

W8b

AGENDA COVER MEMO

AGENDA DATES: January 29, 2003

TO: Board of County Commissioners

PRESENTED BY: David Garrick, Sr. Management Analyst

AGENDA TITLE: In the Matter of Establishing Two Temporary Justice Court Clerk Positions for the Central Lane Justice Court

I. MOTION

MOVE APPROVAL OF THE ORDER ESTABLISHING TWO TEMPORARY JUSTICE COURT CLERK POSITIONS FOR THE CENTRAL LANE JUSTICE COURT

II. ISSUE OR PROBLEM

The workload at the Central Lane Justice Court has risen substantially over the last five years. The court has asked for additional staff resources. The question before the Board is whether or not to establish two temporary positions to help handle the workload.

III. DISCUSSION

A. Background

On April 11, 1989 the Lane County Sheriff's Office presented a proposal to the Board of Commissioners requesting approval to establish a new traffic team. The proposal stated that Lane County had jumped to number two in the state for traffic fatalities with alcohol and speed being the most significant factors. The proposal hinged on establishing a third justice court wherein the county could retain 100% of the fine revenue generated. The concept was to generate enough revenue to pay for the court and the traffic team. The Board approved both the team and the court ideas in concept.

On May 24, 1989 the Board approved the establishment of the Central Lane Justice Court District. After considering six different options, the Board approved implementing the "least cost" option for an infractions-only court on February 13, 1990. The approved staffing plan included a 1.0 FTE Justice of the Peace, a 1.0 Sr. Justice Court Clerk, and 2.0 FTE regular Justice Court

Clerk positions for 4.0 FTE total. The court officially opened its doors in April 1990.

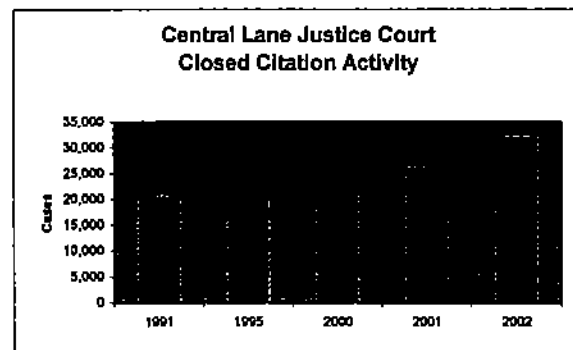
Two new clerical staff were added in FY 91-92 to handle the caseload increase from the addition of two additional traffic team deputies and a records officer assigned to the Santa Clara and Hayden Bridge areas. A 0.5 FTE was also added that year to begin work on collecting revenue from unpaid/delinquent citations. This latter activity proved so successful that the Board approved increasing the part-time collections clerk to full-time in FY 92-93, bringing the staffing up to 7.0 FTE where it is today.

In the last eleven years the caseload has grown to the point where staff can no longer handle it. They have asked for an additional clerical position.

B. Analysis

The staffing pattern at the Central Lane Justice Court has remained the same for the last eleven years. The following data table and bar chart show how the level of citation activity has grown over that same period.

Year	Cases Closed
1991	20,087
1995	19,891
2000	21,944
2001	25,671
2002	31,737



This data shows a 10% increase in activity from 1995 to 2000, a 17% increase from 2000 to 2001, and nearly a 24% increase from 2001 to 2002.

To further validate the trend data, I have attached a moving range statistical control chart (Attachment A) used to predict future results/performance. Any data points that are either above the UCL (upper control limit) or below the LCL (lower control limit) indicate that there is either a significant shift/trend in performance or a single event that has caused a one-time variation in performance. As can be seen, the chart shows a significant trend/shift in demand/workload that is clearly not a one-time event.

What the data does not show is the additional workload resulting from civil cases, small claims, FEDs (evictions), and truancy cases. In 2001 the court handled 10 civil cases, about 200 small claims, and over 150 truancy cases, nearly double the prior year level. Going along with the caseload increase is all of the paperwork process, court docketing, jury trials, payment agreements, drivers license suspensions, collections agency preparation, community service

and traffic school assignments, DMV extracts, filing, and cash handling to name a few.

As can be seen, handling citations is a labor intensive process that requires focus and extreme accuracy. For comparison purposes, when looking at just the citation activity, the Florence Justice Court handles about 4,500 cases per year with 2.5 FTE for an average of 1,800 cases per employee per year. Using 31,737 cases seen last year, Central Lane's 5.0 FTE processed 6,340 cases per employee per year.

Cash turnover at Central Lane for the year ending June 30, 2002 totaled \$3,976,000. Half of this revenue is used to cover court and traffic team operations and the other half is distributed to the state and other jurisdictions.

In June of 2002, County Administration contracted with the Office of the State Court Administrator's Office to conduct a study of Central Lane court operations. Richard Vandiver, Ph.d., Court Programs Analyst, was asked to objectively assess whether the Central Lane Justice Court needed additional staff resources as requested by studying the Court's operation and comparing it with other courts who handle similar cases.

The central question of the study concerned whether expanding the case processing staff was justified by the increasing workload. Alternatively, could the Court improve its case processing through: modification of its staff organization and efficiency, innovation in its procedures, and increasing its access to automation of manual processes?

To summarize the studies findings, the study,

"...did produced evidence in support of the request of the Central Lane Justice Court for an additional FTE staff position. It also produced evidence for a need for major changes in the organization, administration and technology of the court for long-term improvements. Adding the staff position at this point will aid the court in completing its current work, ease tensions and pressures generated from staff being gone for vacations, family or personal illness, or training opportunities."

As a follow-up to the court study the Central Lane staff underwent a rapid process improvement session to examine workflow in the court. The result was to streamline several processes, remove some redundant steps and make some minor time saving changes, but nothing that would reduce the overall workload and forego the need for additional staff.

On top of the current workload is an additional consideration. That is, the potential failure of Measure 28 in January. If the measure fails, the local State Court will be cut an additional 20% on top of the 10% reduction it has already taken. The fallout may well result in a shift of more small claims and FED's to the justice court.

The FY 02-03 adopted court budget included additional extra help dollars to address the workload issue until such time as the county administrator was convinced that all other options had been explored. Two extra help people have been working at the court. Due to the uncertainty surrounding the state reductions and State Police layoffs that could drastically affect the other justice courts, the decision whether to add a new position or not was delayed. As a result, the extra help staff has stayed on past their 520 hours. If any new positions are to be established, they need to accommodate the current extra help employees.

Human Resources has observed the Central Lane court operations and agrees that additional staff is needed. Their recommendation is to add two temporary (1040 hour) positions for the rest of this year. Then, July 1, 2003 convert the two temps into a single full-time position to avoid the extra benefit costs.

C. Alternative/Options

1. Do not approve additional staff support for the justice court. This would not be a good option since staff are already under a great degree of stress and the court cannot adequately cover all court operations during periods of vacation and sick leave.
2. Approve the addition of two temporary positions. This will provide the ongoing staff assistance currently required and addresses the need to pay the extra help clerks for their additional hours. The budget does include sufficient funding to add both of these positions this year.

D. Recommendation

Staff recommends option 2, approving two new temporary positions since there is already sufficient funding budgeted for this purpose.

IV. IMPLEMENTATION/FOLLOW-UP

Following Board approval, paperwork will be processed as soon as possible to convert the positions to temporary status. The two temporary positions will be converted to a single full-time position in the upcoming FY 03-04 budget process.

V. ATTACHMENTS

Board Order
Attachment A "Central Lane Justice Court Caseload Trend Analysis"

IN THE BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS OF LANE COUNTY,
OREGON

RESOLUTION AND
ORDER 03-

) IN THE MATTER OF ESTABLISHING
) TWO TEMPORARY JUSTICE COURT
) CLERK POSITIONS FOR THE
) CENTRAL LANE JUSTICE COURT
)

WHEREAS, The Central Lane Justice Court has maintained the same staffing level for the last eleven year; and

WHEREAS, the court's caseload has seen tremendous growth over the last few years; and

WHEREAS, court operations have been studied by the Office of the State Court Administrator, the county's Human Resources staff, and by a rapid process improvement project; and

WHEREAS, the court has followed through by implementing a number of the recommendations from the original study and RPI process; now, therefore,

IT IS HEREBY RESOLVED AND ORDERED, that, two temporary Justice Court Clerk positions be established in the Central Lane Justice Court to handle the increased workload and that the position costs be paid from the existing court budget.

Dated this ____ day of _____, 2002.

Chair, Board of County Commissioners

APPROVED AS TO FORM
Date 1/21/03 Lane County
Jenna J. [Signature]
OFFICE OF LEGAL COUNSEL

In the Matter of Establishing Two Temporary Justice Court Clerk Positions for the Central Lane Justice Court

Central Lane Justice Court Caseload Trend Analysis

