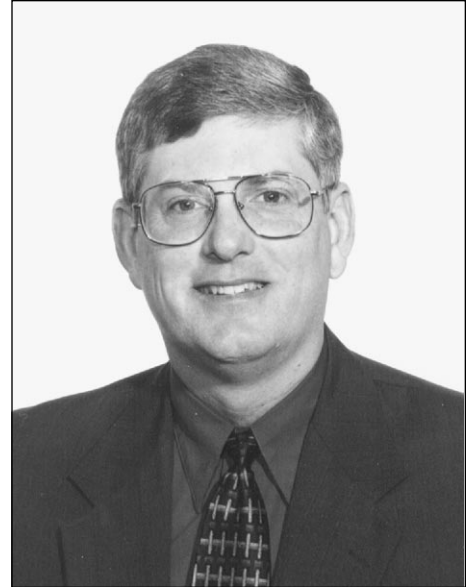


Circuit Court Happenings

by **Kevin M. Oeffner**
Circuit Court Administrator



A number of issues have been reviewed and addressed recently that deserve mention in this column. These “snippets” are presented below to inform you of some upcoming changes in Circuit Court.

We are making one change in the way that transcripts are requested when pertaining to events originating in our video courtrooms (both Circuit and Probate). Attorneys, litigants, and other interested parties must contact the Court Administrator’s Office when requesting transcripts rather than submitting their request directly to the transcription agency that services the applicable courtroom.

We want to more effectively manage the transcript process, and the foundation for doing so is to know how long it takes for transcripts to be prepared upon request. Among other things, we will consider increasing the number of transcription agencies with which we do business and revising our method for distributing transcript assignments. Our goal is to enhance the quality of transcripts and speed up their delivery.

Two new circuit judgeships will be created effective January 1, 2003. The new judges, to be elected this coming November, will be assigned to the family division. Judge Patrick Brennan will transfer from the family division to the general jurisdiction division in December. These moves will result in a net increase of one judge in both the family and general jurisdiction divisions.

To accommodate the new judges, two courtrooms and the associated jury rooms, chambers, and staff offices will be constructed in the West Wing Extension of the courthouse. This is the building in which the Prosecutor’s Office is located. The courtrooms will be constructed in the north end of the first floor. Construction will begin this month and is expected to be completed in October.

Those acquainted with the West Wing Extension know that the courtrooms will be constructed in space currently occupied by the Library for the Visually and Physically Impaired. The Library will be relocated to the opposite end of the first floor. Patrons of the Library will experience little, if any, disruption of service.

All civil cases more than 24 months old will be included in an upcoming Settlement Week scheduled for October 2-4, 2002. More than 80 attorneys have agreed to serve as facilitators. The motion call on October 2 will be canceled for general jurisdiction judges only so that courtrooms and jury rooms can be reserved for settlement conferences. Please note that family judges will hold their motion call that day.

No general jurisdiction trials will be conducted (unless they are a continuation from the previous week) and no

jurors will be summoned. Motions to exempt cases from Settlement Week will be heard by Judge Potts (even-numbered cases) and Judge Andrews (odd-numbered cases). Cases that do not settle will be immediately set for trial before a visiting judge during the last quarter of calendar year 2002.

Those who accept appointments to represent indigent criminal defendants are reminded that a seminar has been scheduled pertaining to the Adult (Drug) Treatment Court. Attendance is required for those who wish to continue receiving criminal appointments. If you did not attend this free seminar last month, the program will be offered again at 1:00 p.m. on Wednesday, June 26 in the Commissioners Auditorium. Topics include admission criteria and program eligibility. The Adult Treatment Court has been progressing nicely since its inaugural session last September. More than 20 offenders have been accepted into the program, which meets every other week. A couple of my past columns have been devoted to the Adult and Juvenile Treatment Courts. You may view past columns at the Circuit Court Web site.

While we’re on the topic, the county recently unveiled its new Web site that includes several enhancements to the Circuit Court’s Web site. You may access information about court policies and procedures, hours of operation, holiday closures, accommodations for visually and physically impaired persons, forms, local administrative orders and court rules governing our operations, judicial and staff contacts, alternative dispute resolution programs, juror information, and a host of other topics. Go to the county’s start page at www.co.oakland.mi.us. Clicking on “Judicial” followed by “Circuit Court” will get you to our Web site. As mentioned above, you may access past LACHES articles by clicking on “Court News & Employment” and scrolling down to the section on LACHES.

The topics referenced above represent the “tip of the iceberg” in terms of the latest happenings at Circuit Court. Space doesn’t permit a more detailed explanation of the topics; however, you are always welcome to contact the Court Administrator’s Office if you have any questions or need additional information.

Until next month ...