



System OK'd to link data between police, courts

By Nicklaus Lovelady
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— Henry County plans to revolutionize the way its courts share data using high-tech consolidation software that will link the county's police agencies and courts to the same information.

The \$764,000 information sharing system by Metatomix, approved by county commissioners on Monday, will allow all of the county's judicial and public safety agencies to view and exchange data with the click of a button, without an overhaul to their existing databases.

The problem, said Clark Rainer, Henry's systems analyst, is that over the years, each court, each prosecutor's office and the county's police department and sheriff's office have developed their own data tracking systems.

"Imagine each department has their own language," said Rainer. "What we're doing is providing them with an interpreter that knows all the languages."

The nine initial data sources that will be connected to the system will be the Henry County superior, state, juvenile and magistrate courts, the Henry County Sheriff's Office, the police department, the public defender's office and the Flint Judicial Circuit District Attorney's office, as well as a financial database.

Rainer has spent the last four years trying to find a system that would allow the data sharing. He said this program will eliminate redundant data entries and it will speed up the process used to store and retrieve information.

An example of an improvement would be the speed in how warrants are processed. Rainer said warrants could be viewed by on-duty police office as quickly as 30 minutes after they are issued, whereas they currently take hours or days to process.

The processing speed "depends on the work load, if there is an officer available to take the warrant from the court to the police department, even the time of day," he said.

Once the system is in place, Rainer said the county will see a return on its investment in three years. He said some police agencies around the county have had to hire additional staff to handle data entry only.

The system is expected to be operational within the next six months, Rainer said.

It would be modeled after a test system currently used in Crisp County which links eight departments.

The Henry County system will link nine public divisions and 28 departments.

Among the departments that will benefit from the consolidated data system is the office of the district attorney, which prosecutes cases handed up a lower court and collects data from multiple departments.

District Attorney Tommy Floyd said his office will run much more efficiently because of the system.

"I have a person that all she does is input information into our case tracking system," Floyd said. "Not only will it make things faster but this will save money in the long run."

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