https://waukeshafreeman-wi.newsmemory.com/rss.php?
date=20240611&edition=Waukesha+Freeman&subsection=News&page=fr_04a_0611.pdf.0&id=art_3.xml&device=

Register of Deeds office now offers registration notification system

Intent is to catch title fraud early

By Bridget Dean - Freeman Staff
Jun 11, 2024

WAUKESHA — The Waukesha County Register of Deeds office launched a recording notification system service in April; once you opt in, you will be notified anytime documents are recorded on your parcels. Although the system cannot prevent fraud from happening, it makes it a lot easier to catch it early on.

"There's a lot of people that are concerned about their title on their house," said James Behrend, Waukesha County's register of deeds. "One of the ways to combat that is to inform people if anything's been recorded here."

He assured that title fraud is uncommon. Beth Zimmermann, deputy register of deeds, said she'd never seen a case of it in Waukesha County.

"We want property owners to (register) their own property. ... I have an elderly parent who owns a house. So, I've also registered his property so that I can keep an eye on what's going on," Zimmermann shared. "If something comes into our office that's recorded against that parcel, I would get an email."

You'll receive a notification and link to the recorded document. Usually there isn't anything fraudulent going on. You might get a notification if, for example, your mortgage company is bought by another company.

Title fraud is most common on lots that are vacant or vacation homes, where people aren't around. Zimmermann shared a case that happened at a vacation home up north. A person drafted a deed to themselves for the property and had it recorded.

"If a deed is in recordable form, we are statutorily obligated to record that deed," said Zimmermann. "The person then went to sell this property that they gave themselves, and it just so happened that the real estate agent was familiar with the (real) owners."

It's easier to correct title fraud when it's caught earlier, and corrections are done through the courts. Thankfully, the Register of Deeds office collects all the evidence of said fraud. "We just want people to be vigilant. A lot of times a lot of these services, these Title Lock services, and these LifeLock services try to get people to spend $80 a month. This is free. ... Title Lock and all those, they have to go through our system to get the records," she said, adding that if people have questions or concerns, they can call the office.

Registering your property requires an email address and either your parcel identification number/tax key number or the legal description. Register online at the Waukesha County Register of Deeds webpage; computers are available in the office lobby, if needed. Up to five parcels can be registered on one email address.

"It isn't that frequent, but this is a service that can lend some comfort," Behrend concluded.