

State awards \$18,900 grant to study feasibility of court sharing
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TRENTON - The state Department of Community Affairs has awarded an \$18,900 grant to study whether Millstone Township, Upper Freehold and Roosevelt can feasibly share a municipal court.

"We felt it might be more cost-effective to unify the courts in our area," Millstone Mayor Nancy Grbelja said. "We're always looking to share services with municipalities that are adjacent to us."

Upper Freehold and Millstone adjoin each other, while Roosevelt is surrounded by Millstone. The three towns are served by the State Police, having no police departments of their own.

Millstone's Municipal Court hears cases on a weekly basis for itself and Roosevelt, Grbelja said. Upper Freehold's court hears cases for its township two times a month, said Upper Freehold Mayor Steve Alexander.

"I'm glad it (the grant) came through," Alexander said.

Upper Freehold's court costs are not covered by the fine money it brings in, Alexander said.

"It doesn't pay for itself," Alexander said.

Millstone applied for the grant with the blessing of Upper Freehold and Roosevelt, Grbelja said. Roosevelt Mayor Beth Battel could not be reached for comment.

Millstone began considering the matter when it realized it may be costly to modernize its court facility, Grbelja said.

Government Strategy Group, a consulting group from New Providence in Union County, is to conduct the feasibility study, Grbelja said. Grbelja said she expected the consultant to begin work as soon as the money was received from Community Affairs. Grbelja speculated the study could be completed in 6 to 12 months.

The grant comes from the Community Affairs SHARE (Sharing Available Resources Efficiently) program.

"Gov. Corzine has urged local governments to examine sharing services as a way to reduce property tax burdens on New Jersey residents," Community Affairs Commissioner Joseph Doria said in a news release. "These municipalities, counties and organizations

are to be commended for their dedication to driving down costs and increasing government efficiency."

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