

Judges get answers, OK pagers

Prospective jurors would be allowed outside court in waves, clerk says

MT. CLEMENS

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A once-stalled plan to give prospective Macomb County jurors pagers so they can wander downtown Mt. Clemens while waiting to be called for jury duty has been given the

green light by circuit judges — the last hurdle in getting the program under way.

County Clerk Carmella Sabaugh said she hopes to have pagers in hand within a few weeks.

Sabaugh met with the majority of circuit judges Wednesday to discuss the pagers. Their main concern,

she said, was that too many jurors would be away from the courthouse at once and there wouldn't be people ready when it came time to pick juries.

The solution? To allow only one-third to two-thirds of the jurors to leave at a time, Sabaugh said.

"We will be cautious," Sabaugh said. "They will have jurors when they need jurors."

The plan hit a roadblock when funding became an is-

sue. Then last month, business leaders stepped up and offered to front half of the \$30,000 start-up cost.

The pager plan is unique in Michigan. Much like pagers given out to restaurant patrons waiting for tables, the county pagers will summon prospective jurors when it's time to return to the courthouse. Until then, they'll be free to wander up to a mile away, and area business owners hope that will translate in-

to mini-shopping excursions downtown.

They'll have about 10 minutes to report back to the jury room.

Another juror-focused program — to pay jurors their daily wage in cash rather than by check — appears to be on track to get started in upcoming weeks as well, chief deputy clerk Todd Schmitz said.

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