

SIDNEY PROGRESS EDITION  
SHELBY COUNTY COMMON PLEAS COURT  
JANUARY, 2021

The year 2020 was, I suspect, a year that we would all like to forget due to the COVID-19 pandemic. From March to August, the Shelby County courthouse had limited access for court proceedings and all scheduled jury trials were continued.

COVID-19 restrictions significantly reduced traffic in to the courthouse; although, we still continued to be very busy. The average number of persons scanned annually through security for the four years before 2020 were 63,490 per year. That dropped in 2020 to 38,575.

Fortunately, some years ago I started a process, with the assistance of Clerk of Courts Michele Mumford, of modernizing our court procedures. With e-filing of court documents in place, COVID did not restrict the on-going filing of court cases. Even though not physically present in the courthouse, judge and staff could work on-line from outside the courthouse. Attorneys and parties could file pleadings and the court could issue decisions and orders.

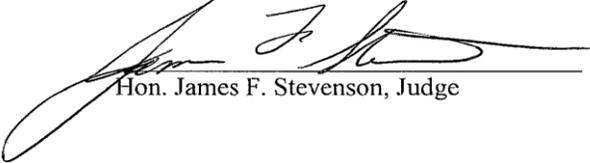
The Common Pleas Court was awarded a Remote Technology Grant from the Ohio Supreme Court in the amount of \$44,565.47 which was used to purchase and install new equipment in the courtroom for video proceedings. With the use of this technology, there is no need for inmates at the Shelby County Jail and prisons to be transported to the courtroom. Fewer individuals in the courtroom reduce the chance of security issues and saves the county travel expenses. Jury trials were continued for a period of time until safety protocols were implemented due to COVID. The Court is now proceeding forward with jury trials with safety precautions in place.

In 2020, there were 530 new cases filed in the general division compared to 655 cases in 2019. Included in the new cases were 296 felony criminal cases. Civil cases filed included 31 Worker's Compensation and 40 foreclosures. Foreclosure filings showed an encouraging downward trend as there were 96 foreclosures filed in 2019.

Magistrate Kristina Morris, in the domestic relations division of the court, conducted 425 hearings during 2020. Case types included in the domestic relations court are Civil Protection Orders, divorces, dissolutions, custody and child support matters and the many other issues that

come before the court on family issues. There were 269 new domestic cases filed. Of those cases, there were 79 domestic violence cases compared to 43 domestic violence cases in 2019.

The COVID-19 pandemic created a significant strain on court procedures. But as Supreme Court Chief Justice O'Connor said, legal and court services are essential and closing the courts is not an option. I am proud that the Shelby County Common Pleas Court continues to operate and use all means available to provide for the legal needs of the community. I hope that soon we will be able to get back to more normal operations; although I suspect that some of the processes, such as video-conference, may very well become part of the tools used by the court even after the pandemic is past.



Hon. James F. Stevenson, Judge