COUNTY OF BERRIEN
REGISTER OF DEEDS OFFICE
LORA L. FREEHLING, REGISTER OF DEEDS

For Immediate Release

Contact: Lora L. Freehling
Phone: 269.983.7111 xt 8627
eMail: lfreehling@berriencounty.org

BERRIEN COUNTY REGISTER OF DEEDS ANNOUNCES TEMPORARY ACCEPTANCE OF ELECTRONIC AND REMOTE ONLINE NOTARIZED DOCUMENTS

Berrien County Register of Deeds, Lora L. Freehling, announced that per Governor Whitmer's Executive Order 2020-41, the Berrien County Registers of Deeds will be temporarily accepting eNotarized (electronically notarized) and Remote Online Notarized documents. Notaries should follow the standards set forth in the order and adhere to approved Notary Best Practices. Executive Order 2020-41 allows and encourages, "…financial institutions and registers of deeds…," to permit the use of remote electronic notary. This order, signed April 8th, is effective immediately and continues through May 6, 2020 at 11:59 p.m.

"Recording eNotarized documents is new to Berrien County," Freehling says. "Prior to the governor's executive order, Berrien County would reject electronically notarized documents. Michigan's Public Act 360 of 2018 allowed for Michigan notaries public to perform notarial acts electronically and remotely, however the Michigan Electronic Recording Commission (MERC) had not yet adopted approved methods, vendors, and standards relating to register of deeds offices." Freehling continues, "Michigan's Public Act 364 of 2018 required the Michigan Electronic Recording Commission (MERC) adopt standards, '…for the acceptance and use of electronic notarization of documents submitted to a county register of deeds for recording.'" [PA 364 of 2018, Section 5(10)]

"The COVID-19 pandemic has disrupted everyone's lives and the economy. The goal is for everyone to remain safe and healthy. Accepting and recording documents that have been electronically or remotely notarized will allow residents and employees conducting essential business to continue practicing social, physical and professional distancing." Freehling adds, "The Register of Deeds office remains committed to servicing the residents of Berrien County to the greatest extent possible. With Executive Order 2020-41 we are allowed to do just that."

The Register of Deeds office, albeit closed to the public, continues to serve the public with a reduced staff. For further information or approved language for tangible (papered out) copies or for general questions contact the office during normal business hours, 8:30 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. Monday through Friday, at 269.983.7111 xt 8562.

END