



WISCONSIN

# SHEBOYGAN COUNTY

**Christine Koenig**  
*Clerk of Courts*

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March 1, 2024

Honorable Members of the Sheboygan County Board and County Administrator Alayne Krause,

The Clerk of Courts Department experienced both a challenging and rewarding year in 2023. We had several staff members resign in favor of higher paying jobs. We were able to recruit to fill these positions and were also able to fill prior vacancies. I am grateful to have built an exceptional team in this Department.

In 2023, the ordinance and traffic cases saw an increase of 427 citations for a total case load of 5,992. Felonies increased by 39 cases, criminal traffic matters increased by 82 cases, misdemeanors decreased by 14 cases for a total criminal case load of 1,931 cases. In total, we received filings of 12,553 cases – a net increase of 1,049 over 2023. The Department processed 55 appeals, filed 71 liens, and 117 transcripts of judgment.

The Clerk of Courts had a \$26,420 increase of the \$922,000 budgeted in collections of fines, forfeitures, and filing fees due to our daily collection efforts, Department of Revenue, State Debt Collection, and bond forfeitures. Of the dollars we collected, \$2,112,610 was forwarded to the State, and \$53,158 was distributed to municipalities within the County. The County was credited with \$2,112,610 which is an increase of \$121,265 in county-retained revenue.

My continuing goal is to address the challenges that result from the State's budget while fulfilling all other responsibilities and needs of this Department. We are working as a team to find better and more efficient ways to reduce costs. Additionally, I will continue to work with the County Administrator, the County Board Supervisors, and most specifically with the Law Committee, to ensure resources that this department needs are provided to carry out our responsibilities for the courts and our community.

Sincerely,

Christine Koenig  
Clerk of Circuit Courts

## **Mission Statement and Summary of Responsibilities**

*To effectively and efficiently facilitate the administration of justice.*

The Clerk of Circuit Courts is a public official elected every four years, whose basic duties are enumerated in Sections 59.40 and 753.30 of the Wisconsin Statutes; myriad other responsibilities are scattered throughout the Statutes. The Clerk is the administrator of the Clerk of Circuit Courts and carries the responsibility of budgeting and administering trial court resources, developing effective policies and procedures, and maintaining competent staff.

Statutes require the Clerk of Circuit Courts to maintain a record of all documents filed with the courts, schedule all matters in court, keep a record of all court proceedings, and collect the various filing fees, court costs, assessments, surcharges, fines, and forfeitures ordered by the court or specified by statute through all means provided for by statute.

The Clerk also provides support personnel for each of the five Circuit Courts, as well as for the Court Commissioner and all outside judges who hear cases in Sheboygan County. The support staff is responsible for scheduling court appearances, taking minutes in the courtroom and preparing all notices, judgments of conviction, jail and prison papers, driver's license suspensions, juvenile placement orders and all other documentation and orders as required by statute. The Clerk is also responsible for filing and maintaining the judgment and lien docket, as well as preparing reports to many other agencies of determinations made in the courts.

Jury management is another function of the Clerk of Circuit Courts. The Clerk is responsible for qualifying, selecting, and notifying potential jurors for service to the five Circuit Courts. Annually, in excess of 6,000 questionnaires are mailed to county residents; and from the responses, four different jury pools are created for each of the thirteen four-week terms of jury service.

## **Goals and Objectives Achieved in 2023**

- Updated the Clerk of Courts webpages and continued to monitor for needed refinements.
- Court Service Specialists updated all court proceedings by use of in-court processing.
- Initiated implementation of Confidential Zoom at the Detention Center and Jail.
- Assigned each Circuit Court a Court Services Specialist.
- Successfully recruited to fill all vacancies that existed at the beginning of 2023.
- Continued to cross train staff.
- Established new process for interpreter block time in the intake court twice each month, saving approximately \$800 to \$1,000 per month in interpreter fees.
- Created a shared jury email to enable the Department to respond to jurors more quickly and efficiently.

## Budget

	<b>2023 Budget</b>	<b>2023 Results</b>	<b>Variance</b>
<b>Revenues</b>	\$2,961,554	\$3,009,843	\$48,289
<b>Expenses</b>	\$2,961,554	\$3,279,276	-\$317,722
<b>Total</b>	\$0	-\$269,433	-\$269,433

In 2023 our revenues increased by \$48,289 from the budgeted amounts, the majority due to State Debt Collection, bond forfeitures, and our daily collections efforts. We continue to be challenged with the high costs in professional services of psychologists, interpreters, as well as court appointed attorney and guardian ad litem fees. The cost in 2023 to provide interpreters, psychologists, court appointed counsel, and guardian's ad litem in criminal, juvenile, Chapter 51's and family matters was \$1,358,545. This is an increase of \$557,172 from 2022.

The 2024 budget of \$3,005,313 includes tax levy of \$1,423,898 and contains an anticipated increase in collections revenue.

## Issues and Challenges Ahead

The Clerk of Courts Department is challenged by the high cost of court appointed counsel, guardian ad litem, psychologists, and interpreters. The Department and the Circuit Courts discuss these concerns on a regular basis. We will continue to search for ways to reduce these costs.

Another challenge, which is one of my biggest concerns, is offering competitive wages to Department staff. I have compiled wage data from other Clerk of Courts departments in the 4th Judicial District, which also contains the Sheboygan County Circuit Court. My research has shown that other regional Clerk of Courts departments have hourly wages ranging from \$4.00 to \$6.00 above our hourly wages. We have lost three experienced clerks to higher paying positions, and retaining current staff is a top priority.

## Goals and Objectives for 2024

- Train new Court Services Specialists to clerk all proceedings independently.
- Ensure all Court Services Specialists are trained to clerk jury trials.
- Increase collections. The Department's accounting roles are now fully staffed, which will benefit this effort.
- Continue cross training staff – this is an ongoing process.
- Re-assess work distribution among accounting staff and re-delegate effectively.
- Update all job descriptions.
- Seek approval to reclassify Court Services Assistants to Specialists when they have reached a high level of functioning and understanding of their job duties.

**2022-2023 STATISTICAL REVIEW**

**NEW CASES FILED WITH THE CLERK OF CIRCUIT COURTS OFFICE**

<b>CASE TYPE</b>	<b>2022</b>	<b>2023</b>	<b>Increase</b>	<b>Decrease</b>
Felony	710	749	39	
Misdemeanor	728	714		14
Ordinance	557	507		50
Criminal Traffic	386	468	82	
Traffic	5,008	5,485	477	
Civil	651	687	36	
Small Claims	1,665	2,349	684	
Family	541	520		21
Paternity	168	133		35
Juvenile	282	250		32
Adoption	37	34		3
<b>CLERK OF COURTS CASELOAD</b>	<b>10,733</b>	<b>11,896</b>	<b>1,318</b>	
Probate	99	100	1	
Wills Filed	376	273		103
Guardianship	76	78	2	
Mental Commitments	220	206		14
<b>REGISTER IN PROBATE CASELOAD</b>	<b>771</b>	<b>657</b>	<b>3</b>	
<b>TOTAL CASES FILED</b>	<b>11,504</b>	<b>12,553</b>	<b>1,321</b>	
<b>JURY DATA</b>	<b>2022</b>	<b>2023</b>	<b>Increase</b>	<b>Decrease</b>
JURY TRIALS	32	29		
JURY TRIAL DAYS	59	62		
PER DIEM, MEALS, MILEAGE	<b>\$51,320.14</b>	<b>\$56,821.61</b>	<b>\$5,501.47</b>	
<b>DISTRIBUTIONS</b>	<b>2022</b>	<b>2023</b>	<b>Increase</b>	<b>Decrease</b>
COUNTY OF SHEBOYGAN	\$1,199,550.72	\$1,211,625.24	\$12,074.52	
CITY OF SHEBOYGAN	\$34,729.71	\$31,730.49		\$2,999.22
OTHER MUNICIPALITIES	\$15,774.56	\$21,428.00	\$5,683.44	
STATE OF WISCONSIN	\$1,991,344.94	\$2,112,610.13	\$121,265.19	
<b>TOTAL DISTRIBUTED</b>	<b>\$3,241,399.93</b>	<b>\$3,377,394.82</b>	<b>\$139,023.15</b>	
<b>ACCOUNTS RECEIVABLE</b>	<b>2022</b>	<b>2023</b>	<b>Increase</b>	<b>Decrease</b>
FINES AND FORFEITURES	\$11,891,486.09	\$12,293,538.85	\$402,052.80	