

IN THE SUPERIOR COURT OF BIBB COUNTY, GEORGIA

ORDER

THE WITHIN GENERAL PRESENTMENTS OF THE BIBB COUNTY GRAND JURY
FOR THE FALL TERM 2007 HAVING BEEN READ AND CONSIDERED,

IT IS HEREBY ORDERED THAT THEY BE RECEIVED AND FURTHER
ORDERED THAT THEY BE PUBLISHED AS PROVIDED BY LAW, AND AT THE
EXPENSE OF BIBB COUNTY.

SO ORDERED THIS 30th DAY OF JANUARY, 2008.



MARTHA C. CHRISTIAN
CHIEF JUDGE
BIBB SUPERIOR COURT

Presentments of the Grand Jury of Bibb Co. for Fall Term of 2007

Office of Bibb County Superior Court

A committee of the Grand Jury inspected the Clerks office of Superior Court on December 19, 2007. The tour was conducted by Dianne Brannen. We observed all the staff conducting business in a professional & efficient manner. Mrs. Brannen explained the different functions of each area thoroughly & answered any questions the committee had to our satisfaction.

However, our committee did recognize areas that needed attention. Storage space is limited & some files are stored on computer disc but many are not. Some of the oldest plats & files are in a fragile state and need to be transferred as soon as possible before they are no longer able to be salvaged. This was also noted by the Grand Jury in a 2004 report and no steps were taken to remedy the situation. We feel that it would be in the best interest of this community to hire an outside agency to start copying and archiving the files not only to preserve them but to make them readily assessable to anyone who needs information from these documents. These original documents need to be stored in a more secure area. The lack of space in this office prohibits that. Safety in this office is a special concern. We noted that there were no sprinkler heads in the offices. There were inconsistent temperature variations from one office to another with some being cold while other areas had to block vents because it was extremely warm. Ceiling tiles were broken or missing and needed to be replaced. Exposed wires for phone and computers were dangling from the ceiling. These areas need to be addressed and corrective action taken. The committee feels that the office space is no longer acceptable for them to conduct business efficiently or for any future expansions.

Bibb County Finance Dept.

The finance department was very well managed and looked well organized. There are many checks and balances that are in place. Each department head is held accountable for their budget. Space in this department was also at a premium. Files are stacked on the floor and overhead in boxes. There is definitely no room for expansion as the county continues to grow. Once again, the inefficiency of the building itself and the ability to handle the day to day operations were questioned.

The District Attorney's Office

Bibb Co. citizens should be proud that we have so many dedicated assistant district attorneys. Their dedication and professionalism is second to none. However, a department can only do so much. There are many areas of concern, most not related to their performance but still vital to the department morale and efficiency. The office carpet needs to be replaced. It is in deplorable condition. There is lack of storage space for files as there is in every department. The ceiling tiles and vents are filthy and need attention.

A major concern is the security of our assistant DA's. Many times, they are working late hours at the courthouse and must park in an unsecured parking lot. We do

not need to wait until something unfortunate happens to provide better security for them. This needs to be addressed now. Another concern is the fact that the assistant DA's use their personal cell phones and PDA's for official business. Therefore, they should be reimbursed for this.

Probate Court

On January 8, 2008 the Grand Jury Committee toured the Office of Probate Court and met with Judge Self. Judge Self explained the key functions of the probate court and the licensing offices. He was proud of the fact that both his offices had low employee turnovers with several employees having from 10 to over 30 years of service. Judge Self was pleased with the operations of both of his offices which included the licensing office on the 1st floor and the probate court on the 2nd floor. However, he pointed out that the offices should be combined for better efficiency. The Grand Jury agreed that having both offices together could eliminate the need for separate office managers. This could free up one to be assigned to another area within the court system.

Courthouse Overview

Overall, the Grand Jury's assessment of all the departments within the county courthouse were favorable. We do feel that the county commission has a formidable task of resolving constant problems with the structure and the layout of the courthouse. We feel that it is a waste of taxpayer's money to keep patching the courthouse building. It is no longer able to serve the needs of the employees or taxpayers. The only foreseeable solution is to construct a new courthouse. To accomplish this, the county commission must inform and educate the citizens of Bibb Co. to the issues that surround this problem. In the meantime, security issues need to be addressed immediately. Prisoners are led out of the same entrance as the general public and that is not acceptable. The security door at the employee entrance also is not functioning properly. The building in many areas is not ADA compliant with the bathrooms being a special concern. Sprinkler systems are not in place in many areas. The fire escapes are not functional and the building has no hot water in many offices and bathrooms. The roof leaks and mold forms on the ceiling tiles and walls. Parking is inadequate for visitors. The employees should have a secure parking area. Many of these problems have been reported by the former Grand Jurors yet they are not being investigated or eliminated. The commissions must act as these problems just seem to escalate.

Bibb County Jail

On December 19, 2007 the Grand Jury committee met with Sheriff Jerry Modena, Chief Nelson (head of jail facilities) and Chief Davis (head of law enforcement). It immediately became evident that these men are very dedicated professionals. Sheriff Modena gave us an overview of the yearly budget and insight into some of the challenges that the department faces. Chief Nelson gave detailed insight into the operations of the facilities. He stated that 1,600 meals were prepared daily and distributed to inmates. Chief Nelson also stated that presently 840 inmates were housed and that they have the

capacity to house 966 inmates. He stated that the ideal average population would be between 800-950 inmates. Sheriff Modena and Chief Davis discussed personal issues stating that presently the department is more than 20 officers short with one of the lowest starting salaries in the state. It is difficult to recruit qualified applicants to fill positions. They have an average turnover of between 6-8 officers a year with most leaving for better paying jobs and benefits. The fact that it cost an average of \$35,000 to train an officer, the need for a higher starting salary is critical to the survival of a quality department. It was also stated but not confirmed that the starting salary is around \$25,688. This salary has not been adjusted for over 7 years. Budget constraints are always an issue and one possible solution could be to redefine the roles and responsibilities of some of the personnel. One solution would be to hire jailers at a lower salary and train them to manage the prison population. This would free up the trained deputies to patrol and enforce the law in our community.

There are no easy answers but a committee should be formed to explore possible options. A tour of the jail revealed that several issues should be addressed in the original section of the jail. There were several monitors out in one of the towers on the day we visited. Several areas needed to be remodeled. The new addition was state of the art with cameras recording every movement from a central command center. Prisoners receive excellent medical attention and are evaluated before they are released into the general prison population. It was noted, however that some of the areas in the new wing were not completed to original specifications. This was due to a reduction in the original construction budget.

The Grand Jury committee concluded that the Bibb Co. Commissioners should pay quarterly visits to the jail so that they may have a better understanding of the departmental needs. It was noted that some of the commissioners have never toured the jail.

Overall, the committee concluded that the sheriff & personnel were doing a commendable job. This concludes the general presentment by the Grand Jury for the fall term of 2007.

Mark A. Mauton
Foreman

Cynthia R. Jackson
Deputy Foreman

Mary Ann Salko
Secretary

[Signature]
Deputy Keeper

Thelma B. [Signature]
Members

Licia [Signature]

Margaret Ellis

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Betty H. Brown

James G. Pickett

Lou Ellen Hicks

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Lera Hawley

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Sheila G. Gordon

Laura Underwood