

Adams County

Magisterial District Reestablishment

Report

2022-2031

November 15, 2021

Introduction

In July 2021, Adams County was notified by the Administrative Office of Pennsylvania Courts (AOPC) of its requirement under 42 Pa.C.S.A. § 1503 to participate in the reestablishment of magisterial districts. This event occurs every ten years and is directly related to the Federal decennial census. Adams County has received from the AOPC a set of guidelines, case filing statistics, and workload statistics for Criminal, Non-Traffic, Private Criminal Complaint, Private Summary Complaint, Traffic, Civil, Landlord/Tenant and Miscellaneous filings in the four District Courts in Adams County. In addition, Population Data and Projections were received from the Adams County Office of Planning and Development. The guidelines indicate that Adams County shall submit recommendations to the AOPC regarding the reestablishment of its District Courts no later than February 28, 2022.

The four District Courts in Adams County currently exist as follows:

1. District Court 51-3-01
525 Boyds School Road, Suite 900
Gettysburg, PA 17325
Coverage: Gettysburg Borough
Straban Township
Current Magisterial District Judge: Matthew R. Harvey
Term Expires: 1-4-2026
2. District Court 51-3-02
45D West Hanover Street
Gettysburg, PA 17325
Coverage: Bonneauville Borough
Littlestown Borough
McSherrystown Borough
Conewago Township
Germany Township
Mt. Joy Township
Mt. Pleasant Township
Union Township
Current Magisterial District Judge: Daniel S. Bowman
Term Expires: 1-2-2022
Newly elected Magisterial District Judge: Christopher A. Snyder
Term Begins: 1-3-2022
3. District Court 51-3-03
40 Church Road
East Berlin, PA 17316
Coverage: Abbottstown Borough
East Berlin Borough
New Oxford Borough

York Springs Borough
Berwick Township
Hamilton Township
Huntington Township
Latimore Township
Oxford Township
Reading Township
Tyrone Township

Current Magisterial District Judge: Tony J. Little
Term Expires: 12-31-2023

4. District Court 51-3-04
525 Boyds School Road, Suite 800
Gettysburg, PA 17325

Coverage: Arendtsville Borough
Bendersville Borough
Biglerville Borough
Carroll Valley Borough
Fairfield Borough
Butler Township
Cumberland Township
Franklin Township
Freedom Township
Hamiltonban Township
Highland Township
Liberty Township
Menallen Township

Current Magisterial District Judge: Mark D. Beauchat
Term Expires: 12-31-2023

The following report, along with required worksheets provided by the AOPC, will meet the requirements of the AOPC. The process of coming to the conclusion in this report will be accomplished by a combination of the examination of the data, conferring with the Magisterial District Judges in Adams County, and the guidance and review of the report by a committee to be comprised of the following Adams County members, as appointed by the President Judge:

1. Court of Common Pleas Judge Thomas Campbell, Chair
2. Commissioner Randy Phiel
3. Magisterial District Judge Matthew Harvey
4. District Attorney Brian Sinnett
5. Public Defender Kristin Rice
6. District Court Administrator Donald Fennimore

Background

In 2012, Adams County submitted its last report regarding reestablishment. In that report, the recommendation was to reestablish the four District Courts and to change boundaries in order to address the equitable distribution of caseload. District Court 51-3-01 eliminated Tyrone Township and District Court 51-3-03 added Tyrone Township. These recommendations were accepted by the AOPC and the Pennsylvania Supreme Court.

Guidelines

For the current reestablishment project, the AOPC has indicated we are to answer two questions: First, how many magisterial districts do we need to handle the case filings, not just now, but for the next ten years? Second, where should the boundaries of those districts be drawn so that the workload is equitably distributed among the MDJs in the county? The AOPC has established the framework and provided metrics for us to consider when answering these two questions. We are to compare the average **caseloads** of the offices, both within our judicial district and with all other Class 5 counties. When a magisterial district court falls at the lower end of this range, the president judge must evaluate this factor in formulating the realignment proposal. Additionally, no magisterial district should have a total **workload** which is 15% higher or lower than the workload of any other district in the judicial district.

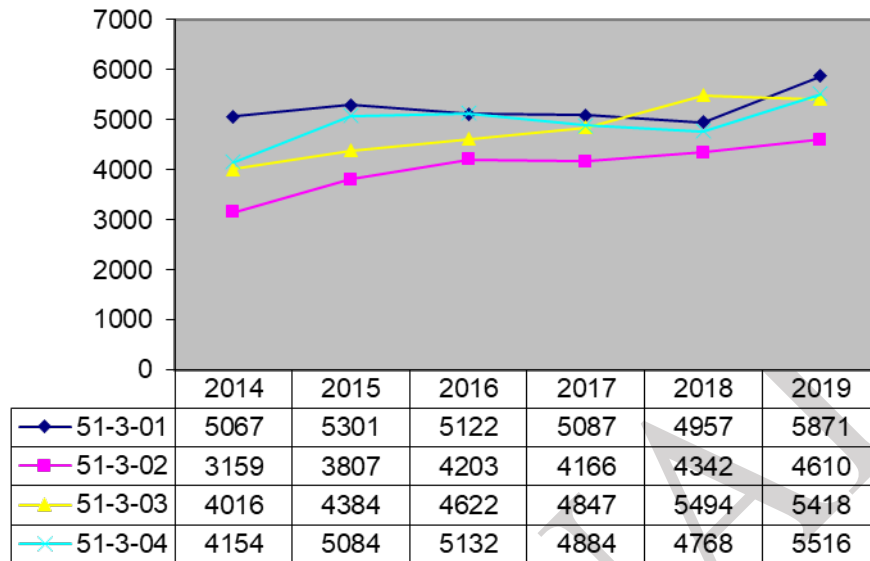
Average Caseload

The AOPC is asking each county to review the average caseloads (defined as the number of filings in a given year) of each office, to compare the average caseload to each office within the county and to compare the average caseload against other counties in the same class size. Figures are based upon sum of rounded figures for: 6-year average of Criminal, Non-Traffic, Private Complaint, Traffic, Landlord/Tenant and Civil filings, plus a 3 year average of Miscellaneous filings. The average number of annual filings for all Class 5 counties from 2014-2019 is 4,119.

Total Filings	2014#	2015#	2016#	2017	2018	2019	Class 5 County Average
51-3-01	5067	5301	5122	5087	4957	5871	27.9%
51-3-02	3159	3807	4203	4166	4342	4610	-1.3%
51-3-03	4016	4384	4622	4847	5494	5418	17.3%
51-3-04	4154	5084	5132	4884	4768	5516	20.3%
All Four MDJ Offices							16.1%

^(Miscellaneous filing data unavailable for these years)

TOTAL FILINGS



In Adams County, the office with the lowest average number of filings is 51-3-02. However, a second measure provided by the AOPC called “Workload” (to be discussed later in the report) indicates that 51-3-02 has the highest workload of the four offices based on the type of filings it processes. Additionally, 51-3-02 has been above the average from 2016-2019, as noted by the upward progression on the chart.

Caseload Comparison to Other Class 5 Counties

Class 5 Counties	Filings
Lebanon	4931
Adams	4777
Northumberland	4382
Lawrence	4161
Mercer	3788
Blair	3757
Lycoming	3306
Class 5 Average	4119

Class 5 Counties	Population
Lebanon	143257
Blair	122822
Lycoming	114188
Mercer	110652
Adams	103852
Northumberland	91647
Lawrence	86070

Adams County is ranked 2nd out of 7 in our class for average number of filings during the time period indicated, even though we are ranked 5th out of 7 in our class for population size. A prior table reflects that Adams County is operating at 16.1% above the average for all Class 5 counties in total number of filings.

Conclusion Based on Caseload

We come to the conclusion that elimination of an entire district court is simply not possible due to the increases in filings and projected continued population growth for Adams County during the next ten years. This is supported by the data which indicates

Adams County is 16.1% Above Average of Filings for Class 5 size counties. The average number of filings for Class 5 counties is 4,119. Additionally, there is not a recommendation at this time to add an additional District Court. However, we note with interest that in 2019, the average caseload size for all four offices is 5,354 cases. If we currently had five district courts, the average caseload size for all five offices would be 4,283 cases. This is still above the average for Class 5 counties ($n=4,119$). If this continues, it is probable that we could conclude the need for an additional District Court when completing this report in 2031, especially if population also continues to increase.

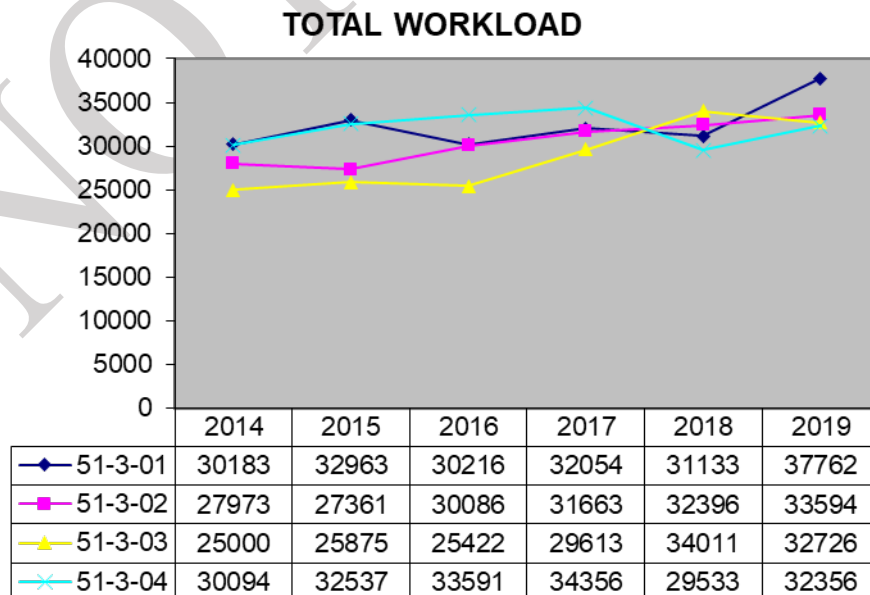
Workload

The AOPC introduced a measure in 2011 to assist counties in determining if the workload is distributed effectively. Workload is a measure between existing magisterial districts within a county and not against other counties. The workload calculus involves the assignment of a weight for different types of case filings, which recognizes that all filings are not equal and that some filings require more work than others. If there is an imbalance, realignment of the district borders can assist with this. The numbers on the table below reflect the weighted measure developed by the AOPC:

Total Workload	2014#	2015#	2016#	2017	2018	2019	Sum of Averages*
51-3-01	30183	32963	30216	32054	31133	37762	35715
51-3-02	27973	27361	30086	31663	32396	33594	34939
51-3-03	25000	25875	25422	29613	34011	32726	36285
51-3-04	30094	32537	33591	34356	29533	32356	37171
Average per AOPC							36031

#(Miscellaneous filing data unavailable for these years)

*(Figures are based upon sum of rounded figures for: 6 year average of Criminal, Non-Traffic, Private Complaint, Traffic, Landlord/Tenant and Civil filings, plus 3 year average of Miscellaneous filings)



No More than 15% Higher or Lower Workload

In order to assist counties to determine if one office is working in excess of another, the AOPC has established 15% as the maximum workload variance from the average between offices. When Adams County completed the Re-establishment Plan in 2012, it was noted that for the 10 years prior to that report, all offices met that 15% variance threshold and the difference between the lowest workload office and highest workload office was 12.2%. After making the adjustment in 2012 of moving Tyrone Township from District Court 51-3-01 to District Court 51-3-03, all offices again meet the 15% variance threshold, with the difference between the lowest workload office and the highest workload office being 6.2%. Our anticipated decrease in workload variance during the last 10 years by moving Tyrone Township turned out to be correct. Interestingly, the variance between the four MDJ Offices is minimal:

1. District Court 51-3-01: -0.9% below the overall County Workload Average
2. District Court 51-3-02: -3.0% below the overall County Workload Average
3. District Court 51-3-03: 0.7% above the overall County Workload Average
4. District Court 51-3-04: 3.2% above the overall County Workload Average

This tight pattern suggests that we have operational equity on the average between all four Magisterial District Courts.

Conclusion Based on Workload

This tight pattern suggests that we nearly have equity on the average between all four Magisterial District Courts. No office has a variance of workload greater than 15% from any other office. The widest difference between any two offices is 6.2%. This variance is low enough to discount the need to move a borough or township out of any current magisterial district.

Population

In order to consider population trends, we consulted the Adams County Office of Planning and Development (OPD). At the time of preparing this report, OPD had not yet completed its updated 2030 projections using new census data and therefore, we will be using their projections generated in December 2019. Based on information received, the second piece of data involved the census data and extrapolated projections in each district court, broken down by boroughs and townships, as follows:

	Population			Projection	Population Change %	
	2000 Census	2010 Census	2020 Census	2030	2000 - 2010	2010 - 2020
51-3-01						
Gettysburg Borough	7490	7620	7106	7785	1.7%	-6.7%
Straban Township	4539	4928	4851	5399	8.6%	-1.6%
Totals	12029	12548	11957	13184	4.3%	-4.7%
51-3-02						
Bonneauville Borough	1378	1800	1758	1847	30.6%	-2.3%
Littlestown Borough	3947	4434	4782	5001	12.3%	7.8%
McSherrystown Borough	2691	3038	3077	3109	12.9%	1.3%
Conewago Township	5709	7085	7875	8585	24.1%	11.2%
Germany Township	2269	2700	2844	3198	19.0%	5.3%
Mt. Joy Township	3232	3670	3789	4311	13.6%	3.2%
Mt. Pleasant Township	4420	4693	4666	5550	6.2%	-0.6%
Union Township	2989	3148	3076	3325	5.3%	-2.3%
Totals	26635	30568	31867	34926	14.8%	4.2%
51-3-03						
Abbottstown Borough	905	1011	1022	1043	11.7%	1.1%
East Berlin Borough	1365	1521	1542	1530	11.4%	1.4%
New Oxford Borough	1696	1783	1868	1804	5.1%	4.8%
York Springs Borough	574	833	683	843	45.1%	-18.0%
Berwick Township	1818	2389	2403	2677	31.4%	0.6%
Hamilton Township	2044	2530	2714	2959	23.8%	7.3%
Huntington Township	2233	2369	2395	2599	6.1%	1.1%
Latimore Township	2528	2580	2646	2813	2.1%	2.6%
Oxford Township	4876	5517	5936	7171	13.1%	7.6%
Reading Township	5106	5780	5799	6471	13.2%	0.3%
Tyrone Township	2273	2298	2268	2478	1.1%	-1.3%
Totals	25418	28611	29276	32388	12.6%	2.3%
51-3-04						
Arendtsville Borough	848	952	867	956	12.3%	-8.9%
Bendersville Borough	576	641	736	692	11.3%	14.8%
Biglerville Borough	1101	1200	1225	1227	9.0%	2.1%
Carroll Valley Borough	3291	3876	3940	4227	17.8%	1.7%
Fairfield Borough	486	507	526	521	4.3%	3.7%
Butler Township	2678	2567	2550	2912	-4.1%	0.7%
Cumberland Township	5718	6162	7033	8219	7.8%	14.1%
Franklin Township	4590	4877	4676	5303	6.3%	-4.1%
Freedom Township	844	831	825	883	-1.5%	-0.7%
Hamiltonban Township	2216	2372	2300	2538	7.0%	-3.0%
Highland Township	825	943	997	1062	14.3%	5.7%
Liberty Township	1063	1237	1376	1483	16.4%	11.2%
Menallen Township	2974	3515	3701	4246	18.2%	5.3%
Totals	27210	29680	30752	34269	9.1%	3.6%
GRAND TOTAL	91292	101407	103852	114767	11.1%	2.4%

The census data indicates an increase in population in three of the four district court areas, and an overall population increase for the County. Even in the District Court where the population has decreased (51-3-01) during the past 10 years, the average number of filings for that office in the years under review exceed the Class 5 County average by 27.9%.

Conclusion Based on Population

Population projections do not suggest a large change in any one Magisterial District. There are no significant downward shifts in population to suggest eliminating a magisterial district. There are not current figures to support a request for an additional magisterial district to be created. The 10-year projection, coupled with the increases in filings noted during the reporting period under review in this report, could suggest the addition of a magisterial court be considered in 2031, when the next reestablishment report is due. At this time, there is no recommendation for any changes based on population.

Public Comment

Guidelines from the AOPC indicate that the draft of the Magisterial District Reestablishment Report are to be provided to the public for a period of 30 days and that comments from the public are to be included in the final report. A copy of this report will be posted on the County of Adams website (<http://www.adamscounty.us/>) on the main page of the website. Copies of this report will also be forwarded to the Gettysburg Times. Comments regarding the report and media inquiries related to Adams County-specific aspects of this report may be directed to Donald Fennimore, 717-337-9846, dfennimore@adamscounty.us. Media inquiries regarding the state-wide process may be directed to Stacey Witalec, Communications Director, AOPC, 717-231-3324.

Responses

Responses from the public will be included in the final report submitted to the AOPC.

Conclusions

Conclusions from the Court will be provided after the public response period has expired and prior to the due date of February 28, 2022.

Respectfully Submitted,

Michael A. George
President Judge, 51st Judicial District