



Carmella Sabaugh

Macomb County
Clerk/Register of Deeds

Betty A. Oleksik
Deputy Register of Deeds

Todd Schmitz
Deputy Clerk

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CONTACT:
Carmella Sabaugh 586-469-7939
Arthur Mullen 586-469-4168

Business community rescues stalled juror pager plan

Macomb County Clerk / Register of Deeds Carmella Sabaugh is today praising members of the Mount Clemens business community who rescued her plan to provide jurors with pagers while waiting to be sent to a courtroom. Sabaugh proposed giving pagers to jurors last October and has worked on the details since. But with the plan ready, and beautiful summer days at hand, her plan stalled as it became apparent less than half of the needed funds would be available. After reading about it in the newspaper, business owner and philanthropist Gebran Anton worked with Community Central Bank and the Downtown Development Authority to rally local businesses to the cause. The timing coincides with Sabaugh's plan to pay jurors in cash. As a result, jurors may soon be walking downtown during business hours with cash on hand.

"I was excited to offer this new service to jurors and local businesses, but I did not want taxpayers to foot the entire bill," said Sabaugh. "I am pleased Mr. Anton and the business community saw the value of this program and came forward to help over 19,000 jurors per year! This is a model of how government and business can work together to benefit the community."

"Jurors will get to know our beautiful downtown, our shops and restaurants," said Arthur Mullen, director of the Mount Clemens Downtown Development Authority. "They'll get a flavor of the city, see all of our changes, and be interested in coming back."

Sabaugh will present details of her pager plan to the Macomb County Board of Commissioners Budget Committee on Tuesday, June 17, 2008 at 9 a.m. If approved, it will then be voted on by the entire Board of Commissioners on June 19, 2008. Sabaugh also plans to seek approval from the circuit court judges on the daily procedures to ensure jurors are available when needed. She hopes to have jurors using pagers in July. The resolution and letters of support are available at <http://www.macombcountymi.gov/clerksoffice> in the NEWS column.

Last fall, the Macomb County Board of Commissioners approved the bid process and six companies bid on the project. The Board will consider awarding the bid to USA Mobility, Inc., in the amount of \$29,746.40 with an annual cost of \$2,182. Community Central Bank, Mr.

Clerk's Office

40 N. Main St.
Mount Clemens, MI 48043
586-469-5120
Fax: 586-783-8184

<http://www.macombcountymi.gov/clerksoffice>
clerksoffice@macombcountymi.gov

Fax-on-Demand

Michigan: 1-888-99-CLERK
Out-of-State: 310-575-5035

Register of Deeds

10 N. Main St.
Mount Clemens, MI 48043
586-469-5175
Fax: 586-469-5130

<http://www.macombcountymi.gov/registerdeeds>
registerdeeds@macombcountymi.gov

Anton, the Downtown Development Authority and the business community came up with \$15,000. Sabaugh came up with \$14,746.40 from the clerk's budget. She proposes to pay the annual maintenance fee from the money saved by paying jurors cash. Her plan to pay jurors cash will save the county over \$9,500 annually because 19,000 checks will no longer need to be mailed.

In 2007, the number of people who served on Macomb County jury duty was 19,262. Jurors would be eligible to use a pager if they have not yet been sent to a courtroom. As long as jurors remain within walking distance of the court, the paging system allows them to be promptly available for the judges. The pagers have about a mile range and provide out-of-range warnings.

Most of a juror's day is spent waiting. There are few televisions in the jury room. It can be crowded. At times it can be loud. Most jurors do not actually serve on a case. In 2007, of the 19,262 jurors who appeared for jury duty, only 1,724 actually served on a trial. Cases are often settled shortly before trial, including the day of trial. This sometimes leads to frustration by jurors who feel their time was not needed. But the presence of jurors in the building often helps to motivate litigants to settle cases, even if jurors don't actually serve on a trial.

With pagers, jurors would have the freedom to get something to eat, shop or take care of personal or work-related business in the downtown Mount Clemens area, or simply visit the Courthouse Café in the courthouse basement. They may be paged to return to the jury room at any moment, but would not necessarily have to wait in the jury room the entire day. When jury clerks need jurors, they could be paged and would have to return to the jury room within 10 minutes or face the same penalty given to people who fail to appear for jury duty. Last year, 27 bench warrants were issued for jurors who did not do their civic duty.

"I think jurors who have a good experience on jury duty will tend to make good decisions," said Sabaugh. "This program might also reduce the frequency of requests to be excused."

Each time a juror requests to be excused, there is a cost to the county in terms of computer use, staff time, postage and printing for confirmation letters, and processing.

This is not the first improvement [Sabaugh](#) proposed for jurors. She also:

- Started a [one-day, one-trial system](#) that reduced jury duty from one week to one day for most jurors and reduced annual costs by over \$75,000,
- Partnered with SMART to provide [free bus tickets](#) for jurors having no transportation,
- Provides [free wireless Internet](#) service in the jury room so jurors can stay in touch with family or work while waiting to be picked for a trial, and
- Partnered with the Mount Clemens Public Library on a web site for jurors to order ahead [free library books](#), audio books and videos to be waiting on jurors' chairs when they arrive.