

SCOTT COUNTY LAW LIBRARY

Meeting of the Board of Trustees

December 6, 2016

Present

Commissioner Barbara Marschall, Rex Stacey, Jody Kieser Kisting, Mary Freyberg and Jacob Grussing

Minutes

On January 19, 2016, the Scott County Board approved a Request for Board Action (RBA) which was endorsed by the Law Library Board of Trustees, to elevate Law Library fees for all cases to \$13.00. The Scott County Board approved the request and as of July 1, 2016, the fee increase became effective.

During the past year, the law library has experienced some staffing changes. After working at the Law Library for eight years, Barbara Taylor retired on Sept 1, 2016. Upon Ms. Taylor's retirement, Mary Freyberg increased her hours to full-time status. The library remains staffed full-time consistent with previous scheduling prior to Ms. Taylor's retirement.

Law Day was on May 2, 2016 and once again, the law library hosted a well-attended event. 2016 was actually a record year for participation in the annual Law Day celebration. 99 people visited the Law Library or one of the five legal clinics offered throughout the day. Four attorneys offered brief consultations to 19 individuals regarding criminal, family, expungement, employment benefits, medical, Social Security, Food Stamps and housing related legal issues. Many more learned how to search a court database, spoke to child support officers regarding modification of a child support order or learned about the Miranda case that created a criminal suspects right to remain silent which is commonly referred to as Miranda Rights. The Law Library partnered with Scott County Court Administration, the Scott County Child Support Office, Southern Minnesota Regional Legal Services, Volunteer Lawyer Network and local volunteer attorneys to offer this event.

On September 16, 2016, the Law Library participated in Project Community Connect. Volunteer attorneys were present to provide brief legal consultations to over twenty individuals. Many more people were given brochures and information about the law library and the legal clinics offered and shown the webpage and how to use the state Self-Help Center.

For the second consecutive year, the Law Library and all of the Scott County Public Libraries hosted online and paper voter registrations. In an effort to better serve library users, easy

access to the Secretary of State webpage was added to all public computers which also offered comprehensive voter information. The Law Library partnered with Jeff Narabrook, the Voter Outreach Director for the Minnesota Secretary of State, Lisa Shadick from Elections, Lisa Kohner, Lisa Motschke, Paula LaFrenierre, the Shakopee Valley News and the Scott County Public Libraries to offer this convenience to our library users.

Law Librarian Mary Freyberg was elected to the Executive Board of the Minnesota Association of Law Libraries which is a chapter of the American Association of Law Libraries. Ms. Freyberg will serve a two year term. The group is a statewide professional organization of legal research and information professionals facilitating access to justice and legal information.

In addition to her work on the Executive Board of the Minnesota Association of Law Libraries, Ms. Freyberg also chairs the Metropolitan Library Service Agency E-Government Team Committee. Although the committee is no longer operating, their focus was to create awareness of libraries and how they can impact conversations by public entities regarding services to the general public.

The past year brought an increase in services provided by the Scott County Law Library. During four months of 2016, the Carver County Law Library was unstaffed. In an effort to provide assistance to library patrons in our neighboring county, Scott County Law Library staff assisted individuals seeking help in Carver County. The Carver County phone message as well as signs posted in the Law Library directed patrons to call, email or visit the Scott County Law Library. The Scott County Law Library staff was able to assist many of their patrons during this time. The largest increase in services provided originated from phone calls made from the Carver County Law Library site. Scott County Law Library Clinics were also available to Carver County residents during this time. As of the date of the meeting, the Carver County Library has returned to full staffing levels.

The Scott County Law Library continues to offer legal clinics to Scott County residents. The Family Law Clinic is free and is offered the second Monday of the month. At the clinic, people have the opportunity to talk to a pro bono attorney for 30 minutes regarding a family law issue. This clinic is offered 4:00pm-6:00pm. It is offered after law library hours for the convenience of working users. Volunteer attorneys are recruited by the law librarian. The Volunteer Lawyers Network (VLN) partners with the law library to provide a clinic on criminal expungement. Participants have the opportunity to meet individually with an attorney from the Volunteer Lawyers Network regarding whether expungement is a realistic option for them. Participants receive information about how to get further help with expungement, which may include getting help filling out the court documents or court representation. In the last year at least seven people attending the Scott County clinics have received full representation from the

attorneys at VLN.

In addition to the aforementioned clinic offerings, the law library also works with Southern Minnesota Regional Legal Services (SMRLS) to offer both a Will Clinic and a Divorce Clinic. Both clinics are staffed with volunteer attorneys who assist individuals in completing documents to facilitate their purpose.

Beginning in January 2017, SMRLS will be starting a new clinic to assist single parents in completing estate planning documents. The clinic includes provisions for guardianship in the event a need for guardianship arises in the future.

Historically, the Saturday Divorce Clinic has been one of the most successful and appreciated clinics that has been offered through the Scott County Law Library. This free clinic was offered monthly by the Scott County Law Library, the Minnesota Justice Foundation (law students from Mitchell-Hamline, St. Thomas and the University of Minnesota) and local volunteer attorneys. Participants were provided with assistance in using the Minnesota Self-Help Center *I-Can* program to fill out divorce paperwork. Unfortunately, without any notice, the I-CAN! vendor withdrew the product nationally on October 14th. Subsequently, the Scott County Law Library was forced to cancel any future clinics until a new vendor has been established and staff has been trained. The Self-Help Center hopes to have a new product in place by the beginning of 2017.

The number one 2016 strategic goal of the Minnesota Supreme Court is “*expanding services for self-represented litigants (SRLS)*”. The Scott County Law Library has a similar goal to deliver the information people need to better navigate the Scott County District Court System or address the legal needs of their everyday lives. To achieve this goal, the Scott County Law Library offers much more than law books and online legal programs. We offer clinics, a Self-Help Center Kiosk, informational programs and more. We could never offer the extra services that we offer without the talents and generosity of our pro-bono partner’s. The partners listed below offer free legal advice, make referrals to other organizations and frequently refer citizens to us. We could not offer the additional assistance that we do without them and we thank them for their assistance during this past year:

Southern Minnesota Regional Legal Services (SMRLS)

SMRLS has a new goal to reach more people needing services outside of the St. Paul area. They now travel to the Scott County community to offer clinics at the local libraries.

Volunteer Lawyers Network (VLN)

VLN offers expungement clinics every other month. They also offer clinics to assist with bankruptcy, debtor issues, answering a summons and more.

Minnesota Justice Foundation

MJF is a collaboration of all of the local law schools creating opportunities for students to participate in real-life legal issues. MJF students assist with the divorce clinics.

Minnesota Judicial Branch Self-Help Center

The Minnesota Self-Help Center has a kiosk located in the Law Library which offers live attorney assistance via phone and most court forms with instructions.

Southern Valley Alliance for Battered Women

SVABW refers clients to the Law Library and the Law Library refers women in need to SVABW.

Eighth District Bar Association/ Volunteer Attorneys

Volunteer lawyers from the local Bar Association offer monthly brief advice clinics and offer legal advice at the monthly divorce clinics and other special event clinics during the year.

Minnesota Legal Advice Online (MLAO)

Minnesota Legal Advice Online is a free legal advice online service offered by volunteer lawyers.

Scott County Child Support Office

Child support officers refer clients to the law library for modification of both the expedited and district court process /cost of living adjustment / and motion forms. Child support officers have also assisted at the Unmarried Parent Clinics and have offered Open House hours at the Law Library.

Harriet Tubman

The Tubman Chrysalis Center offers a phone line and some pro-bono representation. Low cost (\$20.00) clinics are available for people that qualify financially.

Scott County Attorney Office

County attorneys refer clients on a regular basis.

Scott County Court Administration

Most of the people coming to the Law Library have been referred by Court Administration Staff.

Cap Agency

Law Library users in need of housing, food, or a crisis nursery are referred to the CAP Agency.

Scott County Human Services

Case managers refer and sometimes bring clients to the law library for assistance. The Law Library is sometimes the first place that homeless, mentally ill, abused or people with criminal issues come. We also frequently refer these library users to Scott County Health and Human Services.

Call 4 Justice

Call 4 justice is a nonprofit organized to make legal assistance available for low-income individuals. It is a collaborative group that shares information and referrals.

Warmlines

Warmlines is also called Kinship Family Support Services. It operates under the umbrella of Lutheran Social Services. Warmlines works with relatives that are raising someone else's child/children due to the biological parent's inabilities usually as a result of mental illness, incarceration, or alcohol /substance abuse.

Mary Freyberg provided an update on the financial health of the law library. It has been reported at previous meetings that law library revenues decreased from 2011-2015 and costs were subsequently reduced to minimize the loss to the law library budget. Although the numbers have not yet been calculated for the year 2016, as of the beginning of December, 2016, the Scott County Law Library has collected \$148,514.00 in court fees.

In addition to the assistance offered to law library patrons in Scott County directly from the law library, patrons can also contact the Minnesota Courts Self Help Center for guidance on their legal questions. Scott County residents have been using these services in 2015 and 2016. In 2015, the Minnesota Courts Self Help Center answered a total of 21,649 calls throughout the state. Scott County residents placed 782 of those calls which is 27.68% of all calls to the self-help center that year. In 2016, 18,394 calls have already been received by the Minnesota Courts Self Help Center in the first 3 quarters of the year. Scott County residents placed 915 calls which is 20.10% of all calls being placed. It has been determined that in the first three quarters of 2016, Scott County residents were the most frequent users of this service statewide.

Currently, the law library offers both electronic and paper resources for patrons. It is anticipated that in the future, more resources will be available electronically and better technologies will emerge which will enable researchers better access to relevant legal resources, forms and instructions in order to more easily navigate the legal system. There will probably be fewer books and hopefully more reasonably priced online tools. As technology changes, the Law Library will probably evolve into more of an Access to Justice Center.

Most Law Library users have been referred to the Law Library because they are engaged in court hearings or legal transactions and are representing themselves. Many need immediate

assistance. Orders for Protection, foreclosure writs and emergency custody hearings are among the court transactions that need to be filed quickly and patrons need a work space to complete these forms. Currently, the Law Library only has a small space for one person to fill out forms. The County is doing a space study now and looking at adding two court rooms to accommodate the ever increasing number of court cases. It is recommended that the Law Library reconfigure its present space to remove the shelves in the center of the room and add work spaces and computers. In addition, a small conference room (2 person) would be useful to afford privacy to those patrons dealing with sensitive issues.

Legal resources continue to skyrocket in cost. In order to serve our varied customers the Law Library has continued to purchase print and online collections. Mary Freyberg will continue to work on the West contract again in 2017 with the goal of still offering the current resources in a different format and reducing costs.