

AGENDA ITEM 32

Discuss and take appropriate action to grant 3 new staff positions to the District Clerks Office.

District Clerk Bonnie J. Wolbrueck and County Budget analyst Ashlie Koenig addressed the Court. [Note that a visual reference to *The 1985 Family Code* book appeared to be ¼ inch thick and the current version to be 2.0 inches thick]. Ms. Wolbrueck stressed that her office is working at a high rate of efficiency, but that new duties assigned by state code have stretched the staff to a critical point. At this point, work is going undone and the District Clerks Office has been written up during audits for this reason. She further noted that one member of her management staff will leave her office when Judge Carnes moves all of his hearings to the new juvenile center in July. Funding will cost from \$34,349 to \$39,000 to finish the budget year.

Moved: **Commissioner Boatright**

Seconded: **Commissioner Limmer**

Motion: To grant three (3) new staff positions to the District Clerks Office.

Vote: **5 - 0**

< Attachment >

MEMO

TO: Judge Doerfler
Commissioner Curlee
Commissioner Boatright
Commissioner Hays
Commissioner Limmer

4-6-04 agenda -

FROM: Bonnie J. Wolbrueck
District Clerk

Thanks,
SJ

Date: March 31, 2004
In re: Request for Staff

1980 – yes, I still remember it well! I was Chief Deputy District Clerk. It was the year the local paper ran a cartoon of the District Clerk’s office showing stacks and stacks of court files unprocessed! The infamous 80’s hit the District Clerk’s office with vengeance!

And, yes, history does repeat itself! Today, case filings are skyrocketing and the staff ratio to cases filed is back to the unworkable numbers of the 80’s – see attached documentation. Although statutory and rule changes requiring staff actions have increased by 100s fold since the 80’s and although we continue to work more efficiently, staff can only do so much and then matters are left undone! We have again reached the undone state!

To obtain a ratio of case filings to staff at a workable level of under 400 again, the District Clerk staff should be increased by 5. To assist our immediate crisis, I am currently requesting 3 new staff positions. The remainder will be reviewed for the next budget year. **Gentlemen – The District Clerk’s office must have relief. We need help today!**

Since the last courts were added with staffing increases in 2000, family filings are up 30%, civil 66%, delinquent tax 113%, felony criminal 25% and juvenile 72%. **To current date, filings have increased from the same date last year as follows: delinquent tax – 109%; family – 25%; civil – 58%; juvenile – 61%.**

The following new positions are requested effective June 1st :

TOTAL BUDGET Request for Remainder of Year:		34,339 \$39,620
Position #1 - Juvenile Court Clerk	Group 17*	\$ 25,492
* same group as current District Clerk staff with same job description and title		
FICA, Retirement, Insurance -		9,330
ANNUAL TOTAL:		\$ 34,822

11,608 for 4 mos.

Increased filings (pleadings, documents, 72% increase), increased time in hearings (2 ½ - 3 days a week- 100% increase), increased issuances (in excess of 150 summons per month, 110% increase), increased paper work (115% increase in scanning requirements) along with hearings held away from the office in the juvenile center have caused major havoc in the juvenile division. Management staff (group 24 pay group) has taken over juvenile duties due to excessive workload of other staff. Using management staff in this position is an inefficient use of county funds besides creating extensive office problems when most knowledgeable staff is unavailable.

Position #2	OAG Filings Clerk	Group 16*	\$ 24,257
* same group as current District Clerk staff with same job description and title			
	FICA, Retirement, Insurance -	9,110	
	ANNUAL TOTAL:	\$ 33,367	
	Balance -current budget year – 4 months	\$ 12,834	11,123

The Attorney General caseload has increased substantially. With the increase, the OAG Filings Clerk is unable to handle the workload causing complaints from the court and the OAG. Current workload is on a 90-day processing delay schedule from the original 30-day. As a temporary measure, assistance was given by the tax filings clerk (also serves as accounting specialist/bookkeeper). With the delinquent tax caseload increasing by 113%, this staff person can no longer assist the OAG clerk nor has time for office accounting duties. With the establishment of the new courtroom on June 1, the court master will be adding an additional day a week to our OAG caseload, which will double the weekly caseload. Currently, each court day has a docket of around 100 cases.

Position # 3	Tax Court Clerk	Group 17*	\$ 25,492
* same group as current District Clerk staff with same job description and title			
	FICA, Retirement, Insurance -	9,330	
	ANNUAL TOTAL:	\$ 34,822	
	Balance - current budget year – 4 months	\$ 13,393	11,608

Delinquent tax filings have increased by 113% in the last three years from filings of 500 cases in 2000 to 1066 in 2003. In the past, the processing of the tax cases was also a job function of the accounting specialist. With the increase of tax filings, orders of sale and writs of execution, accounting priorities have become secondary and thus going undone. Accounting/bookkeeping must be a high priority and will only be accomplished with the establishment of this new position. Our accounting crisis has been written up by the County Auditor in auditing reports for the last couple of years.

Additional positions required, but not requested at this time:

- Position #4** **Records Management Clerk** – Group 15 (\$23,100) - Document imaging, storage and destruction of case records.
- Position #5** **Case Filings Clerk** - Group 16 (\$24,257)- Initial intake of all new case filings and processing.

County Activity – Cases Filed with District Clerk

POP.	YEAR	COURTS	CASES FILED Sept-Aug.	STAFF PER CASE FILED	CASES DISPOSED Sept-Aug	STAFF PER CASES DSPSD	CASES PENDING Sept. 1	STAFF District Clerk	BUDGET	Budget % Inc. with Staff Inc.
77,000	1980	1 DC*	1513	756	1018	509		2	59,593	
	1981	2 DC (277)	1552	517	1489	496		3	81,405	35%
	1982	2	1659	414	N/A	unkn		4	108,676	33%
	1983	2	1859	413	N/A	unkn		5	139,750	28%
	1984	2	2067		N/A			5	154,419	
115,000	1985	2	2179	363	2221	370	1713	6	182,806	30%
	1986	2	2764		2652			7	220,650	21%
	1987	3 CC(1)	3318	414	2665	333		8	172,222 (9 mos.)	
	1988	3	3364		2735			8	228,483	3%
	1989	4 DC (368)	3104	344	3201	355		9	243,393	6%
139,551	1990	4	3564	356	3396	339	2659	10	268,737	20%
	1991	5 CC(2)	3759	313	3495	291		12	322,391	47%
	1992	5	4001	333	3722	310		12	301,061	
	1993	5	3822		3625			12	360,167	
	1994	5	4344		3826			12	421,511	
	1995	5	4551	350	4206	323	5349	13	448,256	6%
	1996	5	4763		4337			13	469,635	25%
	1997	5	5084	363	5111	365		14	559,238	19%
	1998	5	5216		5156			14	603,860	
	1999	5	5837	389	5412	360		15	773,607	38%
249,967	2000	7 DC (395) CC (3)	6185	344	6973	387	5382	18	771,602	-1%

	2001	7	6790 (9% inc)	357	5612	295	6560	19	922,754	19%
	2002	7	7199 (6% inc)	378	6367	335		19	1,014,207	
	2003	7	8514 (18% inc)	448	6537	344	9369	19	1,091,087	
EST.	2004	7	9365	492	6929 (6% inc)	364		19	1,096,630	
			(10% inc.)	425				22	1,136,250	
				390				24		
			9822 (15% inc.)	517				19		
				446				22		
				409				24		

*DC = District Court CC = County Court at Law

Costs per case filed:

1980	\$ 39
1985	84
1990	75
2000	125
2003	128
2004	117

Comparison Counties – District Clerk Staff per Cases Filed:

Ft. Bend – 229
Denton – 392
Collin – 235

AGENDA ITEM 33

Consider declaring an emergency and approving a budget amendment to acknowledge additional revenue for County Attorney:

0100-0000-335601	County Attorney Salary Supplement	50,850.00
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County Attorney Gene Taylor and Julie Kiley addressed the Court.

Moved: **Judge Doerfler**

Seconded: **Commissioner Limmer**

Motion: To declare an emergency and approving a budget amendment to acknowledge additional revenue for County Attorney:

0100-0000-335601	County Attorney Salary Supplement	50,850.00
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Vote: **5 - 0**

< Attachment >