Dept Name: JUSTICE COURT

Davis COUNTY

Mission Statement

The mission statement of the Davis County Justice Court is to provide the people with an open, fair, efficient and independent forum for the advancement of justice under the law.

Prior Year Inputs/Outputs

FTE (2021):
The Covid-19 pandemic continues to affect the court.

Since 3/12/20 we have been ***working in the office*** more than **306 days** and have handled approximately **9,500** hearings (about 30 hearings per day).

Since 1/1/21 we have been ***working in the office*** more than **150 days** and have handled more than **5,000** hearings (about 33 hearings per day).

Since 3/12/20 we have scheduled approximately **30 jury trials.** In May 2021 we initiated a judge-facilitated mediation program and have reduced the number of jury trials that are **pending to 12**. There are currently 8 cases, set for jury trial, scheduled to be mediated. By November 2021 there may only be 4 jury trials that are pending.

Since 3/12/20 we have scheduled numerous bench trials. Having been given permission to hold bench trials we have reduced the number of **pending bench trials to 8.**

From 8/20 to the present we have conducted **836 Small Claims hearings**. Presently, there is no backlog in Small Claims cases.

Core Functions & Services

The core function of any court, including the Davis County Justice Court, is to provide an impartial forum for dispute resolution.

This core function includes: ensuring access to the court process for all who seek to use it; managing the business of the court in a manner that promotes efficiency, transparency, fairness, timeliness for court patrons and working with other law enforcement entities to develop strategies that combine the interests of all three branches of government.

The core function affects Davis County and its citizens by giving them an effective and efficient forum to resolve disputes. No entity is denied access to the Court's process. Because the Court manages its business efficiently Court users have the opportunity for fair and timely dispute resolution. Finally, working with other law enforcement entities, e.g., prosecutors, public defenders, and law enforcement agencies, the Court has and is developing strategies that combine the interests of County and municipal government for the benefit of all citizens and visitors.

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Current Year Projected Outcomes

We don't generate income by producing "widgets." The income that we generate is the result of fines and fees that are imposed from convictions in cases that are filed by law enforcement, e.g. local police officers, county sheriffs, highway patrol troopers, and prosecuting attorneys. A reduction in the number of cases filed *or* the inability of defendants to pay fines and fees affects our "bottom line." This year the number of cases is up a little from last year, e.g., thirteen percent (13%), eight hundred (800) cases or approximately sixty-six (66) cases per month.

As the COVID-19 pandemic continues to affect the number of cases filed *and* defendants' ability to pay, we have been granting extensions to pay fines and fees. We have been imposing fines and setting payments at rates that defendants can afford and pay given input about their income and budgets. We have been closely monitoring the status of existing fines and fees and only letting cases become ninety (90) days delinquent before initiating "collection efforts," e.g., Orders to Show Cause or Review Hearings. As always, we have a statutory obligation to substitute community service hours in lieu of fines and fees and, when necessary, are making those substitutions.

Review of the "revenue" generated by the court in 2021 shows that we are on pace to collect approximately 1.5 millon dollars. The total amount that will be retained by the county will be approximately $900,000.00. The remaining $600,000.00 will be distributed to Farmington, Kaysville, West Bountiful and the state. These "revenue" figures are a little higher than last year but not by much.

Next Year Budget Initiatives

We are requesting that you approve a career ladder program and salary increases for court staff.

The proposed career ladder is a standard used by other courts (and soon to be used by the AOC) and is a means of permitting our clerks' to become more proficient and valuable to the court and its users. It is an objective standard for assessing compotency and compensation rather than seniority.

Two years ago a court employee left to make more money in the county attorney's office.

This year a court employee left to make more money in a neighboring city. With the help of HR, we went through two complete pools of applicants to find a replacement. Several very qualified applicants would not accept an offer of employment for the wage we were approved to pay them. We did find an applicant that would work for a rate we could pay her and she is developing into a very knowledgeable and productive court employee.

Through personal and private interviews we have learned that we are likely to lose two employees by the end of this year. That represents twenty-five percent (25%) of our staff. If we have the same experience replacing these two employees that we had earlier this year we will be down a quarter of our personnel until we can find qualified

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replacements. Once we make hiring decisions, extend offers and accept replacements almost forty percent (40%) of our staff will have less than three (3) years of court experience. None of them will be paid what they might make at other court jobs along the Wasatch Front. As a result we will be in a "hire, train and repeat" cycle until we become more competitive in wages and can keep our own trained employees.

This kind of disparity and experience affects the culture that we are trying to create and maintain in the court. It affects the morale of the employees who are "left behind." And, it affects the efficiency and effectiveness of the court to meet the needs of court users.