

Macomb clerk sets up website for gun licenses, renewals

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Sabaugh says system frees up time for her office, reduces risk of errors

Macomb County's 23,000 gun owners licensed to carry a concealed pistol will benefit from another innovation by county Clerk Carmella Sabaugh that allows the public to apply for a license or a renewal online.

Sabaugh will announce today that the change will shorten lines in her office and allow her staff to engage in faster processing as she relies on her website to streamline the system. After new applicants for a permit to carry a concealed weapon complete a gun safety course, they can fill out an application online. In some cases, local gun ranges will assist the CCW applicant with the web procedure.

Sabaugh said the new process will eliminate the need for her staff to "key in" application information from their computer keyboards to a database. The system will also substantially reduce potential errors.

The clerk said the biggest benefit is that it will free up her staff to handle other duties, such as assisting with the clerical needs of the Circuit Court, which has been "bombarded" with a heavy caseload.

In the long run, Sabaugh said her numerous moves to employ more technology will provide the kind of efficiencies that will allow her to minimize future layoffs. The clerk is looking ahead to 2012, when the county could face a \$24 million budget deficit.

"We're trying to get ahead so we have things in place and we will be able to do more with less bodies," said the Warren Democrat.

Past budget cutting has chopped her staff from 98 employees in 2007 to 78 this year.

The newest technology dovetails with other high-tech improvements made by Sabaugh in recent weeks.

Redesigned CCW licenses are similar to a driver's license, each with a photo and signature that are saved in a digital database. According to Sabaugh, the

licenses produced by this “IDentiphoto” technology are much harder to alter or duplicate.

Because the Clerk’s Office handles 8,000 CCW permits per year, the cumbersome manual process of preparing paper licenses, plus other paperwork and overseeing gun board hearings, took up manpower that equals several days per month for one worker.

The IDentiphoto process has substantially reduced staff time and has been well-received by permit holders.

In addition, the “FastPass” system will come into play when license holders appear at the Clerk’s Office for their renewal or new applicants appear for their fingerprinting and background checks and to schedule a hearing before the gun board.

FastPass lets Clerk’s Office customers make appointments in advance on the clerk’s website. They can also prepay any fees that are involved.

When a FastPass user arrives at the Clerk’s Office, they can use a phone with Internet access or a computer in the lobby to notify the staff they have arrived. The customer then proceeds to the counter and conducts their business.

The staff can process each transaction much faster and they can prepare paperwork in advance during off-peak hours.

In anticipation of today’s debut, Charles Burnett, retired St. Clair Shores police chief, and Macomb County Sheriff Anthony Wickersham endorsed the new system.

“I am all for the streamlining of the concealed pistol license process to those law-abiding citizens of Macomb County,” Wickersham said in a statement.

Sabaugh said she views the online CCW process as an effort to speed up residents’ due process rights as they pursue their Second Amendment rights.

For more information on the CCW process, log on to macombcountymi.gov/clerksoffice/ccw/

<http://macombdaily.com/articles/2011/03/18/news/doc4d82d79cb69ae173859425.txt?viewmode=fullstory>