

WELDON COPELAND
Collin County Probate Court
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April 23, 2018

Re: Substitute Court Reporter 015-2180-442-64-15

To Commissioners Court:

I am writing to request a budget amendment to increase the Probate Court substitute court reporter line item by \$11,490.00.

Unlike other courts in Collin County, the Probate Court does not employ a full-time salaried court reporter.


Many of our cases are uncontested. Because these cases will never be appealed, they do not require a court reporter. We use an electronic recording system to make records in these uncontested cases.

A significant portion of our cases are contested, however. We employ a substitute court reporter on a daily basis for 5-7 days each month for these contested hearings.

Using this combination of substitute court reporter and electronic recording system has allowed our court to save a significant amount of money compared to the cost of employing a salaried court reporter.

While this combination has been effective in the past, we can no longer fulfil our statutory duties using our current budget due to unexpected circumstances. First, recent population growth and the maturing of the county population have led to an increased number of contested inheritance disputes. Second, our electronic recording system is inadequate for constructing an appellate record which complies with the Texas Rules of Appellate Procedure for cases in which an appeal may be taken. In some cases, we have been able to construct an acceptable appellate record using the electronic recording system, but only after conducting multiple post-trial hearings to comply with instructions from the Court of Appeals, and then by employing a substitute court reporter to prepare a written transcript based on the electronic recording. In some cases, the electronic recording has been so inadequate as to not enable the construction of an appellate record at all.

We have used \$8,016.35 of our original substitute court reporter budget of \$13,360.00. We have already scheduled 30 additional days (five days each month) of substitute court reporter services scheduled this fiscal year at a cost of \$383.00 per day for a total of \$11,490.00. We will need all 30 of these days, and realistically, an additional 2-3 days per month for cases that require a record and that cannot be heard during the regularly scheduled contested hearings weeks. The amount requested will allow us to employ a substitute court reporter for the 30 days already scheduled, and the 2-3 additional days per month that we will also need.


Weldon Copeland