

**SUPREME COURT OF VERMONT  
OFFICE OF THE COURT ADMINISTRATOR**

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FROM: Gregg Mousley  
Chief, Finance and Administration

DATE: January 31, 2025

RE: Judiciary Capital Budget Request

The Judiciary appreciates the opportunity to testify to the House Corrections and Institutions Committee regarding the Capital needs for the FY26-FY27 biennium. The Judiciary operates 23 courthouses across Vermont but does not own any of them. We operate as a tenant in 12 courthouses owned and operated by various counties; and 11 state-owned courthouses managed by Buildings and General Services (BGS).

**Section 2:** AoA; BGS major maintenance  
Line 15 - Burlington: 32 Cherry St. Parking Garage Repairs \$2,000,000

This project would require a total of \$2M in bonded dollars in this biennium to repair the garage. This is a BGS-led project that will impact the Costello Criminal and Family Courthouse in Burlington during renovation.

## **Section 14: Judiciary**

### **Line 133 – Woodstock Courthouse Power Backup \$100,000**

The Windsor Civil and Probate Courthouse in Woodstock currently has a three-phase battery back-up system that only provides emergency lighting for a few hours. As such, major power outages can cause significant operational delays which further exacerbate court backlog. The Woodstock Courthouse has also provided overflow capacity as the Windsor Criminal and Family Courthouse in White River Junction is closed for renovations in 2025 and 2026 and many criminal and family hearings are being held at the Woodstock Courthouse. This appropriation would fund a back-up power system to ensure continuous operation at the Woodstock Courthouse.

### **Line 134 -White River Junction Courthouse Renovation \$8,000,000 Cash Fund**

The Windsor Criminal and Family Courthouse in White River Junction was constructed in 1987 as a District Courthouse and for many years saw minimal capital upgrades. \$6 million was appropriated in the FY24-FY25 capital budget for sitework and to begin significant renovations to improve the building's HVAC systems, energy efficiency, security and life safety systems, and make modifications to several interior spaces to better suit the Judiciary's programmatic needs. This appropriation funds the remainder of this project, which is due for completion during the 2026 construction season.

### **Line 135 – Essex County Courthouse Connector \$3,685,910**

The Essex County Courthouse in Guildhall, VT has several structural and programmatic issues that could be resolved through the addition of a connecting space between the courthouse and the neighboring, currently disjointed Meeting House, as well as improvements to the existing courthouse space. This appropriation would fund a project to help increase the security at the courthouse, minimize the possibility of a mistrial due to juror interaction with the public, and support the smooth and continuous operations of this important regional judicial institution. This project has enjoyed input and support from a variety of local judicial and law enforcement stakeholders. Design documents for the project have been completed. This appropriation would fund construction.

Here's the blueprint of the proposed improvements as a link for your review:

[Essex County Connector Project 20240906.Essex Courthouse-Scheme B.ProgressSet.pdf](#)

### **Line 136 – Newport Courthouse Replacement Planning & Design \$1,000,000**

The Vermont Superior Court of Orleans County currently functions in two adjacent buildings, the Orleans County Courthouse (county-owned) at 247 Main Street in Newport and the 21,854 sq ft Orleans Criminal Courthouse at 217 Main Street in Newport (State-owned). When completed in 1904, the building at 217 Main Street housed all the federal facilities in Newport, including courts, post office, and customs offices. It now houses the Orleans Criminal Courthouse. Both courthouses suffer from significant programmatic inadequacies, functional

obsolescence, security challenges, and life safety concerns. \$750,000 was appropriated in the FY24-FY25 capital budget for potential land acquisition and the initial design of a new courthouse. A land search has been ongoing, as have been conversations with local officials about the future of the existing buildings. This appropriation fully funds anticipated design costs for this important project. Request for FY 2026 Bonded Funds \$3,785,910 Request for FY 2026 Cash Fund \$8,000,000 Request for FY 2027 Bonded Funds \$1,000,000 Total Request for Section 14 FY 2026 and FY 2027 \$12,785,910

According to 4 V.S.A. §39, any county seeking capital funds for its courthouse should submit the request to the State Court Administrator by October 1. The Judiciary recently received an additional county request:

Lamoille County Courthouse Backup Generator \$190,000

This Capital Budget request is to install a generator in the courthouse to support continuous operations during power outages.

The Lamoille County Courthouse was built in 1912 at 154 Main Street in Hyde Park, the shire town of Lamoille County, Vermont. The courthouse was modernized and underwent significant renovations in 2016. In the fall of 2023, four intense storms caused extended power outages in Hyde Park. With no prediction of when the power would be restored, courthouse operations were immediately halted. In two instances, court sessions were cancelled for the day, and court personnel were sent home because the courthouse lacked security, communications systems, heat, and water. Besides the apparent loss of a workday and court hearings, if a power outage were to last for any length of time, with no heat, pipes could burst, and court records, historical documents, computer systems, and the entire renovated courthouse and its relatively new furnishings could be destroyed.

There is no alternative courthouse in Lamoille County that could absorb court activities if it were inoperable due to repeated or extended power outages or water damage. The State has a present and future financial interest in preserving the Lamoille County Courthouse.