



Hamilton County Sheriff's Office

Simon L. Leis, Jr., Sheriff

MEDIA RELEASE



FORECLOSURE BACKLOG DRAMATICALLY REDUCED

Hamilton County, Ohio, July 09, 2010 -- House Bill 138 became effective on November 13, 2008. It changed the way County government processed foreclosures. It affected many county departments (Auditor, Clerk of Courts, Prosecutor, Recorder, Treasurer, and the Sheriff) and all attorneys in the State. It added deadlines to many of the processes. Part of the impetus for the change was to try to alleviate the increase of non-recorded deeds by banks and third party purchasers. The House Bill moved this responsibility to the Sheriff's Office. The House Bill increased the workload for the Sheriff's Office. The Sheriff is basically touching the foreclosure paperwork five times more than done previously.

During this same time period foreclosures skyrocketed and county budget woes increased. The Sheriff's Fiscal Section who handles the foreclosure work along with many other duties saw its staff reduce from thirteen members to ten (a 23% reduction).

It was the makings of a perfect storm (increased workload due to the passage of the House Bill, increased foreclosures, and reduction in staff). In January of 2010, the Sheriff's Office was behind five to six months in distributing foreclosed property. The office was scheduling approximately 120 sales and selling approximately 70 a week. The ones that do not sell are withdrawn and usually go back up for sale at a later date, thus causing additional work.

Sheriff Leis pulled and reassigned staff from other Divisions (Administration, Corrections, Court Services, Patrol, Technology / Integrity) to reduce this backlog. He allowed for his current and reassigned staff to work weekends, early mornings and late evening. He purchased a network router to increase the speed of the computers in his office. He also had his IS staff add information to the Sheriff's Internet regarding sold properties (hoping to alleviate the myriad of phone calls). His staff met and called law firms dealing with large volumes of foreclosed properties to suggest ways of streamlining the process.

By March of 2010 the delay in processing went from six months to four months. By April 2010 the delay was reduced to four weeks. Today the Sheriff's Office is approximately one week behind. This is not to say that there are cases that have sat longer than the House Bill allows. The majority of these cases are waiting on the Plaintiff's attorneys to file entries, deeds, registered land certificates, corrected entries or issuing monies.

The Sheriff is dedicated to providing the service required by his office. However, it has been difficult with unfunded mandates and shrinking budgets.

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