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News Briefs:

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Circuit Court Clerk taking debit/credit cards for fines

The Blount County Circuit Court Clerk's Office is now taking debit cards for payment of fines and costs. A Brentwood company also is paying for a website that allows the office to take debit and credit cards at no cost to the county.

According to Circuit Court Clerk Tom Hatcher, the office began taking debit cards in person and credit and debit cards over the phone or via a new website on June 12. The company charges a fee of \$2.50 on debit card transactions and a \$6 charge or 5 percent of the cost on credit cards via the Internet. The \$6 credit card fee applies to transactions up to \$120 and anything greater than that the fee is 5 percent of the fine or cost.

"The only way people can use the credit cards is over the Internet or over the phone," explained Hatcher. "We can't take credit cards at the window. It has to do with the way the law is set up; we're not allowed to take credit cards in person because of the fee."

Regarding the web site, Hatcher said it allows individuals to log on and look in each court where there is information about the office and informational sheets to help individuals file cases.

Through the website, individuals can link to a new system called Paymentchek. "This system is a contract between the county and this company. For us, we put this in place to better serve the people that use the court system. It gives them better service," Hatcher said.

The company spent three days training the office in how to use their system. He said he hopes the more efficient system for paying fines will generate more revenue through the office. As the office works to collect the fines owed the court, it brings more revenue to the county's general fund, said Hatcher.