

This is a printer friendly version of an article from www.thedailytimes.com
To print this article open the file menu and choose Print.

Article published Jun 8, 2004

Traffic division nets increase in court revenue

Lance Coleman

Revenues in the Blount County General Sessions Court Clerk's Office are \$467,500 more than they were at this time in 2003, Blount County Circuit Court Clerk Tommy Hatcher said.

Hatcher attributed the increase to the traffic division position created several months ago to collect court costs that might otherwise be taxed to the state.

The revenues brought into the General Sessions Court Clerk's Office in May through the traffic division totaled \$42,143, Hatcher said.

Hatcher said the General Sessions judges allow his staff to handle collecting court costs for minor misdemeanor cases.

Individuals can pay the costs for these cases before court and not have to appear. This clears dockets so judges can hear cases involving more serious offenses, Hatcher said.

Cases such as violation of registration law, speeding, light law violations and driving without a license can be handled at the General Sessions Court Clerk Office without seeing a judge, he said.

Before, with a violation of registration, if the person went to court and showed valid registration, the judge would dismiss the case and tax the costs to the state.

Now, even if the case is dismissed, the court costs are collected, he said.

Hatcher said the County Commission also created county ordinances for offenses such as speeding, violation of registration, violation of the light law and driving without a license.

The deputy writes a citation for violating the county ordinances, not the state law.

Now that there are county ordinances for these offenses, money taken as court costs for these offenses goes to the county instead of to the state, Hatcher said.

First offenders of the county ordinance on speeding pay only \$10. Before the first-time offender program, they would have paid about \$186 for violating the state laws regarding

speeding, he said.

"All money we take in here goes back into the general fund to be used in education, law enforcement or whatever the county commission sees fit to use it," Hatcher said.

According to Hatcher, the increased revenue created by the traffic division clerk and the new county ordinances will help cover the cost of a new General Sessions Court approved by the state Legislature. County Commission could appoint a new judge to begin serving Jan. 1, 2005 and face election in 2006, Hatcher said.
