

Jurors will be paid cash

Downtown merchants hope some money comes their way

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Jurors who endure the heat of sitting through a tense trial will soon be paid in cold cash.

Macomb County Clerk Carmella Sabaugh hopes to eliminate nearly \$10,000 a year in check-processing

costs by paying jurors cash for their service. In most cases, jurors would be paid at the end of the day.

"We all know that cash is king," Sabaugh said.

Circuit court jurors are paid \$25 for their first day of service, \$40 for subsequent days. They also receive mileage reimbursement. About 19,000 are paid each year.

The new system was designed by Sabaugh to end delays and periodic mistakes in issuing checks to jurors.

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Some checks took three to four weeks or more to arrive. Some had the wrong amount. Yet, the cost of processing and mailing checks is about \$9,500 a year for the county Finance Department.

"It doesn't matter where the savings comes from. When you save, it still goes into the same pocket - the taxpayer's pocket," Sabaugh said.

City officials hope the cash payments will provide an economic boost to downtown Mount Clemens, where the county courthouse is located. Those jurors who serve just a half day would be paid as they leave - \$12.50 plus mileage - which could be used as lunch money.

Because about 90 percent of those called for jury duty serve just one day, most would be getting cash as they head out the door at the end of the day, which

may entice them to do some shopping or head to a local restaurant.

"We're hopeful the jurors will spend some of their hard-earned money right here in town," said Arthur Mullen, executive director of the Downtown Development Authority. "It definitely can't hurt us."

Under rules put into place by Sabaugh a few years ago, prospective jurors who aren't picked for a trial on their first day are released from their jury duty. In addition, the average trial lasts just two days.

For those jurors who serve on a lengthy trial, they would be paid cash on a weekly basis.

"I think it's a good idea. Anything to save us some money," said county Commissioner Kathy Vosburg, a Chesterfield Township Republican.

The proposal was unanimously approved Monday by the commissioners' Legislative and Administrative Services Committee. The plan must receive final approval from the full

Board of Commissioners.

Chief Circuit Judge Richard Carretti has endorsed the proposal.

Officials were assured that sufficient security would be in place in the fifth floor jury room as an estimated \$3,000 in cash would be handed out daily. In addition, metal detectors are stationed at the entrance to the court building.

The clerk's office already handles large sums of cash daily and the chief jury clerk, Denise Greiner, has eight years of previous experience in the banking industry.

In recent years, Sabaugh has placed a special emphasis on making jury duty more palatable. In addition to the 1-day, one-trial rule she has offered wireless Internet service and an assortment of library books in the jury room. The clerk has arranged for free SMART bus service for jurors and is in the process of giving them pagers that will let them roam the downtown area while waiting to be called for service.