda County Auditor-Controller/Clerk-Recorder logo, her name, and title. It includes a list of bullet points, a photo of Melissa Wilk, and two text boxes. The bottom of the slide shows a Zoom meeting interface.

- Elected in 2018 as Alameda County's *FIRST* female Auditor-Controller/Clerk-Recorder
- 15+ Years of Executive Financial Management in Alameda County
- One of few Auditor-Controller/Clerk-Recorders in California (and the US) that combines all four functions under one elected official

A big part of my job deals with the financial aspects of this County, which is very important to the fiscal health and management of our County. Alameda County has a AAA credit rating from all three credit rating agencies.

But our most public-facing work is actually through the **Clerk-Recorder's Office** where we have the great pleasure of serving Alameda County residents with some of the most important events of their lives – birth of a child, getting married, and recording thousands of real estate transactions every month.

The Auditor-Controller/Clerk-Recorder Agency offers many resources, and we have been reaching out to various communities throughout Alameda County to let them know. On January 11, 2022, Melissa presented to the Bay East Association of Realtors and the Eden Area Municipal Advisory Council with virtual presentations to inform them of our services and updates.

The **Bay East Association of Realtors** is one of the largest real estate trade associations in the East Bay, providing a diverse team of real estate professionals with support and resources to better serve the community. Melissa presented to the organization with updates regarding our services and gave an overview of operational innovations during the pandemic. The presentation outlined the roles of the County's principal agencies in the property tax system and featured key information about our online e-services, major Agency accomplishments, and key contacts for follow-up questions to specific issues.

The **Eden Area Municipal Advisory Council** makes decisions on land use and general-purpose matters for the unincorporated communities of Alameda County known as the Eden Area. These unincorporated communities include Ashland, Cherryland, Hayward Acres, and San Lorenzo. The virtual presentation for the Eden Area Municipal Advisory Council included key information about the Auditor-Controller's role in controlling, auditing, and reporting the County's \$3.6 billion budget; our Annual Comprehensive Financial Report; updates on our Clerk-Recorder services; and how our Agency helps small businesses within Alameda County, such as through the Small, Local Emerging Business (SLEB) program.

If your community or organization is interested in receiving a similar presentation about the services provided by the Auditor-Controller/Clerk-Recorder Agency, please email us at ACCR.info@acgov.org. To get breaking updates on Agency services, announcements, and hours of operation, follow Melissa on Twitter [@MelissaWilkACCR](https://twitter.com/MelissaWilkACCR).

Celebrating the Year of the Tiger

New Customer Brochure Available in Chinese!



Lunar New Year is one of the most important holidays in East Asia and is observed by millions of people around the world. In Chinese culture, it is a time to start fresh and is celebrated with festivals, fireworks, and family gatherings. The holiday observes the start of the new year on the traditional lunisolar Chinese calendar. In 2022, the Chinese Zodiac falls on the Year of the Tiger.

In support of Lunar New Year and the Asian Pacific Islander American (APIA) community, the Clerk-Recorder Agency translated our customer brochures into Chinese for the first time.

"I'm honored to celebrate with the APIA community during a time of year that is so meaningful to the Chinese and Chinese American community," said Melissa. "I've always taken a community-first approach to our work, which means trying to meet the needs of our wonderfully diverse County. That's why we translated our customer brochure into Chinese to let our Chinese-speaking customers know that we are here for them."

The Clerk-Recorder's Office is available to help Chinese-speaking customers during normal business hours (Monday-Friday, 8:30am-5:00pm). For help over the phone, Chinese-speaking customers can call us at (510) 272-6362, extension 3.

QUESTIONS FOR OUR AGENCY?

Are there upcoming community events that you would like us to attend? Do you have a specific question you would like to ask?

Email Melissa Wilk or follow her on [Twitter](#) to let her know what questions we can answer and how we can support your efforts.



STAY IN TOUCH

Keep up-to-date on important information from the Auditor-Controller/Clerk-Recorder Agency by following Melissa on Twitter ([@MelissaWilkACCR](#)).

If this email was forwarded to you, subscribe to our newsletter by emailing us at ACCR.info@acgov.org.



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with



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