



JULIA R. BATES

LUCAS COUNTY PROSECUTING ATTORNEY

LUCAS COUNTY COURTHOUSE, 700 ADAMS STREET, SUITE 250, TOLEDO, OHIO 43604-5659
TELEPHONE (419) 213-4700 / FACSIMILE (419) 213-4595

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Lucas County Commissioners
One Government Center
Suite 800
Toledo, OH 43604

Re: 2027 Court Funding

Commissioners:

I have been informed that the Common Pleas Court has again received an email relating to the Commissioners' 2027 budget hearings. This email scheduled a budget hearing for the General Division of the Common Pleas Court. It is important that the Commissioners have a correct understanding of the budgetary process as it relates to the Common Pleas Court.

Ohio courts have held that the administration of justice by the judicial branch of government cannot be impeded by the other branches of government in the exercise of their respective powers. The Common Pleas Court possess all powers necessary to secure and safeguard the free and untrammelled exercise of its judicial functions and cannot be directed, controlled, or impeded by another branch of government.

The Ohio Supreme Court's held that the statutes requiring the various divisions of Common Pleas Court to attend budget hearings were unconstitutional and not enforceable. The Common Pleas Court has the inherent power to effectuate the orderly and efficient administration of justice without monetary or procedural limitations by the Commissioners.

However, the Common Pleas Court recognizes that public interest is served when courts cooperate with the other branches in complicated budgetary processes, even though this cooperation is voluntary. It is my understanding that the Commissioners established a detailed and exhaustive process for the submission of all county budgets via the PBCS system. Through this system, Common Pleas Court meticulously itemized all personnel expenses as well as providing a comprehensive projection of all other operational expenditures. This information was submitted prior to the deadline requested by the Commissioners. As such, the Court has complied with the Commissioners' budgetary process by submitting to the Commissioners all documentation necessary to establish its required 2027 Court

budget.

Once the Common Pleas Court makes this determination, the Commissioners' authority is limited. The Commissioners are obligated, absent an abuse of discretion, to appropriate annually such sums of money as will meet all the administrative expenses of the Common Pleas Court which the Judges deem necessary. If reasonable, the Courts funding requests may not be refused. The reasonableness of the Court's funding request must be determined *only* from consideration of the request in relation to the factual needs of the Court for the proper administration of its business. The Commissioners are not authorized simply to substitute their judgment for that of the Judges in matters involving the appropriation of the Common Pleas Court's funding. The County's financial condition is certainly a factor to be considered in determining the reasonableness of the Court's funding. However, government hardship is insufficient by itself to determine the required amount of the Court's funding.

The Court's funding request is presumed reasonable, and the Commissioners have the burden to rebut that presumption.

The Court has complied with the Commissioners' budgetary procedures and has already provided the documentation necessary for the Commissioners to perform their limited analysis.

Therefore, I have advised the Court that a hearing is unnecessary, and they are not required to participate. Thus, a representative of the Court will not appear.

It has been the practice of Common Pleas Court to contact the commissioners to discuss budget-related matters as they have done throughout the past years. For well over a decade, individual commissioners and their staffs have met with court administration to discuss the intricacies of the court's budget and have resolved differences without resort to public hearings and lawsuits. The Court remains willing to continue this long-standing tradition.

Sincerely,



JULIA R. BATES
LUCAS COUNTY PROSECUTING ATTORNEY