



76th /276th JUDICIAL DISTRICT COURT

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TO THE HONORABLE JUDGE BRIAN LEE AND TITUS COUNTY COMMISSIONERS

Re: Budget Request for the 76th/276th District Court

Gentlemen:

Please accept this letter as a formal request for additional staff for the 76th/276th Judicial District Courts for the new budget year. We apologize for not being able to address you in person, but we have hearings that were already set prior to our having been given notice that this would be your last day of budget workshop. Unfortunately, we were not able to fully address all issues and requests during our allotted time slot.

Over the past year, Covid has made many changes to the way we do Court. In one way we were stalled, but in many others, we were busier than ever. We were given many new state mandated requirements by OCA and the Texas Supreme Court such as making Covid policies for every aspect of our court and scheduling and operating zoom hearings. While it may have appeared that Court slowed down, in reality, the only slowing down was as to jury trials. The Court needs a Court Coordinator. Ken Wilson has been filling in for this position as well as his bailiff duties during the past year in helping us draft the policies, doing all of our scheduling for both courts and administering the zoom hearings. In our opinion this is too much for one person to do, especially now that we are required to use all reasonable efforts to do both in person and zoom court. All surrounding Courts have had Court Coordinators all along, prior to Covid. We respectfully request that you provide a new position of Court Coordinator for the 76th/276th Judicial District Courts. Prior to requesting an increase in pay for Mr. Wilson, we asked Barbara to research pay for a Court Coordinator. Her research indicated that estimated pay for a Court Coor-

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dinator would be \$32,000 per year, and with benefits would be an increase to the County of \$50,000.00 for a new staff position.

Additionally, we are requesting that you increase the number of hours for the part-time bailiff position, making it a full-time position. As has been stated to you by not only us, but also the DA and the District Clerk, we will be having a significant increase in court cases and trials. We must have at least one bailiff in Court and a second bailiff at the metal detectors doing required Covid screening. It was our intention to ask for this during our initial meeting, but we ran out of time. The auditor has calculated the cost to be a total increase of \$25,000.00.

Thank you so much for your consideration of these requests. It is imperative for the safety of the community that our office and Courts are fully staffed and operational. We appreciate your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Angela Saucier

Angela Saucier
District Judge
76th Judicial District Court

Robert Rolston

District Judge
276th Judicial District Court

To: District Judges Titus County
From: Barbara Shurbet, County Auditor
Subject: Cost Estimates for District Judges –Preliminary Budget Considerations
Date: June 7, 2021

Item #1: Criminal Indigent Defense Rate Increase: Increase the hourly rate from \$75 to \$100 in keeping with the change in the CPS appointed attorney fees. The standard case fee of \$ 400 or \$500 will not change. The hourly rate for time worked in excess of the standard case fee will increase by \$ 25 per hour. The estimate for this increase is \$ 15,000.

Item #2: CPS Appointed Attorney: The rate for this service has for many years been \$ 75 per hour. The rate was increased to \$ 100 effective April 1, 2021. This will cost approximately \$ 36,000 annually.

Item #2: Add Full Time Court Administrative Support Staff: The hourly rate for this position is estimated at \$ 15 per hour which is equivalent to the hourly rate of the district attorney legal secretarial staff resulting in annual salary of \$ 31,200 plus benefits (including health and dental insurance, payroll taxes and retirement) of \$18,800 for a total cost of \$ 50,000.

Item #3: Move Part-Time Bailiff to Full Time: Currently, the part time bailiff is paid \$ 25 per hour and the current budget allows for 1,200 hours per year. The cost to increase this position to full time will be \$22,000 for salary plus benefits of \$ 3,063 for a total cost of \$ 25,063.

Item #4: Increase Rate of Pay for Current Full-time Bailiff: The current rate of pay for the bailiff is \$ 22.08 per hour. The cost to increase this position to \$ 25 per hour will be \$ 6,074 plus benefits of \$ 1,337 for a total of \$ 7,410. This is an increase of 13.25% and after taxes would result in an estimated increase in the take-home pay of \$ 400 per month. The hourly rate for the highest paid deputy is \$ 25.18 per hour.

REQUESTED RESEARCH – STAFF IN DISTRICT JUDGES OFFICES

We made calls and I reached out to other auditors regarding the staff in the district judges' offices. In summary:

Hopkins County – 1.5 court coordinator position with the .5 being a new part-time position

2 Bailiffs

Bowie County – Each judge has court coordinator and bailiff. Also, a staff attorney position is funded to do research and assist district judges as needed.

Lamar County - Each judge has court coordinator and bailiff.

Cass County – Part-time bailiff who is also precinct Constable. Court coordinator duties are shared with district judge and county court at law judge.

Ward County – 1 court coordinator and 1 office staff person. Bailiff is shared between district and county court.

Ector County – There are 5 district courts in Ector County. Each has: court administrator and bailiff. Until about 3 years ago, they did not have bailiff positions; instead, courthouse security served as bailiff. One of the district judges found in the statutes that the courts were supposed to have a bailiff and 1 bailiff position was funded for each district court.

Cooke County – 1.5 court coordinator positions with the half position being increased to full time for the upcoming year.

REQUESTED RESEARCH – POSSIBLE GRANT FOR INDIGENT COSTS

Attached is the information for the grants that are available through the Texas Indigent Defense Commission. The application due date was May 7, 2021. We have confirmed this morning with Mr. Edwin Colfax, Director of Grant Funding with TIDC that applications are still being accepted. It appears that Titus County might possibly qualify to apply for the multi-year improvement grant. The full application requirements begin on page 3. There are 7 sections that require a narrative explaining the proposed use of the funds as well as the development of an evaluation system that is measurable among many other stipulations. I believe that you likely recognized the level of knowledge required to apply for this grant when you read through the initial email that I sent to you in March. I have reviewed these requirements and am sorry to say that I do not have the expertise to be able to write this grant. I am confident in my ability to provide the financial management for this grant.