

# **BRADENTON HERALD**

Bradenton.com

**Friday, September 4, 2009**

## **Clerks of court deal with budget cuts**

**By: Carl Mario Nudi**

MANATEE — Just as the other 66 Florida county clerks of the court, Manatee County Clerk of the Court R.B. “Chips” Shore has had to trim his staff because of actions of the Legislature last session.

Statewide, the clerks of the court have seen close to \$90 million in budget cuts as a result of new budget caps and a transfer of \$45 million in filing fees to the court system, according to a Florida Association of County Clerks press release.

Locally, Shore’s office has seen more than \$1.1 million in budget cuts.

“We’re working with the bare number of people we need,” Shore said.

“Anything out of the ordinary, such as a request for a large jury pool, puts a strain on the staff.”

Florida’s 67 county clerks of court have eliminated 1,300 positions, furloughed employees, closed branch offices and reduced services.

Shore had to lay off 20 people and cut wages up to 10 percent. He has had a salary freeze for two years. Nine months ago he instituted a hiring freeze.

The state clerks association asked Supreme Court Chief Justice Peggy Quince to set priorities for the service reductions.

The budget cuts have resulted in insufficient courtroom staffing, delays in completing appellate records and foreclosure sales, and unanswered phone calls, the state association said.

Clerks also have been training staffers to handle a broader range of duties, allowing lawyers to file documents electronically and urging the public to conduct business online.

The Associated Press contributed to this story.