



COMMON PLEAS COURT

GENERAL DIVISION

Richard E. Berens, Administrative Judge
David A. Trimmer, Judge

PRESS RELEASE 7/23/2018

On April 17, 2018, the General Division of the Fairfield County Court of Common Pleas was awarded a technology grant for over \$19,000 by the Ohio Supreme Court to enable free e-access to certain court records.

The Common Pleas Court, in conjunction with the Clerk of Courts and Information Technology Department, submitted a grant application to the Ohio Supreme Court for consideration in December of last year. The proposal requested funds to upgrade the court's case management system to allow the public to access and view document images online free of charge.

"This has been a long time coming and we are very excited," said Jillian Boone, Court Administrator. "Moving forward, the public will be able to know what happens in court on a daily basis—the nature of pending charges or claims, why the Judges ruled why they did, when the next hearing date is—all without having to make a phone call or record request. It is a win for everyone: attorneys, court staff, parties, family members, and the public."

Prior to receiving the grant, members of the public could access the court's docket online but could not view the content of the court's decisions or notices. If individuals wanted to view the actual court filings, they were required to make a records request to the Clerk's Office. Clerk of Courts Branden Meyer supported the project, stating that providing free e-access to filed documents "will increase transparency and expand the public access and customer service provided by the Clerk's Office."

Since being notified of the award in April, the Clerk's Office has been hard at work to ensure this increased transparency does not compromise the private and personal information that are sometimes included in court documents. And while the Clerk's Office will continue to monitor and redact filings with personal identifiers, Meyer emphasizes that the responsibility is on the filer to safeguard that information.

"Since 2009, changes to the Rules of Superintendence placed the responsibility of removing personal identifiers on the filer, but this obligation is even more important now," said Meyer. "If an individual attempts to file a document with personal identifiers, such as a social security number, the Clerk's Office will do our best to advise the filer to remove them. However, the burden ultimately rests with the individual filing the document to redact this information," he explained. "Further, litigants can be assured that any documents that are not subject to public access under the Rules of Superintendence or Ohio's Public Records laws will not appear online."

All general division court records filed on or after January 1, 2018 that are subject to public disclosure will be available online beginning July 30, 2018 via the Common Pleas Court and/or Clerk of Courts' websites.

Court of Common Pleas of Fairfield County, Ohio • Hall of Justice • 224 East Main Street • Lancaster, Ohio 43130
Judge Richard E. Berens (740) 652-7422 • Judge David A. Trimmer (740) 652-7423 • www.fairfieldcountyohio.gov