



COUNTY ADMINISTRATOR  
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TO: Wesley Prater, Chair  
Ways & Means Committee

THROUGH:

FROM: Robert E. Guenzel  
County Administrator

Dan Dwyer  
Trial Court Administer

DATE: August 4, 2004

SUBJECT: Legal Resource Center

**BOARD ACTION REQUESTED:**

The Washtenaw County Trial Court and the County Administrator requests the Board of Commissioners allocate revenue from sanctions ordered by the Judges against attorneys or other parties to fund the Legal Resource Center (LRC.)

**BACKGROUND:**

The Washtenaw County/Eastern Michigan Legal Resource Center (LRC) is a community resource providing legal information, education and assistance to individuals seeking, without representation, equal access to justice. The concept of the LRC began in 1999 when the Washtenaw County Bar Association noted that more people were, by choice or need, going to court without attorneys. In 2002, the courts also saw a need for a center to assist such individuals. By 2003, the LRC was formed and an Executive Director was hired in June, 2004. The opening is planned for September 2004.

Furthermore, the County has provided space to the Legal Resource Center along with the Washtenaw County Bar Association and the Dispute Resolution Center. This space is located together at the Washtenaw County Annex at 110 N. Fourth.

**DISCUSSION:**

Interns from the Legal Assistant Program of Eastern Michigan University will work with patrons providing them with the necessary self help materials for dealing with such legal issues as small claims, child custody, personal protection orders, adult guardianships or landlord tenant. The materials include court forms with instructions on how to complete and file the form in court. The Legal Assistants can assist with the completion of the

forms if necessary. When patrons are unsure of their legal needs or options, they will be referred to the Lawyer Referral Service of the Washtenaw County Bar. From time to time the Judges sanction attorney's by ordering them to pay a certain amount into the Court. While this is not a large amount, the Court has requested that the Board of Commissioners earmark these funds to help support the Legal Resource Center. The revenues that will be forwarded to the LRC will help offset the costs associated with their operations. The LRC is also engaged in grant seeking and other fund raising initiatives.

**IMPACT ON HUMAN RESOURCES:**

No impact.

**IMPACT ON THE BUDGET:**

There is no impact on the county's budget resulting from this action. Any revenue generated will be diverted to the LRC to offset their operating costs. This is a new revenue source and should not reduce revenues coming into the county's general fund.

**INDIRECT COSTS:**

No impact.

**CONFORMITY TO COUNTY POLICIES:**

This request conforms to Washtenaw County policies.

A RESOLUTION REQUESTING THE BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS ALLOCATE REVENUES GENERATED BY THE WASHTENAW COUNTY JUDGES FOR SANCTIONS TO THE LEGAL RESOURCE CENTER. FURTHERMORE, IT IS REQUESTED THAT THE BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS AFFIRMS THE DECISION TO USE COUNTY SPACE FOR THE LEGAL RESOUCCE CENTER, THE BAR ASSOCIATION AND THE DISPUTE RESOLUTION CENTER.

WASHTENAW COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS

August 4, 2004

WHEREAS, many residents of Washtenaw County find a lack of legal representation as a barrier to justice; and

WHEREAS, the complexity of the legal system can be very confusing and intimidating to non-lawyers; and

WHEREAS, Judges and court personnel are not permitted to provide assistance; and

WHEREAS, the Legal Resource Center is a community resource dedicated to removing barriers to justice through the dissemination of legal information and assistance; and

WHEREAS, the Legal Resource Center will be staffed by interns in the Legal Assistant Program at Eastern Michigan University; and

WHEREAS, Washtenaw County is committed to providing equal access to justice; and

WHEREAS, the judges of the Washtenaw County Trial Court agree that funds generated from punitive actions against members of the bar should be directed towards the Legal Resource Center; and

WHEREAS, the Legal Resource Center is located at 110 North Fourth, Suite 100 through an in-kind donation of space by the county; and

WHEREAS, Washtenaw County has provided space for such community resources as the Bar Association and the Dispute Resolution Center and wishes to continue these in-kind efforts with the Legal Resource Center.

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Washtenaw County Board of Commissioners hereby allocates funds generated from sanctioning attorneys from the Trial Court to the Legal Resource Center.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Board of Commissioners affirms the use of county space for the Legal Resource Center, the Bar Association, and the Dispute Resolution Center.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Administrator shall report back to the Board of Commissioners concerning the amount of dollars collected for the Legal Resource Center from Court Sanctions.