

Judge lashes out

Klammer says Painesville Utilities could have prevented courthouse flooding

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Lake County Probate Court Judge Ted Klammer is accusing Painesville City Department of Utilities officials of not doing enough to prevent flooding in the county's Courthouse West Annex.



Klammer

At the same time, security glass

Multiple offices at the annex were closed Nov. 5 after the city of Painesville had a large water main break Nov. 3.

Cleanup continued Monday in Probate Court.

was installed at the court's front window — despite the fact the building was closed to the public for Veterans Day.

Klammer said carpet throughout the court will have to be ripped up and a jury box wall may have to be taken down because of mold.

"They turned the water on for the jail, which created problems in this

courthouse," said the judge. "It blew up our bathroom, and it started flooding like there was no tomorrow. The utility companies should be putting in new lines so this doesn't happen again."

Klammer said the utility company has no competition, so it feels it can do whatever it wants.

"They're not updating things, and

they charge as much as they can," he added. "There shouldn't be any more water or sewer increases. It's got to be addressed. The government has to service the people. When you know something is wrong, you do something about it. The county has insurance to replace the carpet, but the utility company

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Lashes

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should pay for it. If they don't, perhaps the county should look at another seat — maybe Mentor."

Painesville Acting City Manager Doug Lewis said the city has been in touch with the utilities department and talked about the situation and changes that they need to make in terms of procedure for any future water main breaks.

"We have asked the utilities department to contact county maintenance in the future when turning any water on," Lewis said.

Lewis added that breaks and backups are never "anticipated to occur," and said the utilities department's response to this specific incident was "nothing

Lewis said he did not wish to comment on who might be at fault for the incident.

In the meantime, Klammer expected to hold court hearings as usual today.

The clerk's office has been using an upstairs Probate Court conference room since the flood, and those looking for marriage licenses have been redirected to what was once the front entrance to the main courthouse.

Seventeen Probate Court employees who have been unable to use their workstations because of water and loud noises from industrial strength fans have been working out front in close quarters together in the West Annex since the flood.

Klammer — who is the presiding judge for the county court's general division — said it was too soon to give a damage estimate.

at the courthouse for more than 1 years.

The main problem is two 4-inch water drains that connect to the sanitary sewer system. Each drain is located on the side of the building at the bottom of 15-foot stairwells that allow employees to exit the building each night when it's locked.

The drains are too small to handle the water, which then seeps into the basement of the renovated building, court officials have said.

The county spent more than \$10 million in 2004 to renovate the old U.S. Post Office in downtown Painesville to house the Clerk of Courts office in the basement and the probate judge's office on the first floor.

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