



MEMO

Mayor's Office

To: Common Council
From: Mayor Penterman
Date: August 2, 2022
Re: Municipal Court Operations

There has been increase in complaints from the public around the lack of customer service the municipal court has been providing. With a gain in efficiency is a loss in office hours and availability. The current clerk of court has made significant improvements to the administrative processes. With this, there has been less time spent in the office and standard office hours have not been upheld.

Because of this, other staff has been fielding calls that they haven't been able to answer. Some of these calls have been bounced around to City staff and ended up in a voicemail box of many different departments. Some have been returned in a reasonable time while others haven't. Customers that come in can make payments, but other information has been limited if the clerk of courts isn't present.

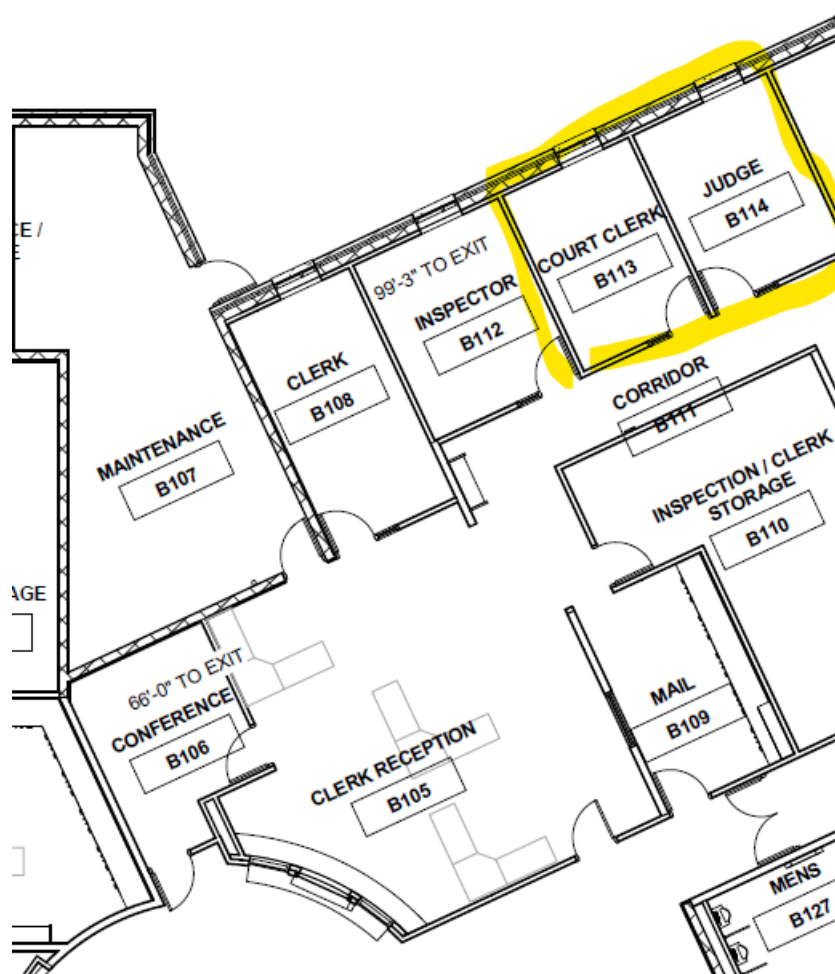
This seems to have caused deterioration in trust and respect for law enforcement and the judiciary which is a big problem, and actions locally can either help or hinder, and they directly impact local attitudes toward police department and the Court. For obvious reasons the police department, the City Attorney and the Muni Court will always receive complaints from some unhappy defendants, so we must take many complaints with a grain of salt, but some are legitimate, and when the judiciary shows no respect to the people, the people will respond in kind.

With the recent resignation of the current Clerk of Courts I would like to reestablish some standards that I believe will improve the operations of the judiciary. Below are the items I would like to address

- Established office hours regardless of workload. This will give customers a chance to speak with someone from the court regarding their questions.
- Appoint a deputy Clerk of Courts for the days the clerk of courts isn't scheduled to answer the questions of the customer that call or stopped in.

- Consistently adhere to the already established court room and trial hours until a case is made to change to something different

In addition to operating office hours, we are also running into office space shortages around inspections and clerk area. Right now, both clerk of courts and the Judge have an office space. (See image below).



Both roles spend limited time in the office leaving both these spaces vacant much of the week. I would like to consolidate the office space of both the Judge and Clerk of Court like how it was with Judge Schaffer in our old municipal building and how it is with our current City Attorney and Paralegal. This will free up an office for the Code Enforcement officer who has confidential and sometimes confrontational conversation that requires a closed door.

I have looked at other office space with the current Judge. These options will take away a conference room and net the same space for both of these roles. I would like to try this arrangement before making any more changes that will have a financial impact.

With that I would also recommend the below that is pursuant to state Statue 755.09.

- Consolidate office space of the Clerk of Court and Judge to better utilize the office space for our growing staff.

Recommended Actions:

Motion 1

Approve standard office operation hours where clerk of courts will be available to answer calls, return voicemails and greet customers in person. The standard hours shall be:

Monday 8am – 2pm
Tuesday 8am – 5pm
Thursday 8am – 2pm

Motion 2

Approve the current standard court schedule that includes:

Initials - Tuesday – 9 am and 4 pm
Trial - Tuesday 1pm-4pm
Juvenile Court - One Tuesday per month at the Kaukauna High School

Motion 3

Approve the consolidated office space of both the Judge and Clerk of Court to one office space of which is the current Judge Office space

Motion 4

Direct the Mayor to appoint a deputy clerk of courts that is a fulltime staff member