

# Court seeks way out of crunch

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As the population has continued to increase, the court's caseload has followed suit. Even if more court staff could be added to wrestle with increased caseload, the big question is where to put them, Judge Harris said.

"All the areas of the courthouse are crowded. The halls are completely crowded. Our clerks are just cramped. There's no place left for more desks," Judge Schaeffer said.

"We need more clerical help. We've tried to do it with computers. We have a large group of unhappy people. It's become a stressful situation for our staff. And the air circulation is bad."

Including Schaeffer and Harris, the court has 24 full-time employees and 6-8 part-time employees. Two magistrates also work on the weekends and one day a week to help with the caseload. A court reporter also works with them, Schaeffer said.

THOUGH THE most obvious crowding is in the halls and in the clerks' areas, Harris said that the probation department is just as bad, with little space for a probation officer and client to speak confidentially.



RANDY BOJST/staff photographer

Probate assistant Mary Combes searches for a file in the 47th District Court's storage room. In addition to storing the paperwork of the court, it houses the copier, postal meter, computer prints and storage boxes.

"We have such a crisis, it's unbelievable. We need two more probation officers, but there's no place to put them. We have no place where they can work," Harris said.

The issue of adding a third judge goes hand-in-hand with the issue of where to put a new judge and staff in an already crowded building.

"If we were ever to have a third judge, we would have to get a new

building or add to the old one somehow," Costick said.

Until a new building could be obtained or the existing one expanded, a new judge and staff would have to work somewhere in the building.

"We could use the magistrate's space for a new courtroom. But it wouldn't work for a permanent solution," Schaeffer said.

# State opening door for 3rd 47th court judge

By Joanne Maliszewski  
staff writer

State legislators are expected to authorize a third judgeship for the 47th District Court. But the post won't be added to the two-judge court unless Farmington and Farmington Hills officials agree to foot the bill.

"We'll let it go through (the Legislature) and become a public act (creating the judgeship). The local communities will be notified. If they do not pass resolutions (approving the position and agreeing to finance it), it just sits there, nothing will happen," said state Rep. Jan Dolan, R-Farmington Hills.

"The city councils don't have to discuss it at all. But the public will be in place allowing it (a third judgeship). They (city councils) can come back later if they decide they can afford it," Dolan added.

Judge Margaret Schaeffer, chief Farmington district judge, said the court's caseload — more than 30,000 cases last year — is heavier than in many district courts in suburban Detroit that already have three judges.

"We've struggled to get by with magistrates. But more and more, I've come to the conclusion that we need a third judge," Schaeffer said, adding that the court's caseload increases an average 6 percent annually.

NEWS THAT legislation creating

a third judgeship is expected to be introduced in the state House Tuesday took Farmington and Farmington Hills city managers by surprise.

"There's been no substantial discussion about a third judge," Farmington Hills city manager William Costick said. "We don't have the facilities for a third judge nor have we ever discussed it. The question of funding has never been broached."

Both city managers learned of the recommendation for a third judge when Dolan called them Wednesday after she was notified that certain districts were to be given the opportunity to add a judgeship.

"No one likes surprises. It's not been broached in front of either city council, who will have to pay the bill," Farmington city manager Robert Deadman said.

Deadman estimated that it would cost the cities perhaps \$500,000 for the additional staff and facilities required for a third judgeship.

Effective Jan. 1, 1990, district judge salaries are \$93,817, with Farmington and Farmington Hills paying a \$41,047 share.

ADDING A judgeship to a district court system is a two-part process. The state Legislature must enact a public act creating the judgeship.

Actual creation of the position depends on whether the local governmental units are willing to foot the bill, said Janet Welch, executive an-

alyst in the Supreme Court Office of the Chief Justice.

If Farmington and Farmington Hills are willing to finance a new judgeship, including part of the salary, as well as facilities and staff, they must respond by resolution by May 8. The deadline allows candidates for the new post to file for election by the May 15 filing deadline.

Officials in both cities are working on proposed 1991 budgets. But it's uncertain whether there is overwhelming support — or money available — for financing an additional judgeship in the immediate future.

"You can never afford an expansion. It's at what point can we? It would mean a budget change. We have so many facility needs being discussed in the community now. That would mean something else couldn't be done. And I'm not sure that's the facility to add on to," Costick said.

THE MOVE for an additional judgeship coincides with a current space study of the already cramped, 13,883-square-foot courthouse on 10 Mile, between Farmington and Power roads. The study is expected to be completed at the end of February.

Recommendations are expected to include proposals for adding a courtroom should a third judgeship be created, said Farmington architect Rob Allen of John Allen architect.

# Grads to need 20 credits for ceremony

By Marie Chosney  
staff writer

Starting with the Class of 1991, Clarencville seniors won't get to participate in graduation ceremonies unless they have earned 20 credits, the number of credits needed to graduate.

The policy change made by the Clarencville Board of Education Thursday does away with the longstanding rule that seniors with only 19 credits can attend the ceremonies (but not get a diploma) if they agree to attend summer school to earn the extra credit.

The old policy allowed a student one-credit short to "graduate" with his or her classmates. Instead of the following year, Clarencville includes northwest Redford Township, northeast Livonia, and southeast Farmington Hills.

THE NEW policy adopted is the

## Clarencville

The district includes parts of Livonia, Redford and Farmington Hills.

recommendation of an eight-person committee formed this year to study doing away with the old policy set in 1974.

"They shouldn't get the honor of walking across the stage if they don't get their diploma," said committee member Gloria Vanderglut.

While unanimously adopted, the policy change sparked a lot of debate among the trustees, especially as to how students and their parents would be notified if the student's graduation is at risk.

"I have mixed emotions about this," said trustee Linda Ahnert. "If

they are willing to work, they should be able to walk across the stage. I don't want them to fall through the cracks. And I don't want to lose a kid because of home problems."

However, the general belief among committee members and school officials was that students would rise to meet expectations set for them.

"Kids will push to the limit," said Fay Belanger, a member of the committee. "If they know they can get away with 19, they'll do that. If we promote excellence in education, this should be a given. When this fact

was presented to parents, they were shocked to discover we let them walk if they don't have the credits."

PAT VICKERY, administrative assistant for instruction, said the old rule applied to only a small number of students.

"Most students get more than the 20 credits," Vickery said.

Livonia Public Schools allows seniors to attend graduation ceremonies if they have one credit less than the 22 credits needed to participate, said Kenneth Watson, director of the district's department of community education. Seniors in the Redford Union School District need 22 credits to graduate and must earn all 22 to attend graduation ceremonies, said superintendent Kenneth Erickson.

The same holds true for seniors in South Redford. Students must have all 22 1/2 credits to participate in the

graduation ceremony, said superintendent Jan Jacobs.

With the new policy, Clarencville will now notify students and their parents at the end of their junior year if they are at risk.

Students then will have the summer of their junior year and their entire senior year to earn the credit or credits needed.

"This new policy forces us to closely monitor the progress of our students," said David Simowski, principal of Clarencville High School.

Trustee Dale Welch said the policy change is just another example of demands made on persons by society.

"There's all kinds of requirements in society that have to be met," he said. "You have to pass a test to get a driver's license. There are grade requirements to get into the National Honor Society. One point less and you don't make it."

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