

To: Rep. Alice M. Emmons, Chair  
Members of the House Committee on Corrections and Institutions

From: Madeline Motta, JD, DCL                      Patricia Gabel, JD  
Assistant Judge                                      Assistant Judge  
Lamoille Superior Court                      Lamoille Superior Court

Date: April 14, 2025

Re: Background Information – Lamoille Generator Proposal

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The urgent need for a courthouse generator became evident in late 2024 when four storms on four separate Mondays shut down court operations, disrupting a scheduled jury trial. The presiding judge and court operations manager urged the assistant judges, as the county administrators, to investigate the possibility of installing a generator.

Lamoille Superior Court is unique from other Vermont courthouses. The county owns the land, the historic portion of the courthouse, the Sheriff’s building, and the State, the two modern additions completed in 2016. Mutual easements ensure that the State and the County can access the entire renovated building, which operates as one building.

Lamoille County periodically adopts a Capital Budget and Program in five-year increments. The most recent capital plan, running from 2019 – 2024, was disrupted by pandemic conditions, price increases not anticipated in the plan, and the shortage of skilled providers qualified to work on historic buildings. The next plan to be developed during the next budget cycle will project capital needs through 2030.

The goals described in the Lamoille County budget plans include maintaining reserves sufficient to pay for unanticipated capital expenses without the need to go through the slow, cumbersome, uncertain, and time-consuming bonding process.

In the future, the Capital Budget Plans will need to anticipate the impact of increasing extreme climate incidents. For example, recent ice and wind damage to the slate roof not only required a slate roof repair but also caused damage and leaks into the historic courtroom, requiring significant repairs.

Example of County Expenses in FY 2024-2025

- \* Exterior Roof Repair Due to Ice Leak:                      \$6,700
- \* Interior Repair Due to Ice Leak:                                      \$7,500

* Ventilation for LCSD Building (SBS):	\$9145
* Solar Protective Window Film (Sun Glare):	\$3,400
* Courthouse Railing Refurbishment:	\$3,500
* Snowplow	\$10,000
* Spring Building Inspections/Maintenance:	\$10,070

It would take several years to increase our capital reserves to purchase a generator, leaving Lamoille Courthouse vulnerable to repeated and extended power outages, water damage, the abrupt discontinuance of scheduled hearings, court operations time, and the expense of court staff sent home for the day.

Lamoille County's capital reserves for FY 2024-25 are \$378,465.17, which is 47% of the budget. This is well below the 75% cap set by VT Statute Title 24, Sec.133, (e) (3). In FY 2025, Lamoille County taxed towns 0.777308%