

NEEDS OF THE CIRCUIT COURT IN WATERTOWN/CODINGTON COUNTY

Requesting that the **Board hire an architect /engineer**
to develop options for **remodeling** the existing space
which will accommodate needs of the public and the court.

January 15, 2002

2013 minor updates - under way.

July of last year Magistrate Judge Pierce began holding misdemeanor jury trials here in Codington County. Addition to her regular Tuesday magistrate court day and the calendars of Judges Timm and Roehr.

OVERALL NEEDS OF THE COURT have been growing for a long time. We have been sensitive of county's **COMPETING PRIORITIES** and **AVAILABILITY** of **FUNDS**. No longer able to contain our concerns through the conventional ways of **MANAGING, REARRANGING, AND MANIPULATING** our court docket.

OUR OWN NEEDS ANALYSIS involved

- Reviewing operations (facilities should serve operations, we shouldn't try to fit operations into facilities)
- Evaluated existing space allocated to the court functions
- Projected growth and change (how we do business, not just how much business)
 - Case filings: civil and criminal (history indicates future trends)
 - Jury usage
 - Population (indicator of future needs)

IN OUR MANAGEMENT REVIEW, WE CONSIDERED

- Courtroom sharing
- Reassignment days out of county
- Alternative uses, hours, scheduling days
- Current and past jury usage

SOUGHT INPUT

- May 7, 2001 met with state's attorney Vince Foley, president of local bar association David Strait, Commissioner Thomas, auditor Pat Walder, and various court personnel
- July 10, 2001 wrote letter requesting the county's attention to both cosmetic and structural changes (paint, counters, shelves, drapes, etc., plus major remodeling)

IDENTIFIED FOLLOWING CONCERNS

- Courtroom space
- Security concerns
- Consultation/meeting space for attorney & clients
- Privacy and confidentiality issues

FOCUS on Jury Usage (Primary concern)

- A quick look at own checkbook shows increasing use of jurors
- Average trial lasts a day, but some have gone 4-5 days; average jury days in a year is 14 (19 two years ago)
 - Criminal trials last 1 to 2 days. Civil usually last 5 days. Some go longer
- Average jurors summoned in for one trial is 44 right now; but some cases require a panel of up to 80 to get 12 seated
 - Average is 60. 6-8 trials had 65-90 summoned.
- Average jury trial scheduled in a year is 32; in 1999 was 43; only about 14 of them go to trial but have to schedule all of them
 - 2012, 33 notices sent out last year. 7 held. 2011, 36 notices and 10 held
- The very UNPREDICTABILITY requires need to be flexible, to accommodate the worst case, and hope for the best
- Current space requires scheduling out regular court days 6 months in advance, with actual trials being scheduled 2-3 months in advance; you can imagine the juggling that goes on when one settles or is moved for any other reason; might be months before next day is available due to 3 judges having to share one room

FOCUS on Caseload

- Caseload over the past 10 years for both Civil and Criminal shows climbing trends (graphs)
- Court has no control over the cases that come before; does not influence number of petitions, complaints or tickets; up to 75% might be dismissed or settled, but have to be prepared to address all of them. Except for payable offenses on traffic tickets, all have at least one appearance to get started
- Civil cases in 1990 were less than 1500; last year were over 2200
- Criminal cases in 1990 were about 4500; last year over 7000
- Standing room only in small courtroom.
- Judge need has been stable about 1.52 2.0 judges; also serving Grant, Deuel, Clark, and Hamlin Counties; now also covering Kingsbury County until new judge is appointed

FOCUS on Population

- Longer history field
 - 1970 19,140 in Codington County
 - 1980 20,885
 - 1990 22,698
 - 2000 25,897
 - 2010 27,442