

**Testimony of Sandra L. Wesolowski
Director of Clerk Services/City Clerk
City of Franklin, Wisconsin**

Study Committee on Publication of Government Documents and Legal Notices

July 26, 2016

Room 411 South, State Capitol

Chair Spiros, Vice-Chair Miller, and Committee Members:

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony on this matter from a municipal level. I am Sandi Wesolowski, Director of Clerk Services/City Clerk for the City of Franklin. I have worked for the City of Franklin for 31½ years and for the City of Oak Creek for 8 years prior to Franklin.

Franklin is a 3rd class city and, therefore, does award a contract for an official city newspaper pursuant to §985.06, Stats.

Our total cost in for publication of official notices in 2015 was \$17,495. During the first six months of 2016, we have already spent \$9,795. In addition to publication of legal notices as required by law, in Franklin we also post the notices on our official bulletin board at City Hall, place them on the City's website, and provide a copy to the public when one is requested.

Currently in the City of Franklin, the most significant costs relate to the publication of the proceedings of the Common Council meetings. We have two scheduled Common Council meetings per month and the average cost for publishing minutes from one meeting is \$325. We attempt to reduce publication fees for meeting minutes by condensing the minutes (after approval of the minutes but prior to submittal for publication) by reformatting the layout, using abbreviations where possible, and providing the newspaper an electronic copy in the format that eliminates typesetting, enlargements or reductions, or other changes by the newspaper. Publication costs for adopted ordinances, budget resolutions, legal notices for elections, licensing are also significant.

In addition to the potential cost-savings if cities were able to post legal notices in public places and on their web site, there is an ability for cities to maintain the accuracy of effective dates and comply with legal notice classes defined in §985.07, Stats. If a publication error is made and the official newspaper is a weekly publication, the effective date of certain actions of governing bodies is impacted. When the effective date of an ordinance is upon its passage and publication, that effective date is delayed if a newspaper misses an insertion or places one municipality's legal notice in another municipality's newspaper. The same holds true for an official notice of a public hearing or an official notice to bidders for projects. With a weekly newspaper, one missed insertion of a Class 1, Class 2, or Class 3 legal notice can be costly and a time setback for a municipality.

Conclusion

Thank you for allowing me to comment on costs to municipalities for publishing legal notices in newspapers. I appreciate the scope of this Study Committee and I look forward to legislative recommendations for modifications to update Chapter 985, Stats.

Respectfully submitted,
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