

Norfolk Circuit Court



2006

Clerk's Office Annual Report

Clerk of Court
George E.
Schaefer

Chief Deputy
Thomas A.
Larson

COMMONWEALTH OF VIRGINIA



OFFICE OF THE CLERK
FOURTH JUDICIAL CIRCUIT
NORFOLK CIRCUIT COURT

100 Saint Paul's Boulevard
Norfolk, Virginia 23510
(757) 664-4580

**Supervising
Deputies**

Criminal
Gerald L. Stokes

Civil
Michele M. Evans

**Licenses, Permits
and Finance**
DaVida M. Davis

**Wills, Estates and
Deeds**

To: The Honorable City Council Members and City Manager
From: George Schaefer, Clerk of Circuit Court

CC: Budget Director, Circuit Court Chief Judge

Subj: Annual State of the Circuit Court Clerk's Office Report

Date: March 6, 2007

Ladies and Gentlemen;

Another year has past under my term as Clerk of the Circuit Court. The past year has seen a whirlwind of activity in the Clerk's Office from building enhancements to technology improvements.

Since my last report to you, we have accomplished every goal that was set and improved areas related to those goals.

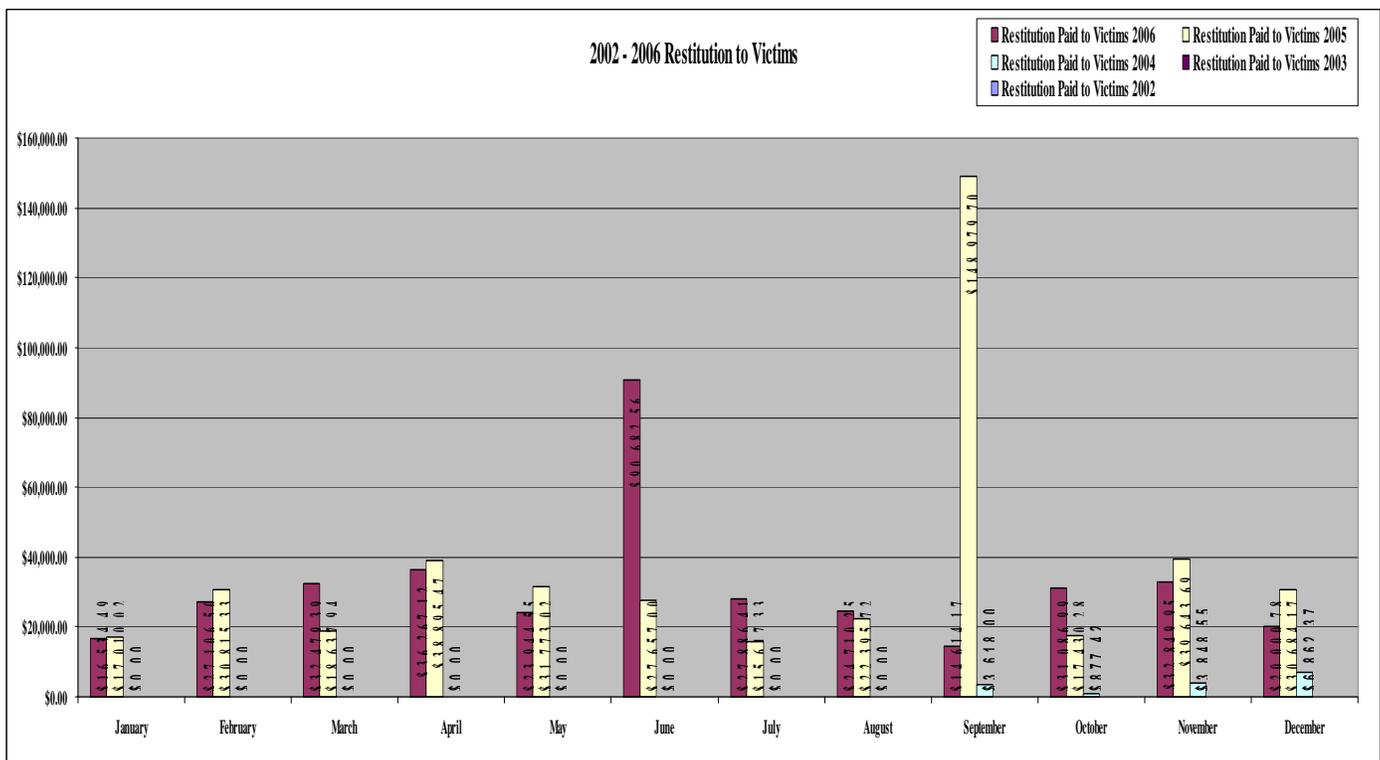
As you are well aware, using technology and automation brings significant upfront costs in not only equipment, but also in staff training. Working with the Supreme Court of Virginia – Office of the Executive Secretary, we have been able to minimize costs in both equipment and staff training areas. This partnership has allowed us to use our collected Technology Trust Funds for all enhancements without the need for additional funds from the city. We have fine-tuned the manpower study I implemented last year and continue to reduce the need for additional staff. The Compensation Board has again taken these figures and recalculated staffing needs across the Commonwealth.

We have seen a tremendous rise in our case statistics during the past year and can expect these numbers to continue to grow. We began the process of moving to a "paperless" courthouse during the later part of the calendar year. We will continue that process into 2007 with the addition of high-speed desktop scanners and new Case Imaging software.

We have worked with the Supreme Court to develop a “Public Access” version of our CAISFORM program that allows the public to complete routine forms on a public computer terminal. This will save untold man-hours during the year as we incorporate each digital form.

A major change in services during the past year was the changeover of the General Receiver duties from Glasser and Glasser to my office. We lowered costs and negotiated a higher interest rate thereby increasing the return on the invested amounts for the recipient of the trust funds. This was a major undertaking with over 350 trust accounts valued at roughly \$5,000,000.00 dollars.

We continue receipting and disbursing restitution payments to victims. Since actively pursuing funds through the Tax Set-off program, we have been able to recoup more funds owed to victims. We also developed additional steps now being put in place by the Commonwealth’s Attorney to ensure collection capabilities for restitution.



Our Secure Remote Access continues to be a big hit among Title Examiners, Attorneys, Law Enforcement and the Federal and State Government. We remain in partnership with several City of Norfolk Departments, such as City Attorney, Real Estate, Building and Codes, HRUBS, to provide access as needed.

We continue the process of back-scanning our land records, reducing the need for physical storage space of paper files. We have digitized all land records back to 1986 and are beginning a project in conjunction with the Library of Virginia to convert images back to 1973.

We continue to push for the implementation of electronic filing of land records and some criminal and civil filings. This office has been and continues to be an integral part of the Electronic Recording Workgroup through the Virginia Information Technology Agency (VITA)

as well as the electronic data exchange group established by the United States Office of Justice Programs (USOJP) through the National Center for State Courts (NCSC). This Court and Clerk's Office sit on the Electronic Filing Committee established by the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court and has been chosen as the pilot program for Virginia.

The importance of our participation in these groups is evidenced by the total number of cases, both criminal and civil filed this past year as well as the ever increasing numbers of marriage licenses, concealed weapons permits, judgments, restitution, time to pay plans, etc. that are processed by this office.

Examples:

Criminal Cases concluded in CY06: 10,415 (up 2.7%)

Civil Cases opened in CY06: 7,208 (up 10.5%)

Will documents processed in CY06: 6,071 (up 46%)

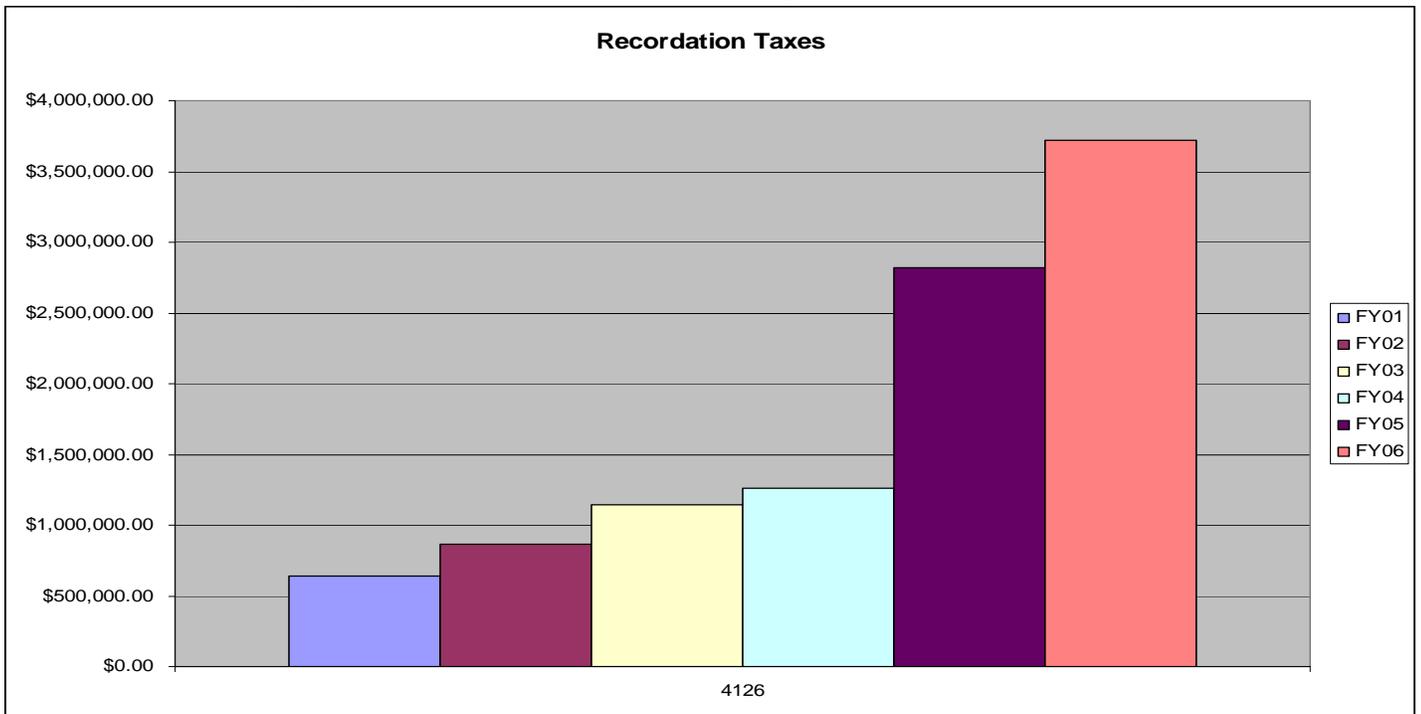
Land Record documents processed in CY06: 53,871 (up 2.1%)

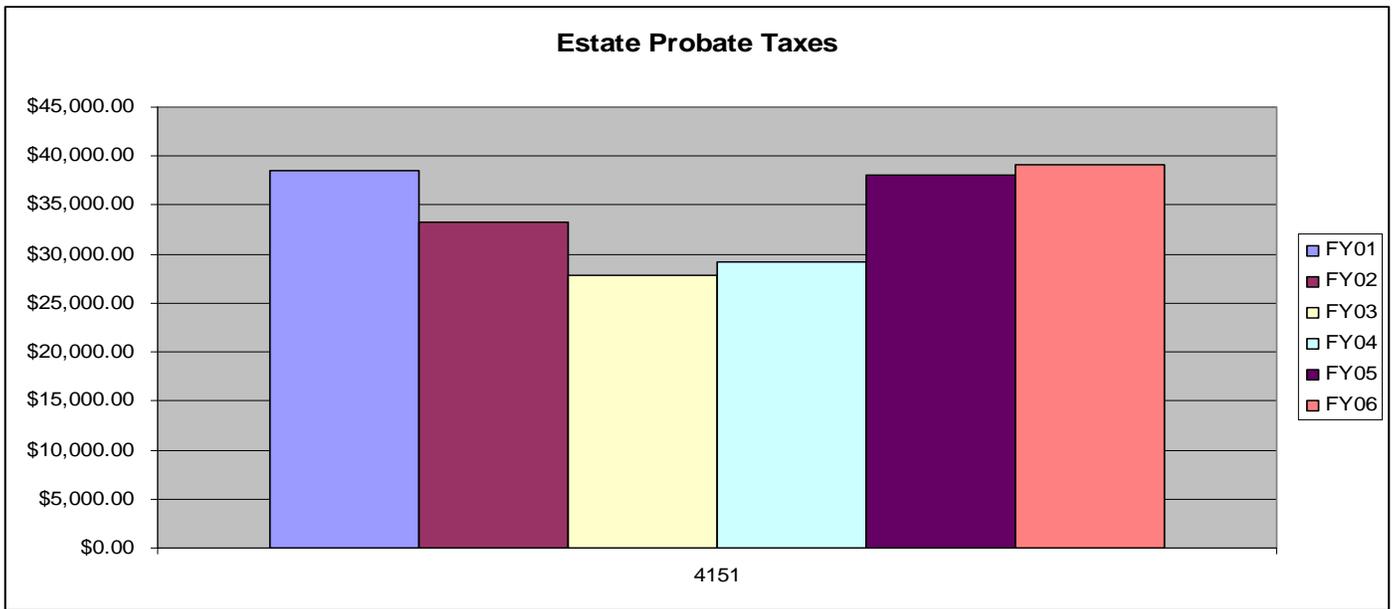
Other (marriage license, weapons permits, trade names, etc.): 62,701 (up 37.5%)

As you can readily see from the numbers above, our case filings continue to rise. Much of this is attributed to changes in procedures and allowing the citizen's to play a larger role.

The changes noted in the CY2005 report concerning Senate Bill 1118 (the merger of Law & Chancery), effective January 1, 2006, has been completed with little effect on manpower or services. Our customers have noted increased efficiencies and a higher level of service as a result of this merger.

The trend in home sales has slowed, but not significantly. We saw a 2.1% increase in land record transactions over 2005. Considering the age of our population we continue to see an increase (46%) in probate documents (wills and estates) processed over 2005.

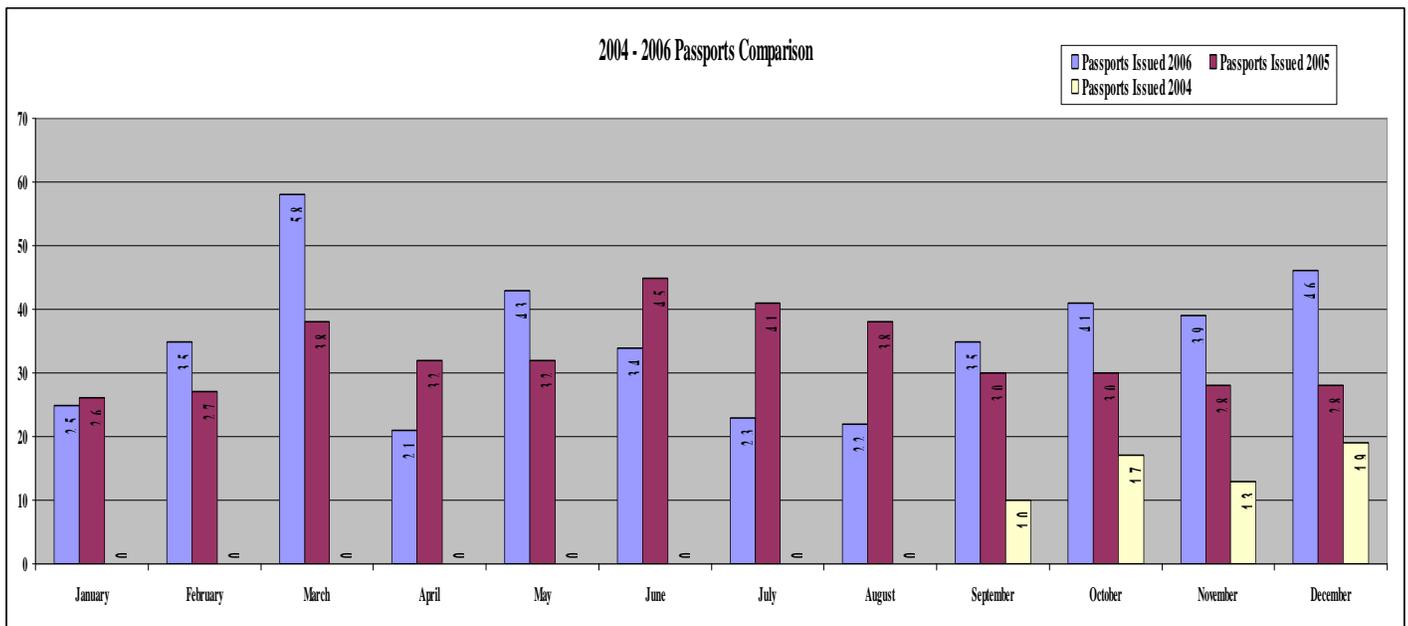




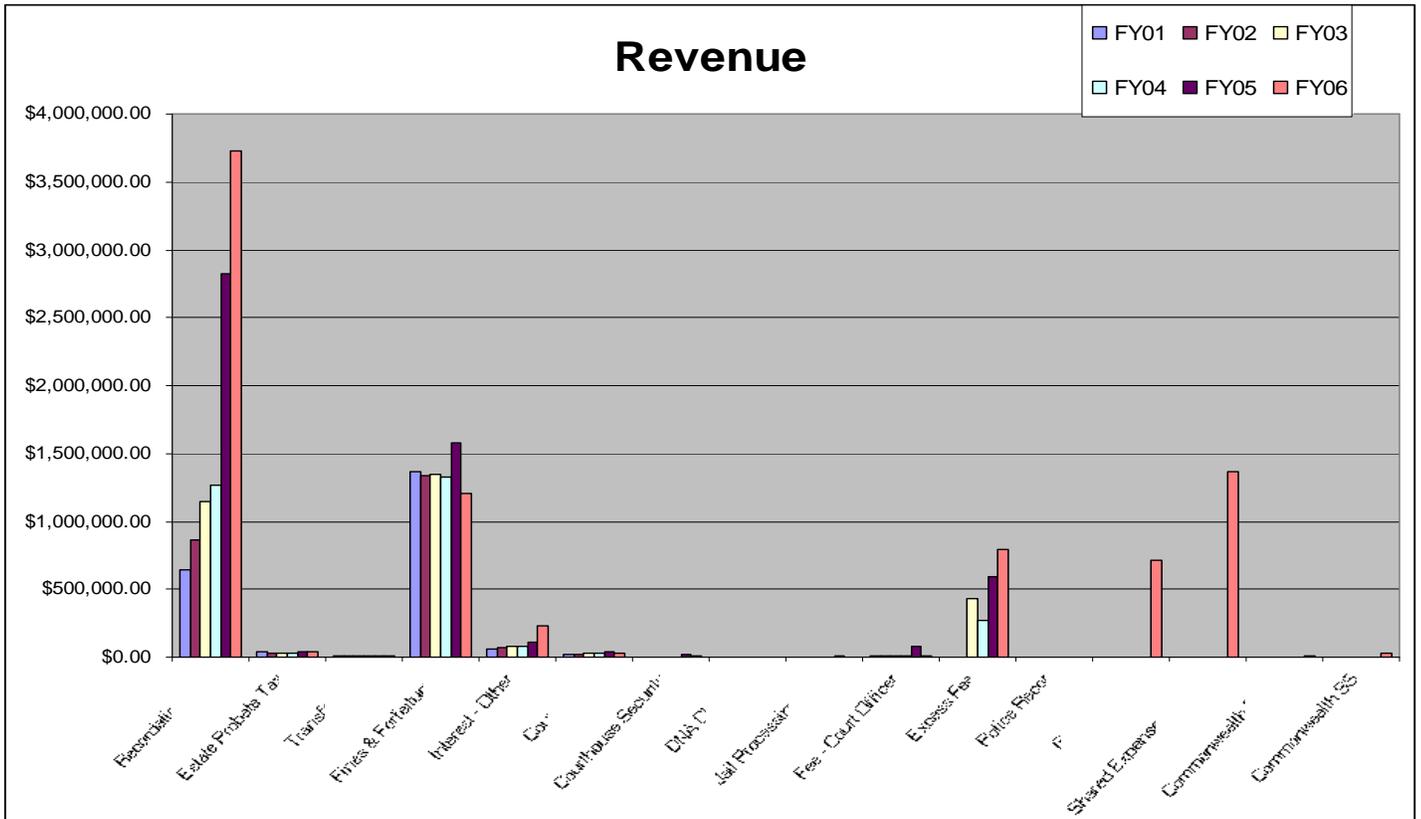
Working closely with Sheriff's Office staff, we have been able to "forgive" \$300,000.00 dollars in court cost debt in exchange for community service work performed by inmates in the Sheriff's Office Work Release Program.

We continue to review each area of revenue on both the state and local level, ensuring a maximum collection of costs for the city and state treasury. With the increase in recordation tax, we saw a significant jump in city and state revenue. It appears that this trend may slow only slightly during CY 2007 as additional housing units come available and interest rates stabilize.

Passport Services continue to be a big hit with the public. We have processed 422 passport applications this year. Working in concert with the State Department, there was no reduction in turn-around time despite the destruction of our assigned passport facility in New Orleans.



Cash flow through this office hit almost \$70 million dollars in calendar year 2006, a 15.7% increase over 2005.



My campaign promise to hire only Norfolk residents and ensure this office resembles the city that we work in has paid tremendous results. We boast a full compliment of highly qualified, personable staff, of whom nearly 80% call Norfolk home.

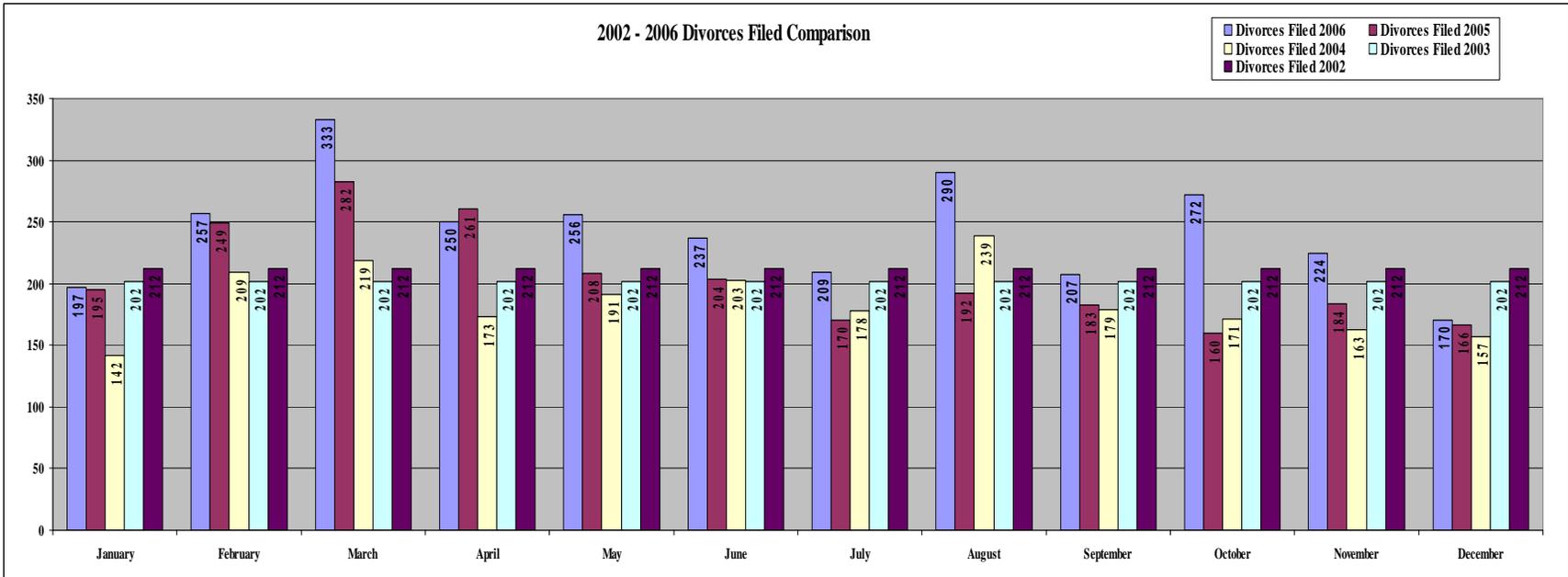
Please find attached statistics from 2006. I have included, as a part of this package, graphs that we employ to determine the ebb and flow of the activities at the courthouse. This gives us the ability to manage our staff efficiently and foresee problem areas.

Thank you for your time and I look forward to a continued partnership between the Circuit Court and the City we serve.

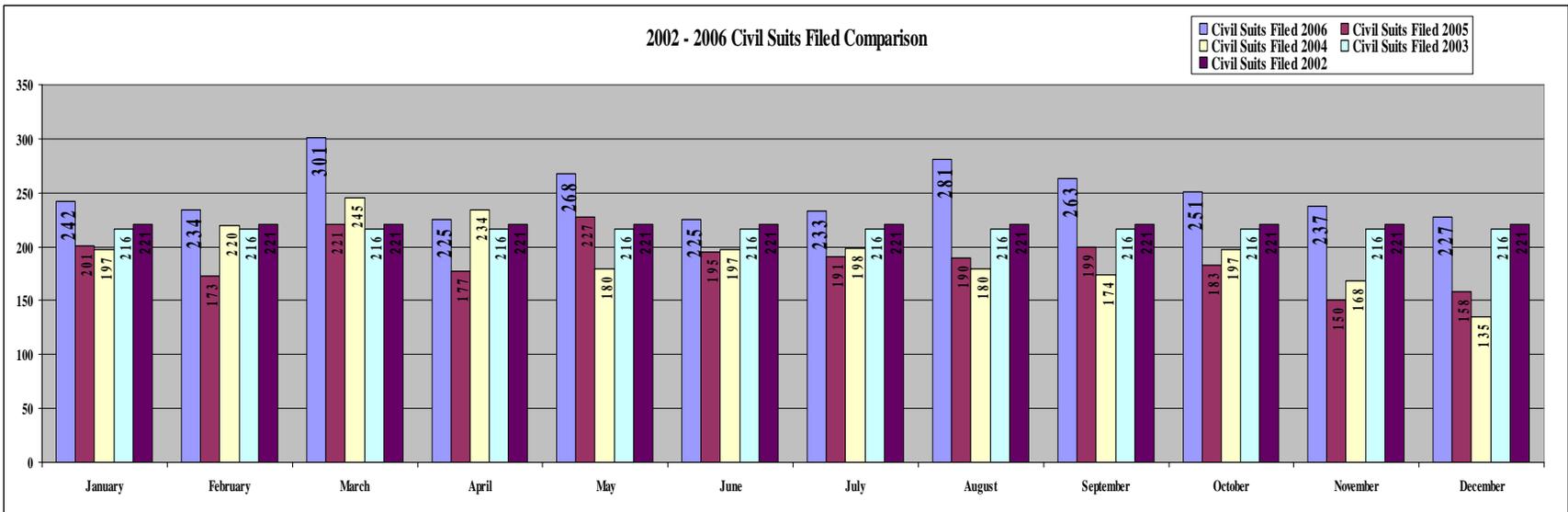
Very truly yours;

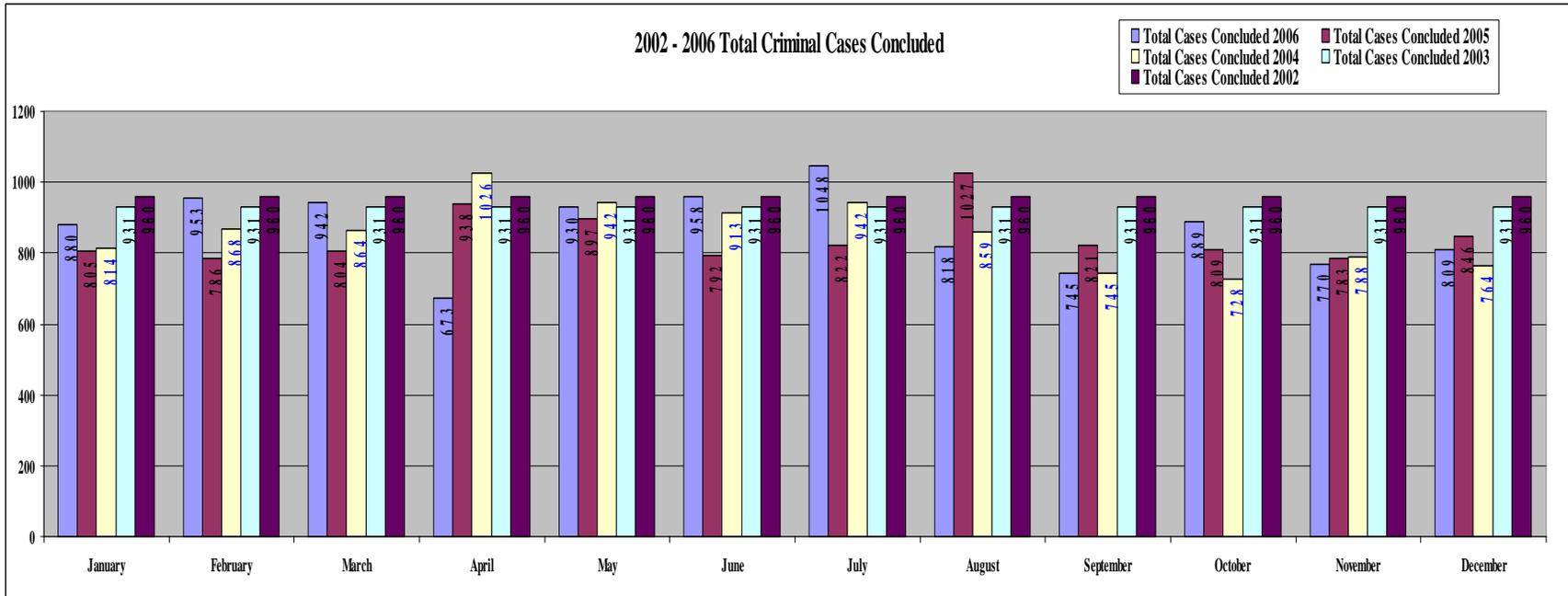
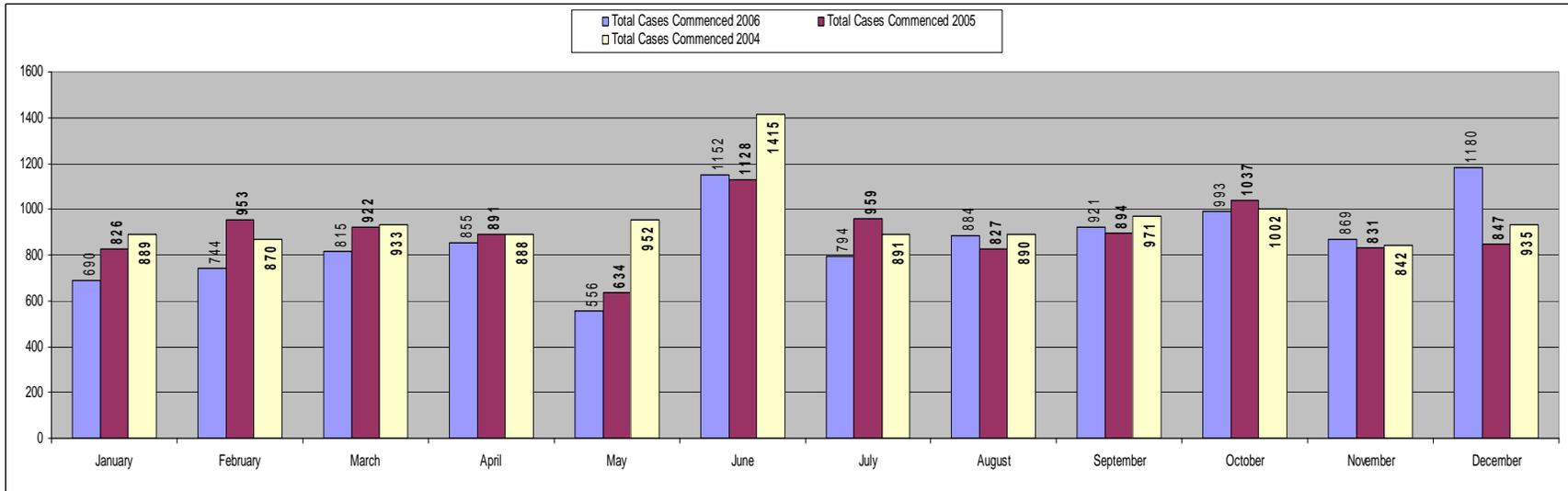
George E. Schaefer
Clerk of Circuit Court

2002 - 2006 Divorces Filed Comparison

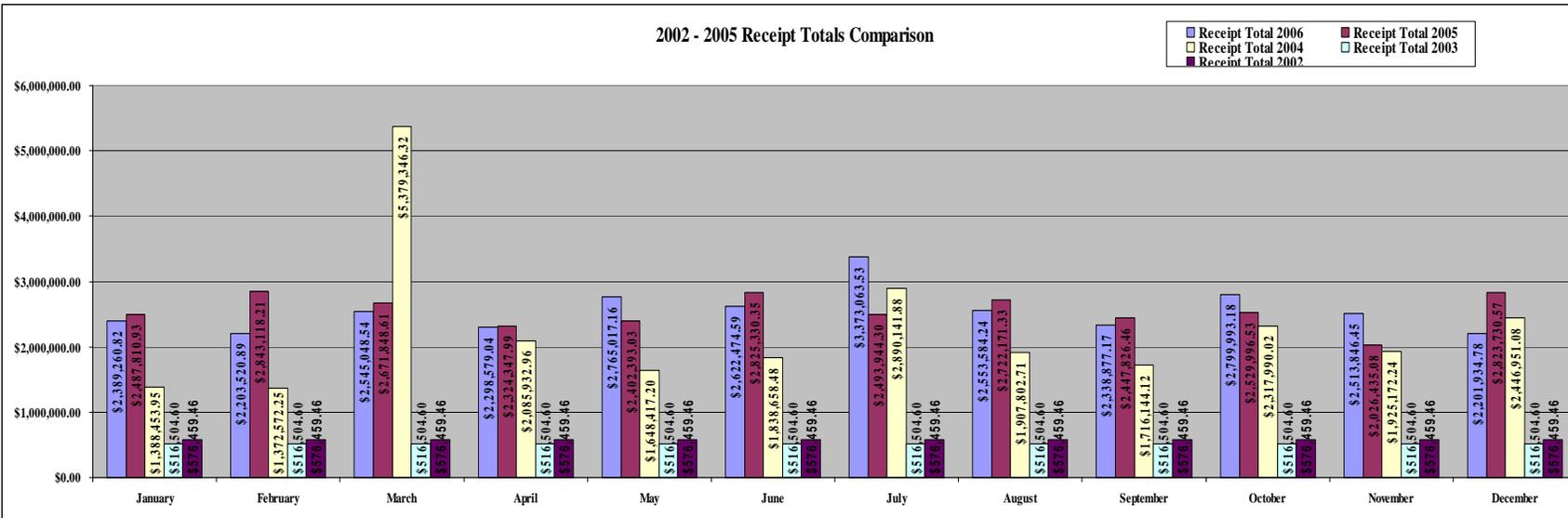


2002 - 2006 Civil Suits Filed Comparison

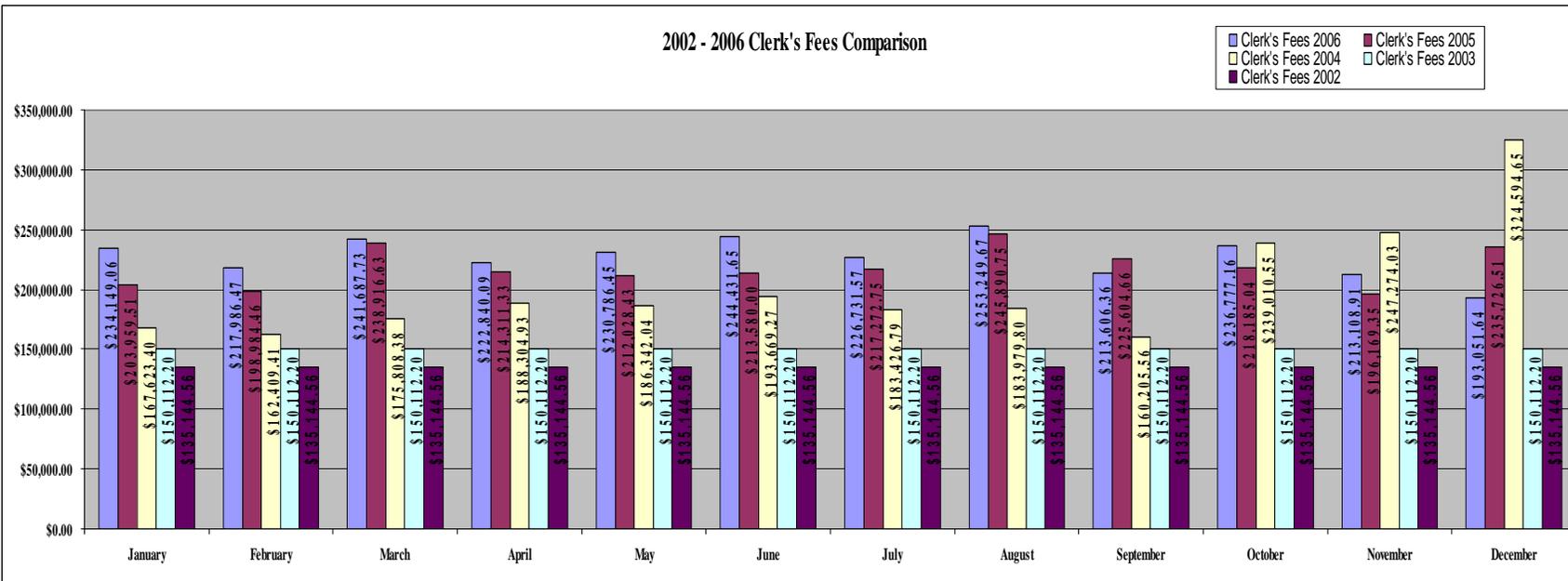




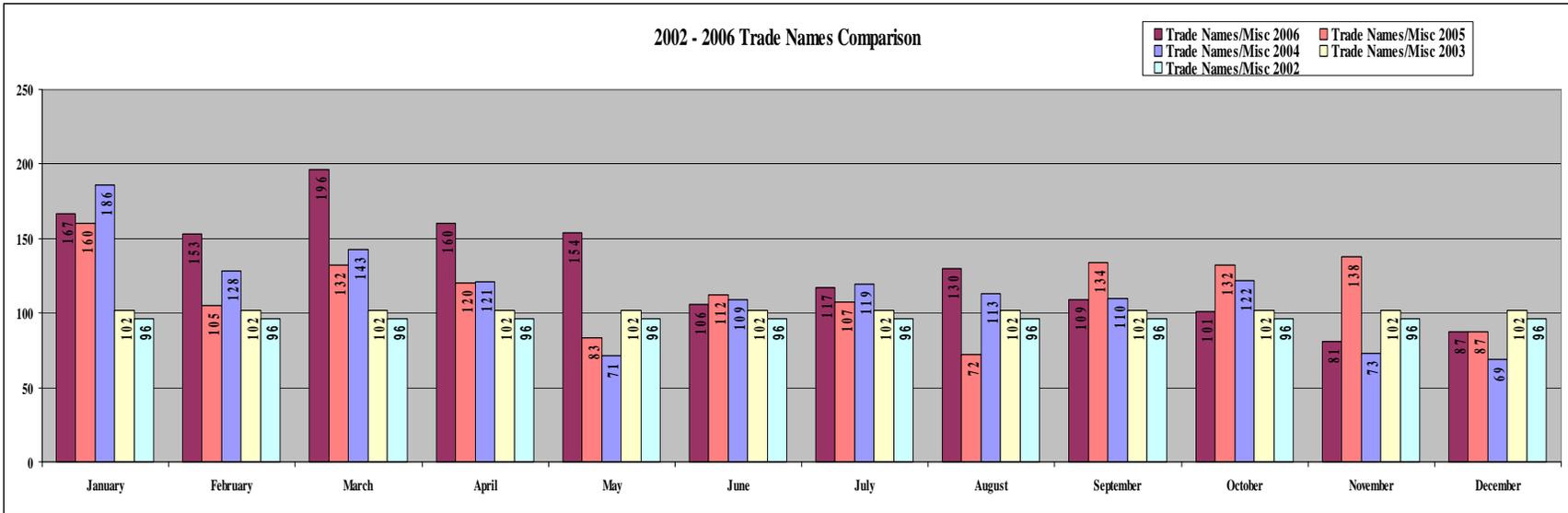
2002 - 2005 Receipt Totals Comparison



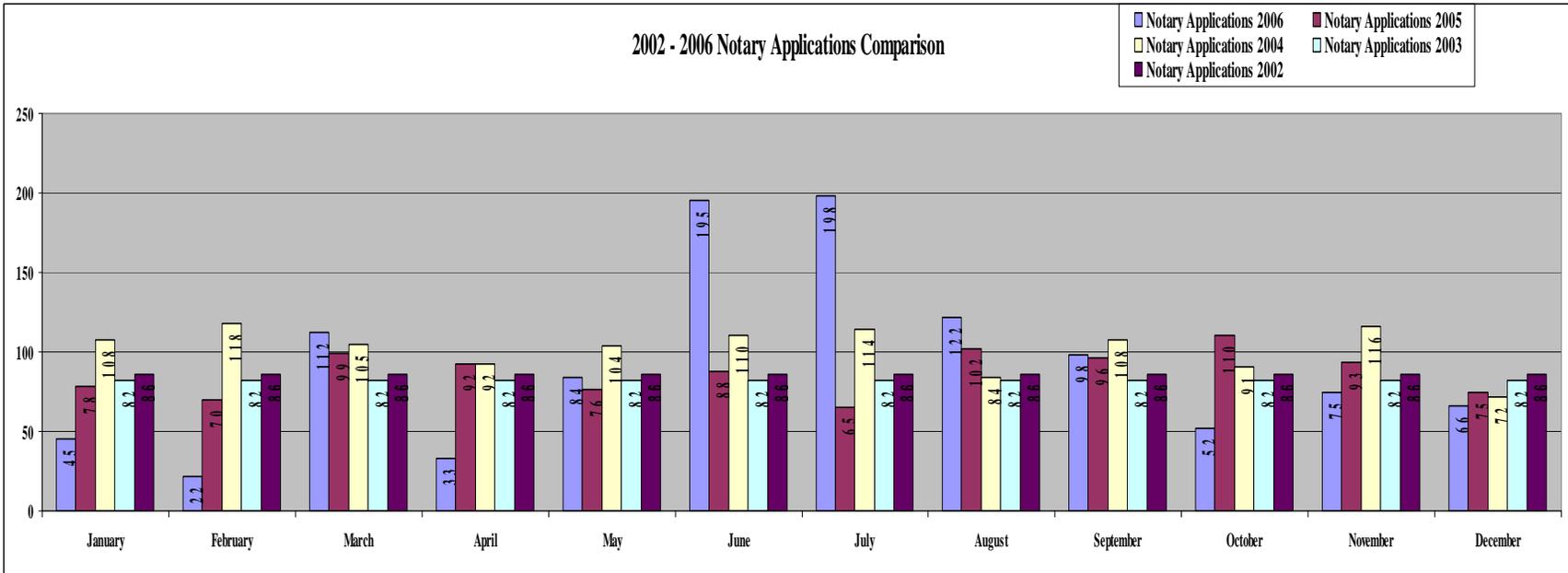
2002 - 2006 Clerk's Fees Comparison



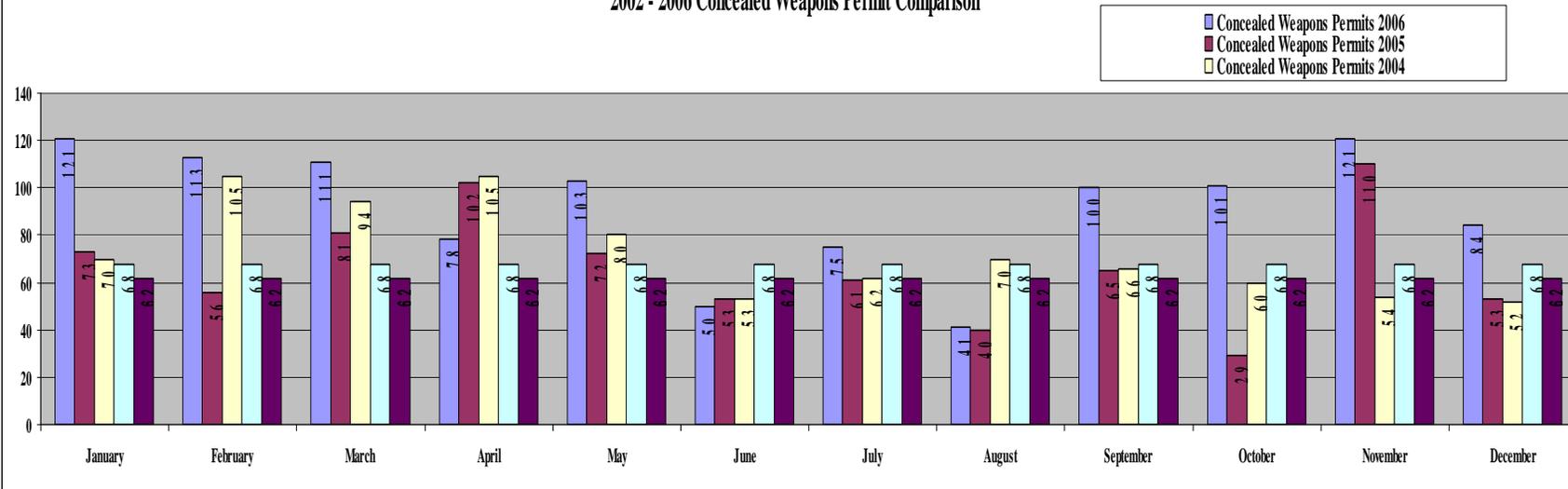
2002 - 2006 Trade Names Comparison



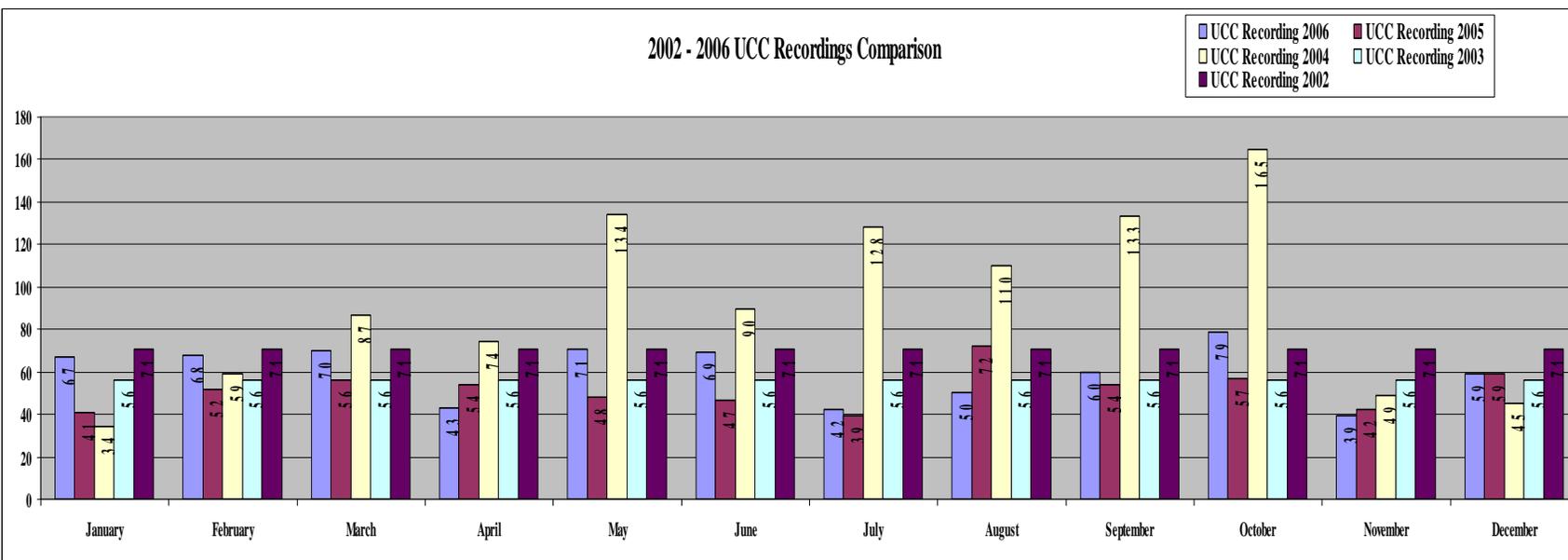
2002 - 2006 Notary Applications Comparison



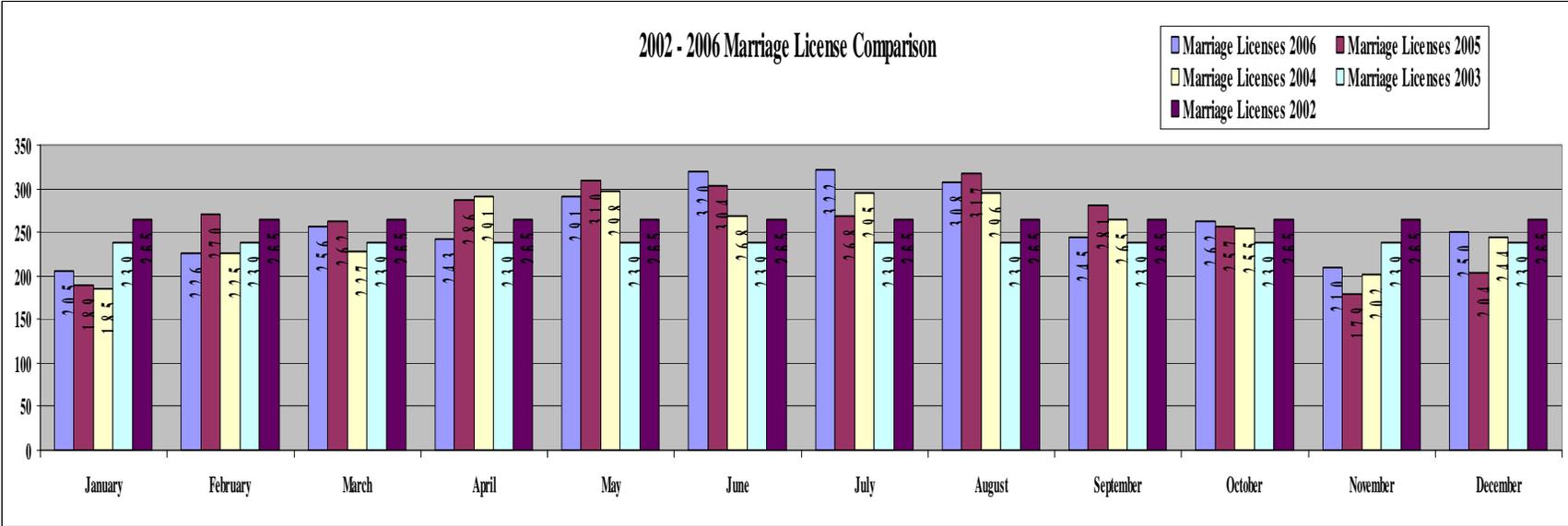
2002 - 2006 Concealed Weapons Permit Comparison



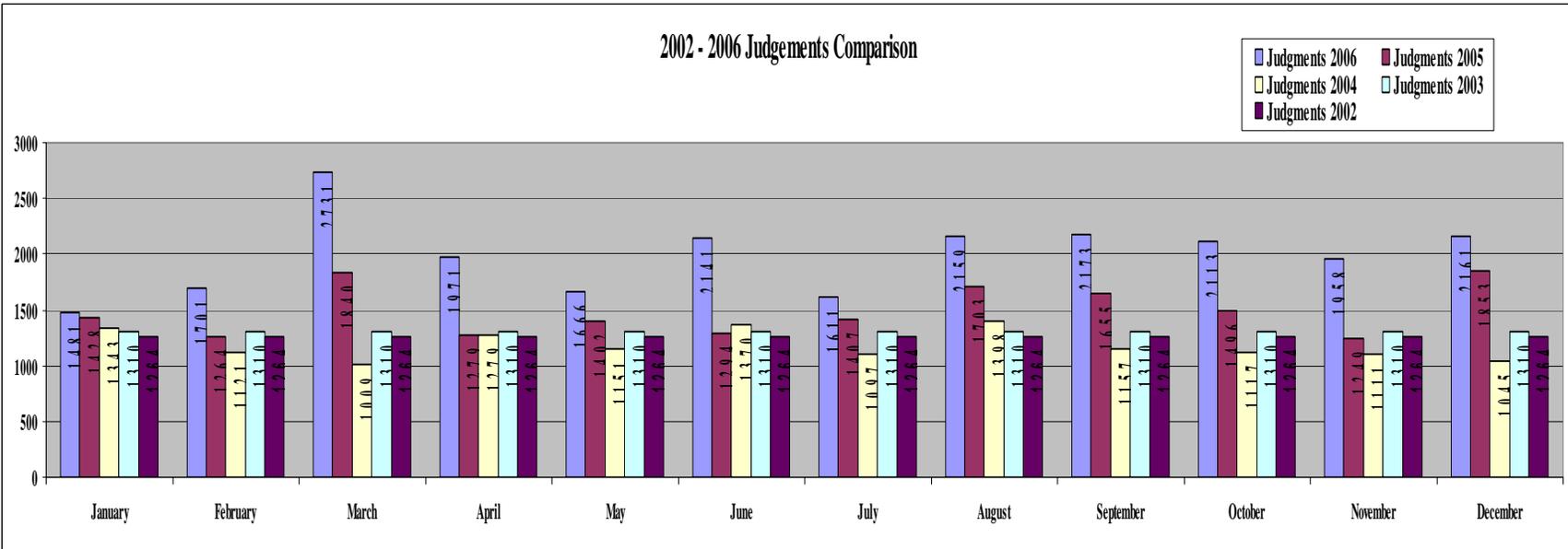
2002 - 2006 UCC Recordings Comparison



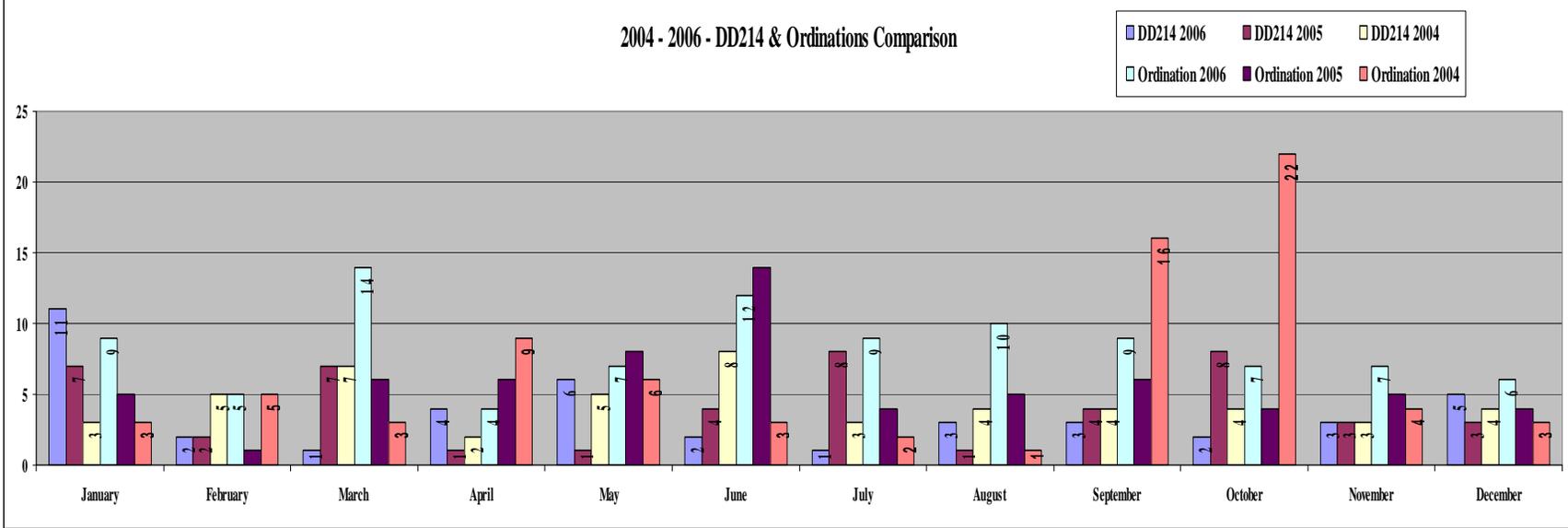
2002 - 2006 Marriage License Comparison



2002 - 2006 Judgements Comparison



2004 - 2006 - DD214 & Ordinations Comparison



2002 - 2006 Will Documents Executed Comparison

