

The following was taken from a question and answer article written by Dwayne Fatherree, of the Daily Iberian and published on June 3, 2019. The complete article can be found at: https://www.iberianet.com/news/new-clerk-of-court-david-ditch-wants-to-implement-electronic/article_e71ff8ce-85b6-11e9-8b6a-b731586b87aa.html.

The Daily Iberian took a few minutes to talk with Ditch about his goals for the Clerk of Court's office going forward.

What is your assessment of the state of the office?

I think it is good shape financially. Over the last two years, we've taken steps to get it turned around with regard to our expenses versus the revenues. Obviously the biggest challenge right now is to return money from dormant case advance fees to litigants. I have two accounting firms coming in to help us put processes in place. I think the employees have done a great job to turn around the day-to-day operations of the office.

Have the records seized during the investigations over the last few years been returned?

We are in the process. We were working on it Friday, getting info back from the Louisiana State Police and trying to piece everything back together. I'm hoping we can get the bulk of it back in the next couple of days. They have been good about letting us go there to access files when we needed to. Now it's a matter of getting them to release back to us the data they didn't use in the trial. I don't think we will get the data related to trial for evidence at this point, though.

What was the reaction of the staff to Mike Thibodeaux's felony conviction?

The office staff has been through a lot of stress. I think they are ready to get back to business. Throughout this, they have kept their heads down and done the work that needed to be done. They truly are public servants. Now they are eager to get back to

work without the trial or an investigation hanging over their heads. I know they are very disappointed in the outcome, but they handled it professionally. Mostly, I think there is a sense of relief that it is over.

Where do you see the operation going from here?

As far as processes go, I think the biggest thing is the implementation of technology. We have worked to implement e-recording of conveyances and mortgages. Next I'd like us to implement electronic filing in the civil court system, similar to what they do in federal court. That would create a pay-as-you-go system. That gets rid of the need for advance payment of fees. Obviously attorneys would rather that, and the accountants would like it. It's not mandated yet for state courts, but it could be mandated in the state system in as little as two years.