

County Politics

Judge Kyle Hartmann,
Fayette County JP, Pct. 1

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Agenda

Getting Requests
Approved by the
Commissioners Court

Building Relationships
in Your County

Activity

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Getting Requests Approved by the Commissioners Court

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A Commissioner's Perspective

Hon. Tim Addison
Yoakum County Commissioner, Pct 4

“Don't approach court like they are the enemy. It should be a partnership between all elected officials to provide the best product for the county. It's not personal. Budgeting decisions are competitive between all requests made. You need to build a relationship with the court and not just show up when you need something. Help them understand what you do. No one knows your job and your needs better than you!”

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A Treasurer's Perspective

Jennifer L. Henderson

Schleicher County Treasurer, CCT, CIO

- Start with a look at previous budgets, I would recommend at least three years' worth.
 - Are there overages/shortfalls? Why?
- Is what the office doing currently working?
 - Do you need staff? New Technology?
 - Why? Statute changes? Processing more transactions?
- Does staff need a raise?
 - Are current wages in line with other county staffers with similar responsibilities? With similar tenure?

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A Treasurer's Perspective (Continued)

Jennifer L. Henderson, Schleicher County Treasurer, CCT, CIO

- After getting an idea of what you need, it might be helpful to find someone who works closely with the budget process to help you gather information and to help advocate for what your office needs. It could be your Treasurer, Auditor, a budget officer, or a fellow elected official with budget experience.
- Before presenting any request, ask if there is a specific form that the budget officer uses. Get quotes for any purchases you are suggesting need to be made. Make sure your wage requests are in line with other departments, and show why you think that is.
- Be willing to educate yourself and others about what your office needs, and make requests in a professional manner.
- Accept that county budgets are limited, and you need to be prepared that you may not get everything you want all at once. You will need to be able to prioritize the most critical requests, and then negotiate what can be worked on over the next 2-3 years.

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Work Together with Other JPs & Prepare Ahead of Time (and Be Aware of the Open Meetings Act)

Judge Nicholas Chu
Travis County JP, Pct. 5

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Use Metrics & Data

- Every request you make for additional resources means more cost and an impact on your county's budget.
- So, go to the commissioners court prepared with metrics and data from your court.
 - Every single case management system has the ability to provide you with reports and give you data and metrics that can help you prove your need to commissioners court.
 - Examples of reports: number of cases filed, types of cases filed, time to disposition, etc.
- Use your data to show the commissioners court what you need and why, and more importantly, how your request is going to make your court more efficient, provide better access for the public, to the public, and to give justice to everybody who comes before your court.

Judge Holly Williamson
Harris County JP, Pct. 8, Pl. 1

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Building Relationships in Your County

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Focus on Offices You Work Closest With

Constable

Auditors/Treasurers

Commissioners Court

County Judge

County/District Attorney & Law Enforcement; Legal Aid

State Agencies (DPS, OCA, etc.)

LMHAs

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Don't Forget Non-Legal Stakeholders

Medical Examiners/Doctors

Libraries (access to technology and resources for public)

Non-profits

Churches (but avoid any partiality or anything involuntary)

Community Service Options

Other Resources for the Public

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Be Diplomatic

- Pick Your Battles!
- Be willing to compromise.
- Offer help when you can regardless of if you're getting anything in return.

This can apply to many different situations/relationships .

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Don't Neglect Reporting Duties

- Know what you need to send to who.
- Know who to ask if you have questions.
- Develop a reputation for being reliable and thorough.
- Don't forget about TJCTC's Recordkeeping & Reporting Deskbook:
<https://www.tjctc.org/tjctc-resources/Deskbooks.html>

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Tips for Reporting Duties

- If you need to call someone when in the field, do it from your county phone number. There are services/apps, like FirstNet, that let you do this from your personal cell.
- Put your reporting deadlines into your calendar and stay on top of them.
- Don't be afraid to reach out to the people/agencies you're sending something to if you have any questions about a reporting requirement.

Judge Mark Russo
Rockwall County JP,
Pct. 3

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Activity

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Step 1

List five things you need for
your court right now.

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Step 2

Prioritize: Pick the three most important things.

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Step 3

Sketch out a plan:

- What additional information do you need?
- Who do you need to get on board?
- How do you show the benefits?
- What do you need to prepare?
- What language will be most effective?

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Thank You!