

*The*  
**2016**  
**Annual Report**  
*of the*  
**Fairfield County**  
**Common Pleas Court**  
*General Division*



Judge Richard E. Berens  
Judge David A. Trimmer



## AN INTRODUCTORY NOTE FROM THE BENCH:

2016 was a year of significant change and progress in the General Division of the Fairfield County Common Pleas Court.

The Substance Abuse Treatment and Recovery Court became the Court's first specialized docket to receive certification from the Ohio Supreme Court, which will increase training and grant opportunities.

Additionally, in response to the increasing prevalence of offenders who exhibit mental illness, the Court was designated as the county's lead agency in the SteppingUp program, a national initiative led by former Ohio Supreme Court Justice Evelyn Lundberg Stratton. The Court is prepared to commit its resources to assist these offenders in stopping the cycle of untreated mental illness and criminal behavior.

Jill Boone was sworn in as the Court's Magistrate this year as well, and with her assistance, the Court has implemented scheduling changes to its docket which will improve case management for both civil and criminal cases.

I am privileged to serve as the Presiding Judge of the Common Pleas Court for another year, and look forward to all that can be accomplished in 2017.

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*Judge Richard E. Berens*



## DRUG RECOVERY COURT CERTIFICATION

Although Judge Berens has operated the Fairfield County Common Pleas Drug Recovery Court since 2008, this year marked a special achievement for the program. In order to access additional grant funding and staff training opportunities, certification from the Ohio Supreme Court's Commission on Specialized Dockets was sought and obtained after a rigorous application and review process.

Certification requirements included establishing eligibility requirements, evaluating effectiveness of the specialized docket, and assembling a treatment team for implementing daily operations of the specialized docket. The team includes licensed treatment providers, probation officers and Judge Berens.

Ohio Supreme Court Chief Justice Maureen O'Connor congratulated Judge Richard E. Berens and the Fairfield County Common Pleas Court for receiving final certification.

"Specialized dockets divert offenders toward criminal justice initiatives that employ tools and tailored services to treat and rehabilitate the offender so they can become productive members of society," said Ohio Supreme Court Chief Justice Maureen O'Connor. "Studies have shown this approach works by reducing recidivism while saving tax dollars."

Specialized dockets such as the Drug Recovery Court are courts that

are dedicated to specific types of offenses or offenders and use a combination of different techniques for holding offenders accountable while also addressing the underlying causes of their behavior. Specifically, the goal of the Fairfield County Common Pleas Court Drug Recovery Court is two-fold: to combat the recidivism of probationers whose primary cause of criminal activity is based upon drug addiction while also creating a cost-savings to Fairfield County through a decrease in jail days served by probationers and a decreased cost to the community through reduction in criminal activity. These goals are achieved through frequent contact with and direction from the Community Control Department, counseling service, and the Court. Participants are held accountable for their behavior via periodic drug/alcohol testing, counseling reports, and in-court hearings, as well as the use of graduated sanctions and rehabilitative services.

"The mission of the Fairfield County Common Pleas Drug Recovery Court is to provide intense, specialized, and individualized supervision and treatment to participants with the aim of encouraging them to confront their addictions and problematic behavior and become productive members of society," explained Judge Berens. "This in turn will reduce the likelihood of recidivism and protect the community as a whole."



### THE THREE PHASES OF RECOVERY COURT

#### PHASE 1

Participants are required to attend bi-weekly status review hearings with the Judge. They are also required to report, test, and attend community support group meetings 1-3 times per week. Participants are also required to strictly abide by their counseling treatment plan and maintain total sobriety.

#### PHASE 2

Participants are still required to attend status review hearings and report, although not as frequently. Counseling, community support group meetings, and counseling are also still required components of Phase 2. obtaining stable housing and employment and/or a GED are included as additional goals.

#### PHASE 3

Participants' reporting requirements are reduced, but participants are still subject to random drug screens and the terms of their treatment and counseling plan. To graduate this phase, and thus the program, participants must be gainfully employed or enrolled in school and have stable housing.

# THE STEPPINGUP INITIATIVE

In April 2016, the Fairfield County Common Pleas Court and the Board of Commissioners committed to joining the national SteppingUp Initiative, which aims to safely reduce the number of individuals with mental illnesses in jails. The County joined this movement after recognizing that without proper intervention and treatment, individuals with mental illnesses and co-occurring substance disorders often unnecessarily cycle through the criminal justice system. The Initiative strives to break this cycle by connecting mentally ill individuals with community-based treatment and services, which aligns with the County's mission to protect and enhance the health, welfare, and safety of its residents in efficient and cost-effective ways.

In October 2016, Fairfield County held its official kickoff luncheon, which was hosted by former Justice Evelyn Lundberg Stratton and Thom Craig of the Margaret Clark Morgan Foundation, who spoke of available resources and affirmative steps that organizations, private individuals, and public officials can take to help keep the mentally ill population from becoming long-term residents of our local correctional facilities. In attendance were Common Pleas Court Judges Richard E. Berens and David A. Trimmer, Commissioner Dave Levacy, representatives from county and city law enforcement agencies, counseling and treatment centers including New Horizons, the local ADAMH Board, and several other community leaders.

Retired Justice Evelyn Lundberg Stratton, who serves as the state-wide Project Director of Ohio's Stepping Up Initiative made the following comments about the County's kickoff luncheon:

"We were very pleased that the Commissioners signed Fairfield County up for Stepping Up. We had a great

cross-section turn-out on Friday and are very impressed with the collaboration that already exists. Hopefully our project can build on those partnerships by giving Fairfield County the tools, resources, and technical assistance to break the cycle of jails being de facto mental health hospitals. Our goal is that those with mental illnesses will be able to obtain the assistance they need and will regain their lives and dignity."

Judge Berens also commented on the Court's commitment to the Initiative:

"Unless offenders' underlying mental illnesses are properly addressed and treated, it is likely that offenders will repeat the criminal behavior which brought them before the Court in the first place. This Initiative will assist the Court by ensuring that all available mental health and community resources can be accessed by those persons with mental illness who are on Community Control probationary supervision."



## COLLABORATION WITH FAIRFIELD COUNTY MUNICIPAL COURT

In February 2016, the Fairfield County Common Pleas Court entered into a pilot program wherein a small number of felony probationers would begin testing at the Fairfield County Municipal Court, using their in-house call-in system and testing machine, rather than with the private companies previously utilized for these services.

In early 2016, the Common Pleas Court began discussions with the Municipal Court in an effort to seek better and more cost-effective drug testing measures for its probationers. A few months later, the two Courts implemented a pilot project, wherein a select number of felony probationers would begin drug testing at the Municipal Court (using its in-house call-in system and testing machine) instead of with the private agencies that the Common Pleas Court had contracted with in the past. The results of the pilot project were so overwhelmingly positive, that the Courts agreed to expand the program. To date, the Common Pleas Court has nearly 80 individuals testing through Municipal Court, resulting in a cost-savings of over \$7,000. The rewards are more than just financial, though: the Court's Community Control Officers obtain quicker, more comprehensive results by testing with Municipal Court than with past providers.

## THE NUMBERS

Month	# of Tests	Cost Savings
1 (Feb-March)	67	\$ 481.01
2 (March-April)	80	\$ 592.60
3 (April-May)	75	\$ 461.65
4 (May-June)	73	\$ 517.89
5 (June-July)	42	\$ 289.36
6 (July-August)	65	\$ 456.20
7 (August-September)	109	\$ 727.32
8 (September-October)	129	\$ 885.62
9 (October-November)	175	\$ 910.98
10 (November-December)	355	\$ 1,736.41
<b>Totals:</b>	<b>1170</b>	<b>\$ 7,059.04</b>

The Municipal and Common Pleas Court were also the recipients of a three-year federal Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration grant to coordinate efforts between both courts' specialized dockets, i.e., the Recovery Court Collaboration Project. This grant provides funding for the full salary of one Common Pleas Probation Officer as well as funding for substance abuse testing and medication-assisted treatment.



# INTENSIVE SUPERVISED PROBATION DOCKET

The Fairfield County Common Pleas Court launched its Intensive Supervised Probation (“ISP”) Docket in late 2015. Throughout 2016, the Court’s ISP program continued to develop and grow.

The ISP Docket consists of high risk offenders who have served multiple prison sentences in the past. “Intensive” supervised probation differs from “basic” probation in that ISP individuals are more closely monitored and are required to comply with specific drug, alcohol and/or counseling treatment plans. Participants in the ISP Docket are initially required to report weekly, with reporting becoming less frequent as the individual progresses through the program.

ISP probationers must undergo a drug and alcohol assessment and follow any recommendations made by their treatment providers. Individuals are also giving random drug screens throughout their term of supervision.

An integral part of the ISP Docket is regular contact with not only the designated ISP Docket Probation Officer, but the ISP Docket Judge as well. Specifically, ISP Docket participants must report to monthly status hearings in front of Judge Berens the first Thursday of every month, during which the ISP Probation Officer reports to the Court the participants’ progress and compliance with the ISP treatment and supervision plan.

Throughout 2016, the ISP Docket consisted of approximately 10 to 15 individuals.

“We are giving them the chances that they have never had in the criminal justice system,” explained Probation Officer Casey Jones, who oversees the ISP Docket. “Most of these offenders have never had close and consistent supervision before. Making sure that they are attending counseling, applying for employment, and helping them with their sobriety is very key to [this] program. We have had great success our first year and I feel the program will continue to grow.”

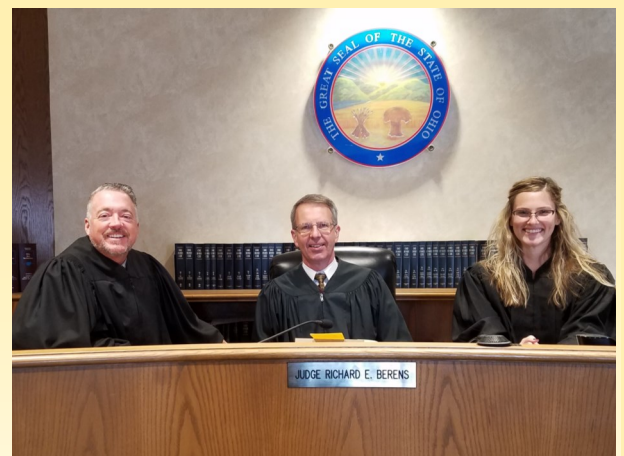
## ADDITIONAL PERSONNEL

In 2016, the Court added key personnel to its roster to ensure that it continues to operate in an effective and efficient manner.

In August 2016, the Court hired Shannon Seesholtz as a Fiscal Clerk/Administrative Assistant. In these roles, Shannon manages the Court’s payroll, processes bills and financial resolutions, prepares notices, and assists the Court Administrator and Magistrate as necessary.

In November 2016, the Court named Jill Boone as Magistrate in addition to her position as Court Administrator. In this role, Jill presides over arraignments, probable cause and civil stalking protection order hearings, as well as other proceedings delegated by the Judges. Jill also conducts legal research and phone conferences as requested by the Judges.

Also in 2016, the Court’s Community Control Department hired two new individuals. Rachel DeLucia came on board in September 2016 as an Adult Probation Officer. The Court also created the position of a Presentence Investigator, which was filled by Kasey Komjati in December 2016. In this role, Kasey will focus predominantly on preparing a presentence investigation report for the Judges to consider when sentencing offenders, which entails conducting extensive research into an individual’s background and criminal history as well as personally interviewing defendants.



## BUILDING RENOVATIONS

The Fairfield County Common Pleas Court experienced several building upgrades and renovations in 2016.

The Court installed new security cameras and access control devices throughout the building to ensure the safety of its employees as well as the public. New, more secure entrance and exit doors were also installed on the first floor of the Hall of Justice for enhanced visibility and security.

New signage was installed to help the public more easily navigate through the Hall of Justice.

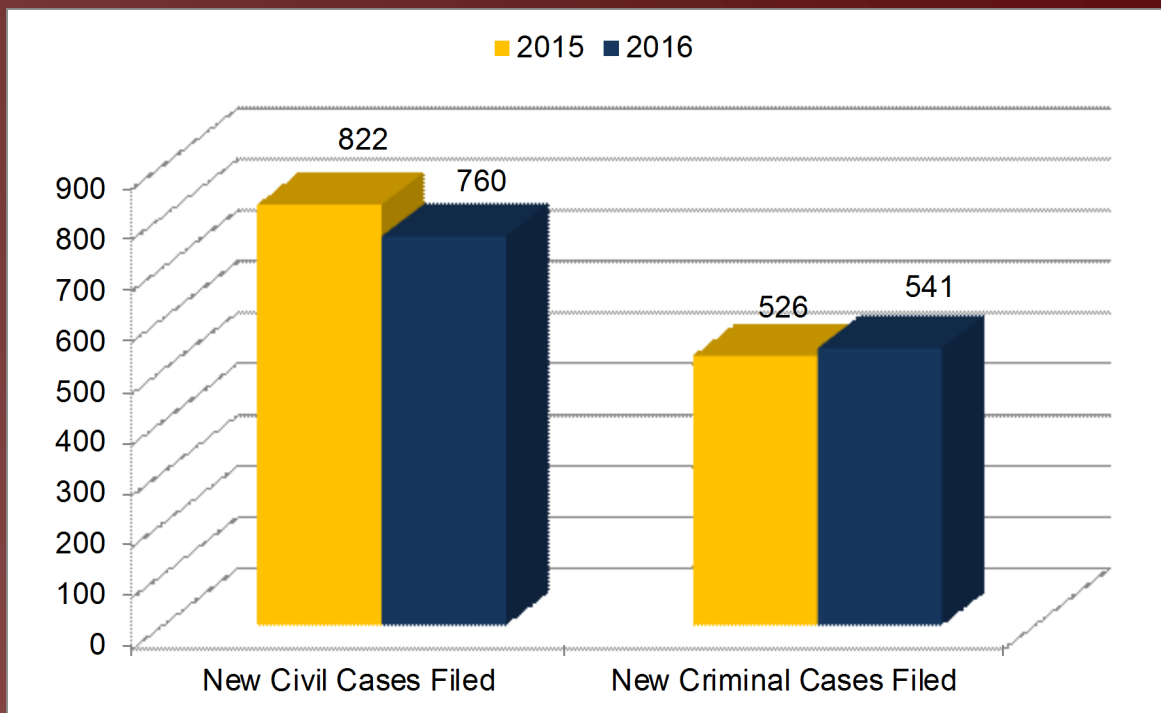
Videoconferencing equipment was installed in the Magistrate's Courtroom in order to allow the Court to conduct certain hearings via video.

The Court also renovated its law library. After recycling thousands of outdated and rarely referenced law books, the Court transformed part of the space into a first floor conference room that is now used to host large group meetings and various trainings for the Court's probation department. The remaining space is still utilized as a law library, which provides reference materials and computer stations to attorneys and the public.



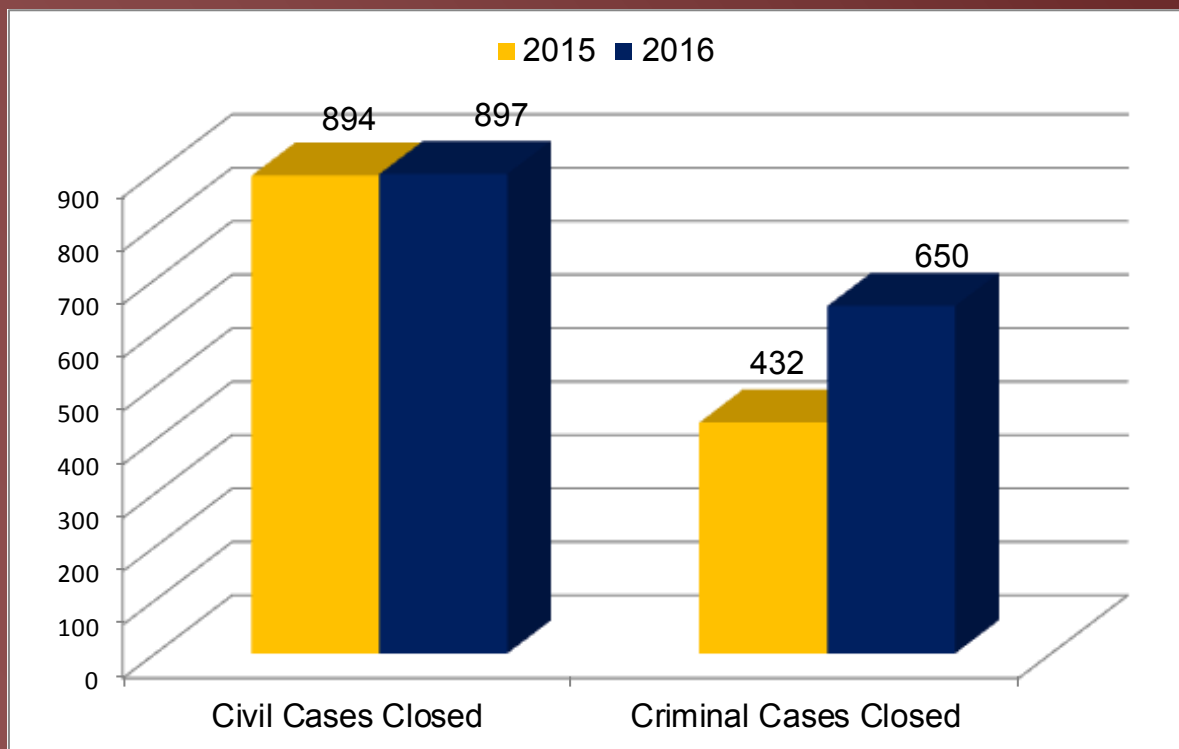
# CASE STATISTICS

## CASES OPENED



In 2016, there were **85,935** case documents filed in the Court's criminal, civil, and administrative appeal dockets, an increase of **9%** from 2015.

## CASES CLOSED





# PROBATION STATISTICS

1373

Individuals currently being supervised by the Community Control Department

> 200

Individuals were placed in Community-Based Correction Facilities / Halfway Houses during 2016

60

Individuals participated in specialized docket programs such as Drug Recovery Court and the Intensive Supervised Probation docket in 2016

\$84,121

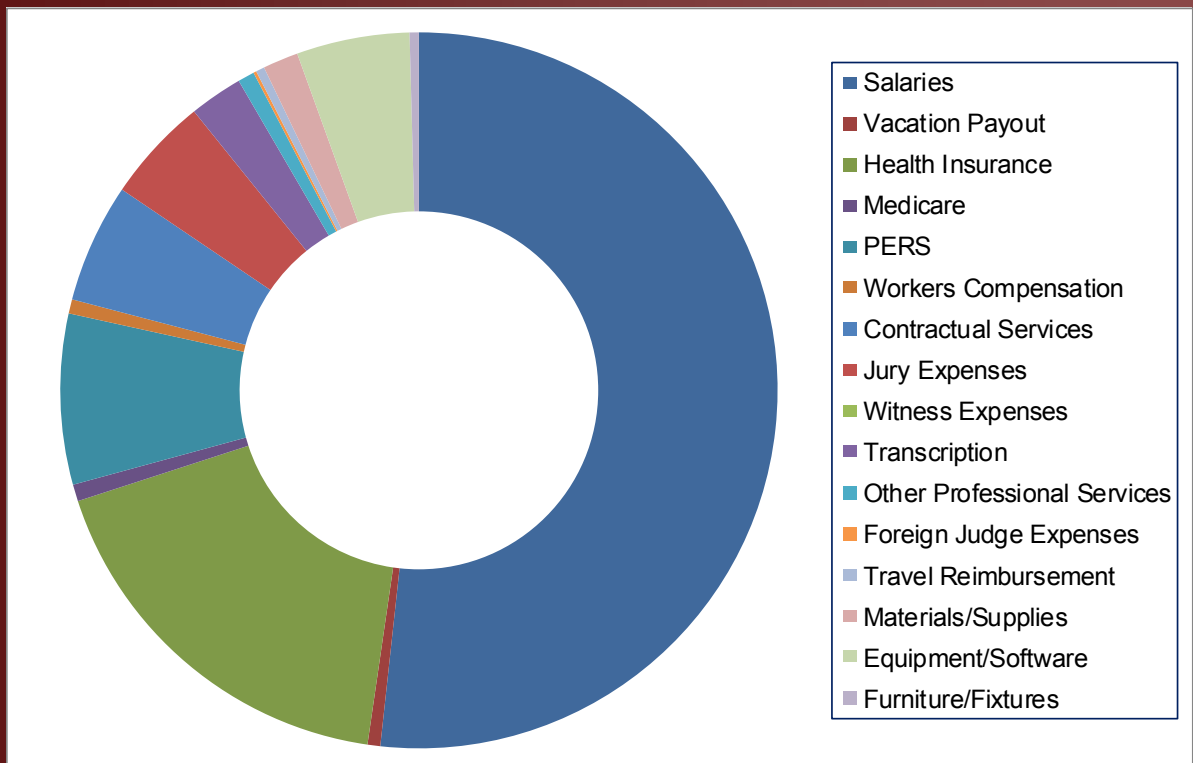
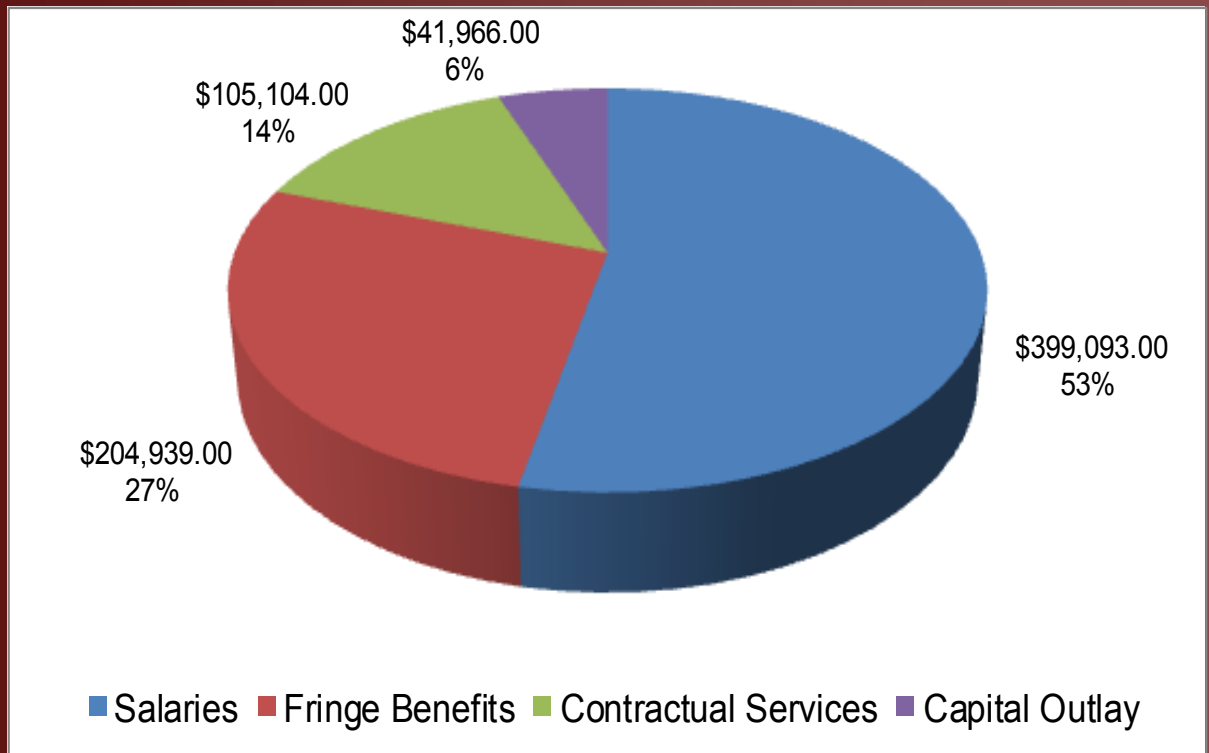
Total amount of supervision fines and fees collected in 2016

\$185,909

Grant funds awarded by the Ohio Department of Rehabilitation and Corrections to further the Court's ISP program

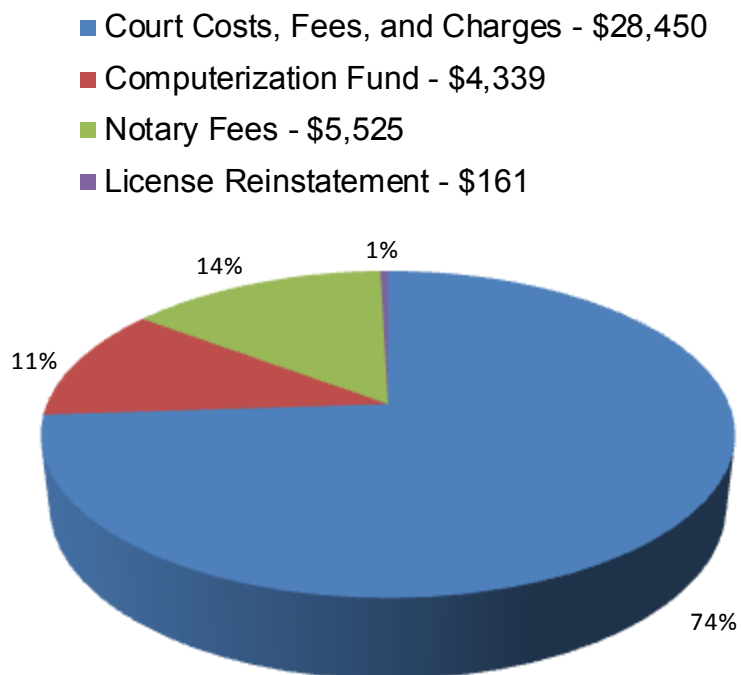
# EXPENDITURES

## 2016 EXPENDITURES

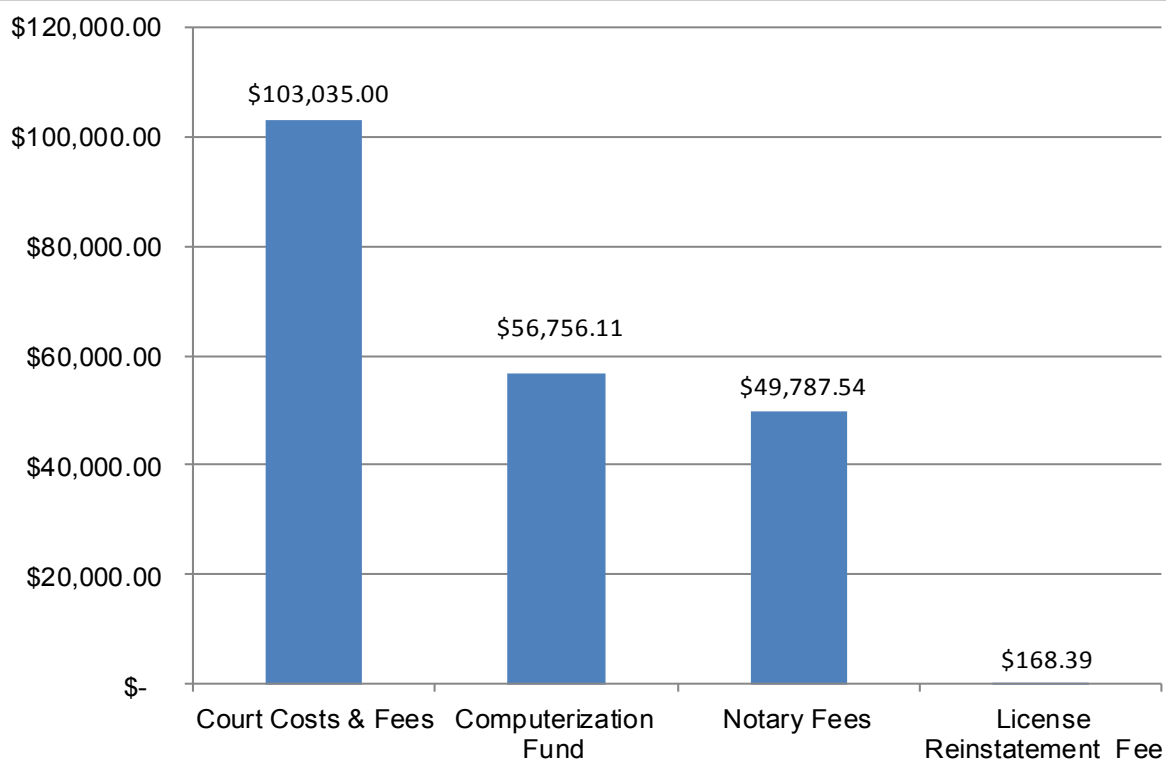


# REVENUES

## 2016 REVENUES



## TOTAL CARRYOVER CASH



# DIRECTORY

## **Assignment Commissioners**

Misty Conkle (J. Berens)	740-652-7431
Kathy Hartman (J. Trimmer)	740-652-7427

## **Administrative Assistants**

Traci Dresbach (J. Berens)	740-652-7435
Shannon Seesholtz (Fiscal / M. Boone)	740-652-7434
Stella Senig (CC Dept.)	740-652-7352

## **Staff Attorneys / Bailiffs**

Joseph Bogdewiecz (J. Trimmer)	740-652-7430
Michael Cox, Jr. (J. Berens)	740-652-7432

## **Court Administrator / Magistrate**

Jillian Boone	740-652-7424
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## **Court Services Coordinator**

Kelly Starkey	740-652-7433
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## **Director of Community Control**

Angel Sanderson	740-652-7344
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## **Community Control Officers**

Ben Tiller (Chief)	740-652-7341
Rachel DeLucia	740-652-7353
Dustin Dexter	740-652-7354
Andrew Dreyer	740-652-7351
Larry Harmon	740-652-7343
Laurie Henderson	740-652-7342
B. Casey Jones	740-652-7346
Dan Jones	740-652-7345
Wayne Moss	740-652-7347
Kasey Komjati	740-652-7435