

## **Law and Justice Committee**

### **Minutes**

**May 29, 2008**

The Law and Justice Committee of the DeKalb County Board met on Thursday, May 29, 2008 @ 6:30p.m. in the DeKalb County Courthouse for a tour of the Courthouse. Chairman Richard Osborne called the meeting to order. Members present were Kenneth Andersen, Sally DeFauw, John Hulseberg and Ruth Anne Tobias. Mr. Lyle and Ms. Allen were absent. Others present for the tour were Judge Klein, Circuit Clerk Maureen Josh, Public Defender Regina Harris and Peg Neisendorf from the Circuit Clerk's Office.

Ms. Josh began the tour showing the committee the new video display system for the dockets that is to be activated soon. She showed the committee around the first floor courtroom and the meeting room just off of it and took us in to see a bond call, which is done by video linking the courtroom with the jail. From there she showed the committee around the civil division of the circuit clerk's office, the space utilization there and showed and explained the file storage system.

Judge Klein joined the tour and highlighted the bathroom situation where there is one bathroom on the second floor, old public bathrooms on the first and modern ones on the second. He also pointed out that there is only one elevator serving the courthouse that is 50 years old and although maintained, it does break down and when it does it creates a hardship for the elderly and disabled. In response to a question regarding chair-lifts on the stairs he pointed out the inadequacy of such a system in moving numbers of people. Showing the second floor courtroom and throughout his participation in the tour Judge Klein noted the care taken to preserve the historic character of the courthouse.

Judge Klein pointed out the lack of conference space for lawyers to discuss with their clients, noting the location of a table in an open stairwell and the utilization of a conference room as holding space. He showed the committee the area underneath a stairwell that serves courthouse maintenance, highlighted the restoration of stained glass windows and the most recent courtroom addition. The area serves as offices for the State's Attorney juvenile division was pointed out as was the location of the court reporter technicians' office. Judge Klein described the court reporter system, which DeKalb County was designated as a pilot user of, where recordings are made of proceedings, monitored remotely via video by a court reporter technician and transcripts are only made when requested. This system creates savings by reducing the number of court reporters needed but also inefficiencies with delays in not being able to produce transcripts immediately for juries and times when a read-back of the transcript might be requested in court. In that area Judge Klein also pointed out the only, small, currently available space in the courthouse that will soon be occupied by the Circuit Clerk's document microfilming operation, which is done partially in-house and partially

outsourced. That operation is currently done on the first floor in a small corner of a storage area.

Judge Klein also showed the committee judges' chambers, noting that they may seem somewhat large, but that also they serve as meeting spaces for conferences between the judge and attorneys. A member of the committee also noted that it is appropriate for the position to have more than just a small office. The area that serves as the Drug Court office was also shown to the committee, a room with two desks, that also serves as a passage between two other rooms, which is used fairly frequently by attorneys and courthouse personnel, making the space awkward for meeting with Drug Court clients. With hopes on the part of officials involved with Drug Court to expand to include DUIs, additional space may be needed. The possibility of renting space nearby was raised, however that is not preferred as it may create difficulties for clients as well as new rent expenses.

Ms. Harris, Public Defender took the committee down to the basement to show the Public Defenders' Office, highlighting that they have no additional space. Were an additional attorney to be added, either misdemeanor/traffic attorneys would have to share space or a section of the file storage/break room would have to be reconfigured as an office, creating the issue of where to move the file storage. Relocating the investigator's office is also not a possibility as the nature of that work requires a sense that it is a safe space for people to share information.

Ms. Peg Neisendorf from the Circuit Clerk's office showed the committee the basement document storage area that once was a holding area and is adjacent to the facility storage area for building supplies. The area that serves as the Jury Commission and Bailiff office was shown to the committee before the tour returned to the ground floor to see the Children's Waiting Room, the storage area that also doubles as the home of the document microfilming operation and the recently remodeled first floor Circuit Clerk's office.

The committee thanked their guides, and was thanked for coming and the tour ended.

Respectfully submitted,

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Chairman Richard Osborne