

# Cleveland Heights eliminates jobs, considers increasing court costs to close \$1 million k



Cleveland Heights city officials are considering layoffs and not filling vacant positions to save money, and increasing court costs to generate more revenue. (File photo)

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on December 09, 2014 at 12:33 PM, updated December 10, 2014 at 4:38 PM

CLEVELAND HEIGHTS, Ohio -- The city will eliminate three positions, leave 14 jobs vacant, and consider increasing municipal court costs to offset a projected \$1 million general fund deficit in 2015.

The court handles about 18,000 cases each year, said Judge A. Deane Buchanan, who encouraged City Council to increase court costs by \$10 during a budget workshop Monday night. That would mean an additional \$180,000 for the city.

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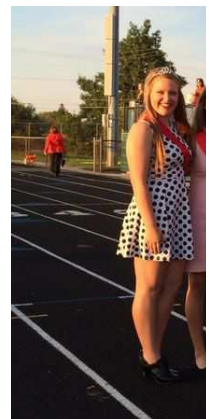
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The city will lay off three employees at the beginning to year by cutting back in the internal copy center and mail room, and eliminated relocation services. That, combined with leaving 14 positions vacant, will save the city \$916,000, City Manager Tanisha Briley said.

City revenue has dropped \$2.5 million a year, according to Mayor Dennis Wilcox, since the elimination of the estate tax and state cuts in local government funds. City officials have talked of **possibly asking voters for a tax increase** ([http://www.cleveland.com/cleveland-heights/index.ssf/2014/09/cleveland\\_heights\\_city\\_schools.html](http://www.cleveland.com/cleveland-heights/index.ssf/2014/09/cleveland_heights_city_schools.html)) next year.

The \$42 million general fund, which covers the city's day-to-day expenses, accounts for nearly half of the city's \$88 million budget. The city budgeted \$18 million for its safety forces and \$1.2 million for the court, which includes 2 percent wage increase for the court's 27 employees.

Buchanan said the employees did not get a raise this year, and he believes they deserve one.

"Our staff does a lot," the judge said. "They actually go out and collect unpaid fines. A lot of other cities pay an outside company to do that for them and tack on a 30 percent fee to pay the company."

The court has handled 12,931 traffic cases; 2,375 criminal cases; and 1,413 civil cases so far this year. Court costs have been \$95 since 2008. They would be \$105, effective at the end of January, if council approves.

**Click here to read** ([http://www.cleveland.com/cleveland-heights/index.ssf/2014/12/cleveland\\_heights\\_city\\_officia\\_3.html](http://www.cleveland.com/cleveland-heights/index.ssf/2014/12/cleveland_heights_city_officia_3.html)) more from Monday's meeting.

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The nights are turning cool as the leaves fall. Want to see what your favorite fall photo is?

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