

By Michael K. Jeanes, Clerk of the Superior Court

What's behind the scenes for 2016

Each new year brings changes and challenges. Some events are surprises, like a change in policy or practice with a court customer that creates an operations problem no one thought of, despite extensive planning. Other events are known, but require months of preparation before implementation, like legislation, court rules, and other mandates. Much of what the Clerk's Office has planned for 2016 is happening behind the scenes, but will benefit our customers through more efficient and updated operations.

The Clerk's Office is enhancing the structure and performance of courtroom clerk operations. This adjustment will provide courtroom clerks direct assistance in performing their functions and improve the speed of resolving complex matters. Additional cross-training will ensure coverage for criminal trials. These enhancements will improve the courtroom experience for participants and provide relief to the clerks.

About one third of the Clerk's staff are courtroom clerks in adult and juvenile case types. Along with file counter staff, they are the most visible representatives of the office. They are who the public think of when they see courts on television. Courtroom clerks have a demanding job. When possible, they alternate one day in court with one day doing administrative functions, such as preparing minute entries and marking exhibits for trial. They handle cash, biohazardous materials, weapons, and other sensitive items. Among other outcomes, their attention to detail ensures people are confined or freed as ordered by the court. Courtroom clerks covered nearly 380,000 court hearings and created more than 650,000 minute entries in fiscal year 2014.

Each year, the Clerk's Office distributes nearly one million dollars in victim restitution, holds tens of millions of dollars of bonds and other funds in Trust, and cashiers transactions ranging from filing fees to child support payments to passport applications. The systems responsible for handling these important daily transactions are in desperate need of maintenance and replacement. Like hardware and software of every other kind, the longer they are in service, the more demanding they become. The Clerk's Office is progressing on the improvements and replacements that will make the Clerk's financial systems more stable and connected to reflect current and future needs. This will improve the speed and access for all transactions.

These two examples are part of the Clerk's larger plans for 2016. Better access and faster service are always under review at the Clerk's physical locations and with internal processes. While the steps from here to there will require some behind the scenes churn, we hope the improvements will be seamless for you as our customers. Happy New Year!