



Happy New Year from the Texas Municipal Courts Association President

Happy New Year! This note will be the first in a series of messages directly from me to you - the Texas Municipal Courts Association (TMCA) member. These notes will be short ones keeping you informed of some of the exciting highlights of Association business. Today, I want to focus on four topics discussed at the Board of Directors first quarterly meeting in Austin last fall.

1) I am happy to report that the Board's consensus was to continue to hire a lobbyist to educate the Legislature on various issues related to municipal courts. The Board authorized me to negotiate an agreement with our lobbyist. I will report on those negotiations at the February Board meeting.

2) The Board also authorized me to form a work group to formulate a plan to establish a charitable foundation. I am thrilled that Judge Kathleen Person from Temple, Judge Julie Escalante from Baytown and Judge Brian Holman from Lewisville have all agreed to serve on the planning committee. I hope to make a presentation to the Board in February.

3) In the aftermath of Hurricane Harvey, a new committee called the Court Helping Courts Committee was created. This committee is an experiment and its purpose is to propose policy and perhaps (in conjunction with our Legislative Committee) propose legislation that would allow municipal courts incapacitated by natural disasters to help other municipal courts. Judge Danny Rodgers has graciously agreed to chair the committee.

4) The TMCA relies solely on membership dues for its organizational goals. The association provides the following benefits to its membership solely through membership fees:

1. Annual Conference to provide education regarding court issues and related topics;
2. Pay for the building mortgage and maintenance of the 2210 Hancock building that houses the TMCEC staff;
3. Has and hopes to continue to be able to hire a Governmental Relations Expert who will advocate on behalf of the municipal courts during the legislative sessions;
4. Provide the membership with a digital or paper copy of *The Recorder*; and
5. Maintain an organizational website for information on-line and to increase the organization's profile to the public.

TMCA does not receive any grant money from any source for operations. The association discussed an increase of membership dues several years back. The last time dues were increased was April 2014. In reviewing the budgetary needs for the organizational goals, it became evident that an increase in membership dues was needed. At the July 2017 Board of Directors Meeting held in Austin, the Board voted to increase membership dues from \$60.00 to \$75.00 effective September 1, 2019. This notice hopefully provides sufficient notification to allow planning and adjusting budgetary needs. We believe membership cost is still quite low in comparison to other professional organizations. The increase in membership dues will allow the Association to continue to provide the benefits listed above to the membership. A strong organization is only as good as its constituents and its goals. Membership remains open to all municipal judges, court clerks, deputy clerks, prosecutors, warrant/bailiff officers, juvenile case manager, interpreters and all other court support staff.

If you have any legislative proposals, you can submit them to our Legislative Chair, Judge Stewart Milner, your Regional Director, to any officer or to me. Our contact information can be found at www.txmca.com/about/board-directors-2017-2018.

I want to thank the members, the committee chairs and the officers of the Board for their time and commitment to the TMCA. The next TMCA Board meeting will be on Thursday, February 22, 2018 at the Sonesta Hotel in Bee Cave. All members are welcome to attend and to address the Board during the speakers' section of the agenda.

I wish you all a very successful new year!

Michael Acuña,

Texas Municipal Courts Association