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Ann Arbor 2012 Budget: 15th District Court

Judges explain to city council how their court works

BY DAVE ASKINS

FEBRUARY 13, 2011

Editor's note: The Ann Arbor city council has held two retreats to discuss the city's FY 2012 budget – one in early December 2010 and another in early January 2011. A summary of the material covered in those retreats is provided in previous Chronicle coverage: "[Ann Arbor: Engaging the FY 2012 Budget.](#)"

Leading up to the city administrator's proposed budget in April, the city council is also holding a series of work sessions on the budget. Their typical scheduling pattern is for the weeks between council meetings. But the work session on the 15th District Court was held just before the council's Feb. 7, 2011 meeting.



Former city councilmember Chris Easthope was elected in 2008 to serve as a judge on Ann Arbor's 15th District Court. In this photo, Easthope was pointing out other judges, the magistrate and staff of the court, who attended the Feb. 7 work session along with Easthope. (Photo by the writer.)

An hour before the city council's regular meeting on Feb. 7, 2011, scheduled to start at 7 p.m., councilmembers received a presentation from Chris Easthope on the financial picture for the 15th District Court. The court is funded primarily, but not completely, by the city. Last year, the city's approved FY 2011 budget for the 15th District Court was \$3,776,080, or around 4.5% of the city's \$81,449,966 general fund budget.

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Civic News Ticker

AAPS Board: Six Superintendent Finalists

At its Feb. 9, 2011 meeting, the Ann Arbor Public Schools board of education announced six semi-finalists for the district's open superintendent position. In alphabetical order, the candidates and the school districts in which they are currently working are: William DeFrance (Eaton Rapids Public Schools, Michigan); Patricia Green (North Allegheny School District, Pennsylvania.); Paul Long (Pennsbury School District, Pennsylvania); Michael Munoz (Des Moines Public Schools, Iowa); Shelley Redinger (Oregon Trail School District, Oregon); and Manuel Rodriguez (Baltimore County Public Schools, Maryland). Board members also set interview questions and blocked out times to hold the first round of open

— VISIT SKYCLOCK SITE —

interviews next week. This brief was filed shortly after the board's meeting. A more detailed report of last night's meeting will follow:

[[link](#)]

- **Ann Arbor OKs Village Green Contract**
- **Fuller-Maiden Lane Intersection Gets Study**
- **Ann Arbor Council Approves Capital Plan**
- **Ann Arbor Applies for Greenbelt Matches**
- **Council Reduces Fee for Heritage Row**
- **Ann Arbor Marijuana Law Still Stalled**

Salaries for the three judges on the court – Easthope, Julie Creal and Elizabeth Hines – are set and paid by the state of Michigan. The judges, along with other key court staff, also attended the work session.

Easthope stressed to councilmembers that he understood the difficult position the council is in, having served on the city council himself. [First elected in 2000 to a Ward 5 seat on the city council, Easthope won a narrow victory in the 2008 race for the 15th District Court judgeship.]

The basic picture Easthope sketched out for the council was of a court that had already reduced its budget – from \$4.1 million in FY 2008 to \$3.8 million in FY 2011, the current fiscal year. Easthope estimated the needed budget for the court in the next two years at around \$3.7 million.

Measures already implemented include optimization of staffing that has allowed a reduction in full-time employees from 40 FTEs four years ago to 32 FTEs today. Easthope also stressed that the court's probation program, even though it is not mandated by the state, actually saves citizens money, because it offers an alternative to fines (which many defendants aren't in a financial position to pay anyway) and jail (which may not be the best solution for mentally ill defendants).

Background: What Is the 15th District Court?

Before diving into the budget picture for the court, it's worth considering: (1) where the 15th District Court fits in the state of Michigan's court system; (2) what specific kinds of cases the court handles; and (3) the volume of tasks the court handles, including those that are not reflected in its caseload statistics.

Background: State Court System

Michigan uses what it calls a "One Court of Justice" system – there's one court with various divisions. The main divisions of the One Court:

- **Supreme Court** [last resort, all decisions final]; number of judges statewide = 7.
- **Court of Appeals** [handles cases when a party wants a review of a decision that has been made by another court]; the Court of Appeals divides the state into four districts with four sets of seven judges; number of judges statewide = 28.
- **Circuit Court** [trial court of general jurisdiction, including criminal cases like felonies and certain serious misdemeanors, as well as civil cases involving amounts greater than \$25,000]; the individual circuits follow county boundaries, with the number of judges per county set based on caseload; number of judges statewide = 221.
- **Probate Court** [handles cases involving wills, trusts, and treatment of mentally ill people]; the geographic parceling out of different individual probate courts mostly follows county boundaries, with some exceptions in northern Michigan, where consolidation has taken place; number of judges statewide = 103.
- **District Court** [handles all civil claims up to \$25,000,

Old Media Watch

UM: China

Reuters published a guest column by Tom Lyon, director of the University of Michigan Erb Institute for Global Sustainable Enterprise, and Peter Adriaens, a UM professor of entrepreneurship. They explore how the U.S. compares with China in terms of innovation and entrepreneurship, specifically in the context of clean energy research. Noting that President Obama has pushed for the U.S. to outpace China, the writers argue that the call to competition shouldn't get in the way of collaborative efforts between the two countries. [Source]

- **A2: Business**
- **A2: Redistricting Study**
- **UM: Sigma Alpha Epsilon**
- **A2: Business**
- **A2: Home Values**
- **Washtenaw: Courts**

New Media Watch

A2: Arts & Crafts

The Flint Handmade blog features Ann Arbor artisan Kate Kehoe, who sells her wares through her company, Chicaloo. In response to a question about how she came up with the name, Kehoe says: "This was a harder decision than one would think. I discarded a lot of names before deciding on Chicaloo. It is a term of endearment that I call some of my friends. I thought it was appropriate since they are the ones who supported me at the beginning of my crafty career." [Source]

- **Washtenaw: Suffragists**
- **A2: Business**
- **A2: Newshawks**
- **Ypsi Twp: Government**
- **A2: Airport**
- **Washtenaw: Michigan CIO**

Missed Ticks

Frederick McDonald Misidentified

In a recent article on Ann Arbor's local officers compensation commission, we gave incorrect biographical information for one of the LOCC members, Fred McDonald. We confused Mr. McDonald with one of his sons, Frederick L. McDonald II. The senior McDonald is partner in the law firm Hamilton McDonald & Carter. In connection to the membership eligibility requirements for the LOCC, which were discussed in that article, we also failed to point out that the senior McDonald's son, Kevin, is employed by the city of Ann Arbor as an assistant city attorney.

We note the error and omission here and have corrected the original article.

- **Rabhi's Name Spelled Incorrectly**
- **Crop Amount Incorrect**
- **Appel's Title Incorrect**
- **Research Figure Incorrect**
- **Gunn's Role Clarified**
- **Gravel Pit Name Misspelled**

including small claims, landlord-tenant disputes, land contract disputes, and civil infractions]; geographically, the number of individual district courts varies by the workload; Washtenaw County, for example has three district courts – 15th District Court for the city of Ann Arbor, 14B District Court for Ypsilanti Township, and the 14A District Court (with four physical venues) for the rest of Washtenaw County; number of judges statewide = 258.

The One Court, across all its divisions, includes more than 600 judges. All three judges from the 15th District Court attended the city council's budget work session: Chris Easthope, Julie Creal and Elizabeth (Libby) Hines.

Background: Specific Kinds of Cases

The 15th District Court's docket, which is available online via the Judicial Information System (JIS), gives a more concrete idea of the kind and volume of cases that a district court judge handles. Here's Easthope's schedule for three upcoming days, as retrieved from JIS last week and annotated by The Chronicle:

MONDAY 2/14/11
 AT 9:00 a.m.
 MARIJUANA AA [possession of marijuana; city charter Chapter 16]
 UNLICENSED [driving without a license]
 DWLS [driving with suspended license]
 FLS INFO PO [giving false information to a police officer]
 DWLS [driving with suspended license]
 NOISE [noise ordinance violation]
 DISORDERLY C [disorderly conduct]
 MIP MISD [minor in possession of alcohol]
 DISORDERLY C [disorderly conduct]
 DWLS [driving with suspended license]
 EQUIP VIOL [defective equipment]
 NOISE [noise ordinance violation]
 DISORDERLY C [disorderly conduct]
 EXPIRED LIC [driving with expired license]
 MIP MISD [minor in possession of alcohol]
 DWLS [driving with suspended license]
 NOISE [noise ordinance violation]
 NOISE [noise ordinance violation]
 OPEN INTOX [opened intoxicants]
 NOISE [noise ordinance violation]

AT 1:30 p.m.
 ASSAULT/BATR [assault and battery]

TUESDAY 2/15/11
 AT 9:00 a.m.
 DISORDERLY, RESISTING [disorderly conduct, resisting arrest]
 MIP MISD [minor in possession of alcohol]
 OW INTOX [operating while intoxicated]
 OPEN INTOX [opened intoxicants]
 MIP MISD [minor in possession of alcohol]
 DWLS [driving with suspended license]
 NOISE [noise ordinance violation]

AT 10:30 a.m.
 OW INTOX [operating while intoxicated]

WEDNESDAY 2/16/11
 AT 8:30 a.m.
 PARKING VIOL [parking violation]
 PARKING VIOL [parking violation]
 TRAFFIC DEV [disobeyed traffic device]
 SPEED 1-5 [speeding 1-5 mph over limit]
 PROH TURN [making prohibited turn]
 FL TO YIELD [failure to yield]
 NO PROOF INS [no proof of insurance]
 EXP PLT CI [expired license plate]
 SCHOOL BUS [failed to stop for school bus]
 IMPR LIGHTS [improper use of lights]
 SPEED 1-5 [speeding 1-5 mph over limit]
 TRAFFIC SGNL [failure to observe a traffic signal]
 SPEED 26-30 [speeding 26-30 mph over the limit]
 SPEED 16-20 [speeding 16-20 mph over the limit]
 SPEED 1-5 [speeding 1-5 mph over limit]
 FL SGNL/OBSV [failure to signal]
 PROH TURN [making prohibited turn]
 PARKING VIOL [parking violation]
 ZONING CI [zoning civil infraction]
 ZONING CI [zoning civil infraction]
 ZONING CI [zoning civil infraction]
 FL STP ASSUR [failure to stop assuring a clear distance]
 FL SGNL/OBSV [failure to signal]
 FL TO YIELD [failure to yield]
 SPEED 11-15 [speeding 11-15 mph over the limit]
 SPEED 11-15 [speeding 11-15 mph over the limit]
 TRAFFIC SGNL [failure to observe a traffic signal]
 TRAFFIC DEV [disobeyed traffic device]
 SPEED 6-10 [speeding 6-10 mph over the limit]

SPEED 16-20 [speeding 16-20 mph over the limit]
 SPEED 21-25 [speeding 21-25 mph over the limit]
 SPEED 1-5 [speeding 1-5 mph over limit]
 BASIC SPEED [violation of basic speed law]
 XWY SPD 6-10 [speeding 6-10 mph over limit on expressway]
 TRAFFIC SGNL [failure to observe a traffic signal]
 PROH TURN [making prohibited turn]
 SPEED 1-5 [speeding 1-5 mph over limit]

AT 9:00 a.m.
 TRAFFIC SGNL [failure to observe a traffic signal]

Background: Volume of Work – Preliminary Exams

In his Feb. 7 presentation to the city council, Easthope stressed that there’s a category of work that’s not counted for the district court’s caseload statistics, but that is nonetheless a significant additional burden on the courts resources: preliminary examinations conducted for the circuit court.

A preliminary examination is one of the steps in criminal prosecution. A defendant accused of a felony, which will be tried in the circuit court, has the right to such a preliminary exam. But it’s not the circuit court that conducts these hearings – it’s done by the district court. They’re sometimes called “probable cause hearings” because it’s an occasion when the prosecutor must convince the judge that there is at least probable cause to believe the defendant actually committed the crime they’re charged with. So the burden of proof is not “beyond a reasonable doubt” as it would be at trial.

The range of possible decisions a district court judge can make at a preliminary exam includes: (1) sending the defendant to the circuit court to be tried on the charges that have been filed against them; (2) reducing the charges and sending the defendant to whatever court is appropriate; or (3) dismissing the charges.

Council discussion after the presentation drew out the fact that the circuit court provides the physical venue for the preliminary exams, so the cost to the district court is measured in terms of their judges’ time.

Where do preliminary exams fit in the work load for the 15th District Court? Easthope told the council it’s hard to give a specific number, because those numbers are not tracked by the circuit court. He said he estimated that the 15th District Court judges conduct around 1,500 preliminary exams per year.

How does that stack up with the volume of other kinds of cases? [[.pdf of caseload stats for 15th District Court 2002-2009](#)]
 Number-wise, the bulk of the work handled by the court involves traffic offenses. But the estimated 1,500 preliminary examinations per year make up around 13% of the non-traffic cases handled by the court:

15th District Court	Total	Caseloads	
2007	2008	2009	
Civil	6,701	6,683	6,624
Criminal	3,818	3,681	3,640
Traffic	29,988	25,416	20,999
Prelim	1,500	1,500	1,500

In Easthope’s presentation, he highlighted the drop in the number of traffic cases handled by the court over the last few years. Since 2006, that number has declined by about one-third.

Budget Reductions: “The budget is the budget”

The presentation from Easthope began on a cheerful note,

with Easthope thanking the council for their support in constructing the new municipal center in which the 15th District Court is now housed. He told the council they'd been in their new quarters for two weeks and that he'd picked his first jury in the new facility that very day. Initial reviews indicate that it's a great facility, he said.

[As a member of the city council at the time, Easthope was among the councilmembers who cast votes that led to the construction of the new municipal center. He's drawn criticism for that, some of it expressed in a comment written on The Chronicle's website last year. The comment drew a sharp emailed response from Easthope to the comment's author, David Cahill, a local attorney and husband of current city councilmember Sabra Briere (Ward 1). Easthope CC-ed his email to the city council, other judges, as well as the media. Among other issues he raised, Easthope argued that he could not possibly have known he would be elected as judge in a race that included a four-way primary. After he sent the email, Easthope declined a request from The Chronicle for an interview on the subject.

The funding plan for the municipal center's construction came up a bit later in his Feb. 7 presentation, when Easthope described how the court's current revenue stream feeds into that plan. Specifically, revenue from the \$10 fee that the district court can impose on all civil infraction citations is pledged to the city's funding plan for the municipal center. The fee generates between \$160,000 and \$220,000 a year, Easthope said.]

When Easthope introduced the other judges and staff to the council – Judges Creal and Hines, plus the court's magistrate Colleen Currie and court administrator, Keith Zeisloft – city administrator Roger Fraser kidded Easthope that he'd forgotten to introduce the little guy who also accompanied him – Easthope's son. Easthope handled the humor by saying that it was his bodyguard, Aidan Easthope, who specializes in security.

After the opening pleasantries, however, Easthope was down to business, saying "the budget is the budget." He sketched out the overall budget picture for the council by describing how the budget for the court has decreased over the last few years:

2008:	\$4,158,000	
2009:	\$4,264,000	
2010:	\$4,093,000	
2011:	\$3,860,000	
2012:	\$3,710,000	[estimated]
2013:	\$3,784,000	[estimated]

Easthope described how the court had implemented various measures to achieve those reductions. Not counting the judges and magistrate, the court now has 32 full-time equivalent (FTE) positions, down from 40 FTEs four years ago. Currie, the full-time magistrate, is now also supervisor of the court's civil division – that move merged what had previously been two full-time jobs and assigned the responsibilities to one person, Easthope said.

The reductions have also been achieved partly through attrition, reassigning tasks and updating technology, Easthope said. The court has reduced court case management staff, who run the court day-to-day, from 14 to 11 positions. The account clerk, senior secretary and court reporters are cross-trained to handle a variety of tasks, he said. He also described how Creal's

court reporter is also the sobriety court's coordinator – another example of merged jobs.

The last budgeting process, Easthope said, had reduced the pay of court staff. For hourly employees, that had been accomplished by reducing their work hours to 37.5 hours per week. For salaried staff, compensation was reduced by 1.5%, but they continued to work a 40-hour week. Easthope pointed out that judges' salaries are ultimately not paid by the city – the state reimburses the salaries for judges.

After the work session, Zeisloft followed up with The Chronicle via email with confirmation of much of the data discussed at the work session, plus additional data, including numbers for judges salaries, which are set by state statute. [[.pdf of the Revised Judicature Act of 1961](#)]. The formula for setting district judge salaries is based on the salary for Supreme Court justices. Zeisloft calculated the total salary for district judges at around \$138,270.

Easthope highlighted how special programs of the 15th District Court – like its street outreach program, its domestic violence program and its sobriety court – were innovative ways to meet the needs of offenders and the larger community. He mentioned that Hines' street outreach program had recently been featured on the front page of the Detroit Free Press. [The Free Press website currently appears to be in a state of redesign that prevents successful linking to that article, but the program has received play in other media as well, including the American Bar Association Journal: "[For Those Teetering on the Edge, Street Outreach Court Offers a Push in the Right Direction](#)"]

Easthope pointed out that one FTE and and three part-time positions at the court are funded by grants. These positions are associated with the domestic violence program, including probation officer David Oblack's position.

Besides grants and the \$10 fee imposed on civil infractions, another revenue source for the court is fines. Easthope described how the implementation of the JIS system had helped with collection of delinquent fines and fees. Despite the decline in citations over the last decade, improved collections efficiency – including the mailing of monthly statements to offenders – had offset what would have been a more significant decline in revenue. Around \$700,000 per year in collections is now attributable to the collections system implemented in 2008, Easthope said. The overall rate of collection is 96-97%, which is better than most collections agencies – not that the court thinks of itself as a collections agency, Easthope added.

Probation Program

The 15th District Court's probation program offers an alternative for sentencing besides fines or jail – oversight by a probation officer who is assigned to their case. Easthope said that if jail and fines were the only two choices, judges would have few means to deal with defendants who can't pay (they might be stealing, and got caught, precisely because they have no money), who are mentally ill or who are addicted to drugs.

Easthope acknowledged that the probation program is not mandated by the state. For that reason, he said, it's often thought of as an easy program to cut. But he described it as

“one of the most important things we do.” During questions from the council, Stephen Kunselman (Ward 3) told Easthope he appreciated Easthope’s acknowledgment of the status of the probation program as non-mandated, and wondered if the probation program could be combined with the circuit court’s probation program. Easthope indicated skepticism about that.

Easthope described how the probation program had already reduced its costs by reducing the number of probation support staff. When he first started serving on the 15th District Court’s bench, there were three support staff for probation – now there is just one person, he said. When that person is on break, a clerk or supervisor fills in.

He went on to describe how the probation program’s projected budget for FY 2012 is \$532,000. The probation oversight fee of \$25/month – charged to those who are on probation – generates between \$125,000 and \$130,000 per year, which could be subtracted from the \$532,000.

At any given time, he said, the three probation officers each have around 150 cases assigned. The annual caseload for the probation program is between 800-900 cases. By way of illustration, the kinds of cases that probation officers monitored in 2010 included: 106 alcohol offenders, 14 suspended license, 96 drunk driving offenders, 105 drug offenders, 255 fraud offenders, 118 property crime offenders, 24 public nuisance offenders, 160 violent crime offenders, and 1 weapons offender.

Among the tasks performed by probation officers are alcohol tests for people who’ve come through the sobriety court – 50 tests a day, said Easthope. [Before winning election to the district court judgeship, Easthope helped conduct volunteer alcohol tests in downtown Ann Arbor on University of Michigan home football games: "Badgers, Breath Tests, Badgers and Buses"]

The bottom line that Easthope suggested for the probation program was this: \$7 million of tax money saved – 84,000 jail bed-days at \$85 per bed-day.

Courts: Council Comments, Questions – Consolidation?

Tony Derezinski (Ward 2) asked Easthope if the court had yet moved to electronic filing. Derezinski felt that perhaps some cost savings could be realized there. Easthope explained that Judge Donald Shelton – chief judge of the Washtenaw County Trial Court, which includes the Circuit Court – has been working on it. A database implementation issue had slowed that down. [The trial court is funded by the county – Shelton recently briefed county commissioners about restructuring for the court that’s aimed at cutting costs and improving services.]

Prompted by a query from Carsten Hohnke (Ward 5), Easthope described how a municipality can request, based on population, that the state establish a district court and the county would then fund it. But the 15th District Court for the city of Ann Arbor and the 14B District Court for Ypsilanti Township are self-funded by their respective municipalities, Easthope explained. Given the seven judges and six courthouses for district courts in Washtenaw County, he said, he felt there is room to consolidate and to make physical changes. The state law would, however, need to be amended, and each

municipality with a court – Chelsea, Ypsilanti, Saline and Pittsfield Township– would need to sit down and agree to make a physical change.

Easthope then took a step back from Washtenaw County to look at the picture statewide for judgeships. In the next 10 years, he said, 200 judges will become ineligible to run – the Michigan Constitution prohibits candidates from running who are more than 70 years old. The Judicial Crossroads Task Force of the Michigan State Bar, said Easthope, has just issued a report suggesting that the number of judges statewide could be reduced. So Easthope felt there could be significant changes to the number of judges. It's ultimately determined by the legislature.

In Washtenaw County, there's the ability to talk about consolidating physical locations, security and transport, Easthope said. But the state needs to be involved, he said – it can't be done unilaterally. Hohnke ventured that it might be a daunting effort at regional cooperation, but that it might result in savings down the line. Easthope said he felt like it was, in fact, daunting, but that he told people he thinks consolidation is going to happen. Instead of "hiding under the last rock," he suggested, we might as well step up now with our ideas.

Easthope and Hohnke agreed that even if it was county taxes that wound up getting saved, city taxpayers would benefit, because they also pay county taxes.

Easthope sketched out a vision where some other district court physical facilities could be closed, and those courts could instead use new city of Ann Arbor space. The two new district court facilities in the county – 15th District Court and 14A-1, on the same campus as the newly expanded county jail – could accommodate all of the county's district courts, Easthope suggested. That would significantly reduce transport, security and staffing costs, he said.

Bottom Line for Courts

Easthope wrapped up the work session by again expressing the sentiment that he understood the council's situation in evaluating the budget. He described a recent email he'd sent to the council as perhaps a little "terse" – he'd been reacting to the results of a priority-setting exercise the council had completed in preparation for one of its budget retreats. The court had come in next-to-last on the priority list of 12 service areas, with a 1.8 average score on a three-point scale – a 3 being the highest. Just above the 15th District Court on the ranking was parks and recreation.

Easthope said that on reflecting about that ranking, he thought maybe it was a good result – the court was doing its job well enough that the council didn't think about the court that much, so maybe it wasn't all that bad to be ranked below cutting the grass.

Easthope stressed that the court understands the need for budget reduction targets, but said that it would be difficult for the court to meet those targets. [The base-line reduction target for all departments is 2.5%.] Easthope said he could not at this point say what specific areas they would identify in order to meet the target. He said he remembered how as a city councilmember he'd listen every year to people say, "It's going

to be difficult to make our target,” and then confirmed, “It’s going to be difficult to make our target.”

He said that the court is always looking to cut and to be better. With the new facility, there are a lot of changes they might be able to implement. There are a lot of changes countywide they might be able to implement in the long term, but he cautioned that it would require a conversation between the 15th District Court, the other district courts in the county, and the state.


Section: Govt., Meeting Watch

The following terms describe the content of this article. Click on a term to see all articles described with that term: [15th District Court](#), [Ann Arbor City Council](#), [caseload](#), [city budget](#), [civil infraction](#), [Easthope, FY 2012 Ann Arbor Budget](#), [judicial reform](#), [mandated service](#), [probation program](#), [traffic offenses](#)



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One Comment

1.  BY JOHN DORY
FEBRUARY 13, 2011 AT 3:40 PM | [PERMALINK](#)

David Cahill’s July 31st, 2010 post to the Ann Arbor Chronicle was spot on with respect to some of the outrageous politics going on in the local court system -especially with the shenanigans going on between Judge Mattson’s courtroom and Judge Brown. The media was aware of this tumult and had not reported it. The hubbub going on with Judge Timothy Connors being sore about his wife, Margaret Connors, not getting a district court magistrate position and wanting the District Court out of the County Building was a second item that Mr Cahill has reported on the blogs and had its genesis from comments his wife, Sabra Briere, received from a county commissioner.

I , however, believe Chris Easthope that neither he nor Joan Lowenstein supported the police/court project out of self-interest. I happen to know that Chris did not even consider running for the judgeship until 2007 after Ann Mattson announced her impending retirement and he was encouraged to run by several heavy hitters in Ann Arbor, including District Court Chief Judge Julie Creal. The idea for a police/court building was in the works long before this. I believe that Mr Cahill was speculating as to Mr. Easthope’s motives as a City Councilman.

That said, I appreciate David Cahill’s astute coverage of the local political scene. He was the only one who called the Steve Kunselman victory over Leigh Greden in 2009 in the Third Ward City Council election. Cahill has been a beacon of information for the local electorate in exposing some of the goings-on at City Hall.

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