



MEMO

Municipal Court

To: Finance and Personnel
From: John Proffitt, Municipal Judge
Date: February 4, 2025
Re: Request for additional hours for Clerk of Courts

Background information:

During my initial time here as Municipal Judge, two items were discovered that seemed to require attention, the completion of which would require additional hours to be completed over and above the normal hours assigned to the clerk of courts. The first item was the discovery that over 900 citations issued by the police department during the period of 2020 through 2024 had no dispositions returned to the police department. Completion of this item would require the clerk of courts to go into the boxes in storage and search for each individual citation and report the finding back to the police department.

The second item was finding no Standard Operating Procedures Manual in the Department from which a new clerk could find the appropriate processes to perform each step of handling citations as they came into the Department, were assigned to the court docket, and then were processed after a final finding was made for each one.

After discussions with Mayor Penterman, we increased the hours of employment for the clerk from 23 hours per week to 29 hours per week with the extra hours to be dedicated specifically to these two tasks. It was my assumption (shame on me) that these hours would continue until the two tasks were complete. I should have confirmed that assumption at the end of 2024 with staff, that those hours would extend into the 2025 budget. As a result, the 2025 budget only reflected the clerk working the original 23 hours per week. Jessica (the clerk of courts) had continued working the 29 hours that she and I both believed to have been authorized. When Will notified me that those additional hours had not been approved past 2024 and that as a result we would run out of hours for her position before the end of 2025, a meeting with the mayor, finance director, HR director and myself was held to report on the status of the work, and to seek a solution.

I reported that as of January 29, 2025, the backlog of citations due back to the police department has been completed. Jessica has also completed what will be the index of the SOP manual, with only the actual writing to be completed. She has estimated that she should be able to complete the project by the end of June, 2025. The completion of both items will require 156 additional hours for her position, above what had been budgeted for the year.

Strategic Plan:

To comply with the requirements of the Court in reporting dispositions back to the Police Department, the first task was essential. It appears that most of the backlog occurred during a time when there was a succession of clerks in that position and sadly, reporting was not handled well, perhaps due to training. It was also during COVID, which required additional tasks to even handle Court. At any rate, that portion of the work has now been completed, and the Court is now compliant with those requirements.

The SOP manual is not a mandated item for the Court to the best of my knowledge. However, as I came on as a new Judge, the clerk of courts I inherited as in the process of retiring. Her departure happened before I had a new clerk of courts hired, and without an SOP manual, we had to hire an outside clerk from another court to come in and help Jessica begin to learn the process. Fortunately Jessica is an excellent learner as with minimal direct help, and assistance with software vendors she was quickly trained. But I think she is an exception because of her education and past experience. With an SOP manual, I think a newly hired clerk who does not have Jessica's background, will acclimate to the processes required to fulfill the requirements of the position much more quickly by having a ready reference to rely on. I hope to have Jessica for the duration of my term, but this would be a great asset, written by someone with an education background.

Budget: The additional 156 hours estimated to complete the writing of the manual by the end of June would require an increase to the Court budget of \$4,4153 with all cost included for these hours.

Staff Recommended Action:

Approve an additional 156 hours for the Clerk of Court hours in the Court budget to be covered by city fund balance or unspent 2025 budgeted funds.