



Circuit Court / Clerk of Court / Register in Probate

BUDGET SUMMARY AND HIGHLIGHTS:

The anticipated expense budget of the Clerk of Court/Probate/Family Court Commissioner and Circuit Court for 2023 is \$481,482 a 1.3% reduction. A levy of \$177,537 is proposed, a 15.5 % reduction due primarily to increased revenues.

- State funding is anticipated to be the same for 2023; \$52,275.00 for the State Grant and \$24,120.00 for the State Grant on GAL; Interpreter Fee will remain at \$500.00.
- County ordinance forfeitures and County share of fines and forfeitures revenue is anticipated to remain consistent in 2023; the main reason is all the old debt has been turned over to the WDOR-State Debt Collection Program.
- The outstanding Accounts Receivables associated with the Clerk of Court Office continues to be approximately \$3M. We have been consistent with our collection efforts, but as of yet, have not been able to bring the A/R balance down.

FUNCTION:

Oversee actions filed with the Bayfield County Circuit Court through to disposition; to promote fair and just treatment toward all litigants.

MAIN RESPONSIBILITIES:

Bayfield County Circuit Court presides over cases scheduled with the Bayfield County Circuit Court; Work effectively with Attorneys and litigants in a fair and impartial manner; Monitor efficient flow of cases; Evaluate Jury Management practices and procedures and make changes as appropriate; Direct Supervisor for Judicial Assistant, Court Reporter and Register in Probate; Responsible for overall function of Bayfield County Circuit Court.

Bayfield County Clerk of Circuit Court keeps court papers, books and records of all cases filed within the Bayfield County Circuit Court; Establish and maintain judgment and lien docket; Maintain index of all Bayfield County Circuit Court cases; Maintain a record of all court activities for all cases heard; Keep record of all payments ordered by the Court and maintain accounts receivables; Receipt payments as ordered by the Court; Disburse revenue collected to appropriate individuals or agencies in a timely manner and according to the Wisconsin Statutes; Monitor jury management and summons jurors as needed; Work with Judges, Attorneys, Court Commissioners, Law Enforcement Agencies, State Agencies, Local Agencies and the general public as needed to take care of Bayfield County Circuit Court business; Prepare and maintain Circuit Court, Family Court Commissioner, Register in Probate and Clerk of Circuit Court budgets with direct accountability to the Bayfield County Board of Supervisors and the Bayfield County residents.

FY2022-23 ACCOMPLISHMENTS:

- The Department spent a lot of time with the architect planning for the upcoming HVAC and Office move and redesign. We are confident this will create a safe and more efficient court operation.
- The upgraded technology in the main courtroom continues to bring greater efficiencies to the business operations of the Circuit Court. The Pandemic Emergency promoted additional technology usage within court procedures. We began using the zoom application in March, 2020 and plan to continue using this application even after the emergency has passed. We were in a great position to be able to use zoom application for court proceedings because the main courtroom has had video conferencing capability since 2007. We now have this similar capability in the small courtroom to enhance our ability to use zoom with visiting judges in Bayfield County for proceedings.
- We have expanded the use of video conferencing for court customers to appear for hearings with our Circuit Court from the Red Cliff Tribal Court Building; The Red Cliff Tribe has invested into a video conferencing system in their Courtroom in order to better serve their community.
- By using this equipment we are saving the county staff time for transportation of prisoners to and from the courthouse for hearings. By using the video conferencing the estimated savings to the County is well over \$60,000.00. In addition, we have saved travel time for the Judge, Court Reporter and other County Staff. We have reduced travel time, thus reducing potential risks for employees of being on the road. This technology has also increased safety for inmates, officers, and the general public, by reducing the amount of time inmates are exposed to the general public, not to mention the reduction of virus exposure to court customers, staff and the general public.
- The interface between CCAP and the DOT continues to be successful. Upgrades to this interface are continual and we are able to send conviction information, reinstatement information, and suspension/revocation information to the DOT electronically.
- The interface between CCAP and the DOT TRACs system continues to be successful. We receive electronic citations from the State Troopers, the Bayfield County Sheriff's Staff, Town of Iron River, City of Bayfield, City of Washburn and DNR wardens as digital transmissions through the State's citation server. With electronic citations being received, we have realized greater efficiencies with fewer human errors.
- CCAP, CODY and Bayfield County IT staff have discussed working on an interface where dispositional information from CCAP will be electronically imported into CODY. This will be of great help to the Sheriff's Department Staff, so their staff would have disposition information on all cases. This interface has not been developed, but may be considered in the future.

- We continue to take civil judgments for non-payment of court-ordered obligations.
- In 2020, we started turning debt over to the Tax Refund Intercept Program as a collection effort for minimal (<\$50.00) non-payment of court-ordered obligations. The Department of Revenue has initiated a new State Debt Collection Program and this program can collect debt owed to Bayfield County through Tax Refund Intercept Program for those working in Wisconsin; this program will initiate wage assignments, place a levy on a debtor's bank account as well as other efforts they have the authority for by statute. There are continued efforts by the legislative professionals to expand the "tax intercept" program to cover Federal law, but as of today, that effort has not been successful. The SDC program also will assess fees to the debtor and not the County in order to recover their expenses for this collection program.
- E Filing has been working great and we hear wonderful comments from our Court Customers using the new system. Every case type has now been implemented with the e Filing process.
- CCAP continues to upgrade our capabilities allowing us to accept on-line payments through the internet, to use the E-Signatures for many of the forms prepared through our automated system, establishing interfaces with many of the State agencies we work with. We currently have interfaces with the Department of Revenue, Department of Corrections, Division of Workforce Development, Department of Transportation, District Attorney Protect, State of Wisconsin TRACs, Wisconsin Department of Justice and the Wisconsin Appeals Court and Supreme Court. Each of these interfaces improves our efficiencies and reduces human errors.
- With the Pandemic Emergency, CCAP was able to set each of our staff up with remote capability so our staff could continue their work from home. We will allow this capability to continue even after all staff return to work full time, as there may be situations where staff are required to self-quarantine at home, and with this continued capability, they will be able to complete all their work tasks from home while in quarantine. This will make for a much safer work environment for our employees and customers.
- We have developed and implemented a procedure where the Clerk of Circuit Court's office will handle most post-judgment requests regarding payment issues of court-ordered obligations. This additional task for the Clerk of Circuit Court's Staff relieves time for the Circuit Court Judges and gives the Court Staff an opportunity to develop a working relationship with our court customers. This is one of the additional duties that has been assigned to our new Financial Clerk and has made the collection process more efficient and consistent. For delinquent account receivables, we currently take civil judgments, prepare and monitor wage assignments with employers, prepare and monitor wage assignments with State Prisons, enter into and monitor payment plans based on the debtors' disposable income and family size, and we certify delinquent debt with the Dept of Revenue-State Debt Collections Program. Currently, Judge Anderson has directed we not suspend driver licenses during the pandemic emergency. We have also resumed suspending driver licenses for non-payment of traffic and juvenile ordinance violations.

- We continue to use the swipe unit for credit card and debit card payments at the office counter through Government Payment Services, now known as AllPaid. This additional option of payment has been used a lot by our customers and is helping with collections by giving our customers additional options to make payment with us at the counter.
- Beginning with all documents filed beginning 01-01-2018, we are maintaining only the electronic version. The older paper files back to 2010 are being back scanned and verified. These older paper files will be maintained by our office until the retention period is over and we are able to document, offer to the Wisconsin Historical Society, and release or destroy the paper files.

FY 2023 GOALS:

- Smooth construction transition.
- Smooth staffing transition with a new Clerk of Court.
- Continue to work with the Security Facilities Committee to maintain and improve the security of the Bayfield County Circuit Court, the entire courthouse and our staff.
- Continue our efforts to expand alternatives to incarceration and programming for Bayfield County inmates through the Hybrid-Drug & OWI Treatment Court, TAD by working cooperatively with the District Attorney's Office, the Criminal Justice Coordinator, the Department of Corrections, Local Attorneys and all Local Law Enforcement Agencies.
- Continue to increase the use of in-court processing procedure for specific hearings for greater efficiencies.
- Continue to use the fast small claims processing procedure for small claim cases for greater efficiencies.
- Continue with collection efforts allowed by Statutes; continuing the use of swipe unit for customers to make credit card or debit card payments at our counter.
- Continue to use the replacement plan for courtroom technology to ensure current technology is available in our courtrooms.
- Continue to use the electronic procedures to forward cases to the Appeals and Supreme Courts as appropriate.
- Continue to work with the 10th Judicial District Court Administrator and CCAP to continue to use the zoom applications to help with the time and traveling constraints as well as the virus exposure on the Circuit Court Judges, Court Staff, Court Reporters, Attorneys and Court Customers.

- Continue to support our staff through the 10th Judicial District on-going trainings and the CCAP Webinars offered to all Court Staff.

PERFORMANCE INDICATORS:

1. Even with increased duties, responsibilities and caseloads, the Circuit Court System of Bayfield County has been able to maintain high quality performance. 5.00 FTE positions carry out the business of the Bayfield County Circuit Court.
2. Scanning and eFiling efforts continue in all aspects of document processing in our office; 60,048 court record entries were documented in 2019, 47,848 entries documented in 2020, and in the first 7 months of 2021, we have documented 32,006 entries.
3. Through a conscientious effort of operating as efficiently as possible, the County Levy for the Circuit Court Offices is anticipated to be \$168,537 in 2023. The levy was \$117,455.18 in 2021; \$207,251.91 in 2020, \$97,101.36 in 2019 and \$220,215.93 in 2018.
4. Through consistent collection efforts in 2020, Bayfield County Clerk of Circuit Court has collected in total, revenue of \$633,974.81 which was paid out to the State of Wisconsin, Bayfield County, City of Bayfield, City of Washburn, Town of Iron River, Town of Bell and Town of Bayview. Restitution in the amount of \$28,350.68 was collected on behalf of victims of crimes and paid to them during 2020.
5. Through consistent collection efforts, Bayfield County Clerk of Circuit Court has collected 74.46% of the total court-ordered obligations assessed by the Court during the past 10 years, totaling \$9,956,907.57, with a balance yet to be collected of \$1,958,861.21.
6. 103% of the Bayfield County Circuit Court cases disposed in 2020 met the State’s standards; 100% of criminal cases, 106% of contested forfeiture cases, 110% of civil cases, 95% of probate cases and 110% of juvenile cases.

