



NORTH CAROLINA
ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICE
of the COURTS

Human Resources Division

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Honorable Patricia B. Chastain
Clerk of Superior Court
102 South Main Street
Louisburg, NC 27549

Ms. Chastain:

Thank you for allowing Carolyn (Carie) Chesarino, Head Records Description Unit of the North Carolina Department of Cultural Resources and myself, full access to the Franklin County Courthouse and the donated space across Market Street today. There are several areas of grave concern to me that I will outline in this letter. I have attached a copy of my report done at the request of Judge Hobgood in November of 2012 along with some pictures from my visit today. Some of my concerns are carried over from the November 2012 report.

AREAS OF CONCERN:

Judge Hobgood's Office: Though the ceiling panels have been changed recently due to water damage, Judge Hobgood continuously runs a dehumidifier in his office to help with the moisture in the air. The indication of growing spores on the law books against the back wall, the water stain running down the wall and the cracked, peeling paint on the window seal are proof of water intrusion and continuous moisture issues.

Law Library: There is water intrusion on the back wall of the rooms, which seems to be coming from the roof. From my previous report there was clear evidence of water damage on this wall as well. Today it seems to have become worse as there is a trashcan on the top shelf holding in place a severely damaged and warped ceiling tile. The law books under this area are ruined as they are warped, stuck together and have visible evidence of fungal growth. The ceiling tiles need to be replaced immediately as to not fall on someone using the library or do further damage to the expensive law books housed in this room. The source of this intrusion needs to be identified and repaired. Any books that can be salvaged should be, however, any books that are damaged beyond repair or show extensive fungal growth need to be removed and properly destroyed.

Second Floor: The hallway on the second floor has many ceiling tiles that show recent water damage and need to be replaced as soon as possible, along with fixing the water intrusion in the far office where there is another trashcan under missing ceiling tile from a week ago. The source of this leak should also be identified immediately as to not cause further damage to the roof, office, or health of the employee in this office.

Basement: I feel this area is a serious health and safety hazard to anyone that goes into the space for any length of time. Paper is especially vulnerable to fungi deterioration and that is what is being stored in this space. The non humid controlled space coupled with water that dripped from the copper pipe in the ceiling for years has created an environment ideal for toxic fungal growth. I feel the more these records are disturbed the more the toxins become airborne and will travel throughout the courthouse. Ms. Chesarino and Sean Bunn, Head of Records for the NC Administrative Office of the Courts can be of better assistance as to the destruction of what is left in the basement however, the records that have met their retention in accordance with the Records Retention and Disposition Schedules need to be destroyed as soon as possible. Moving the contaminated records to the clean space across the street or giving them away is only transferring the mold spores that cannot be seen with the naked eye and has the potential to contaminate the air and space around these records where ever they go. In addition, it is important that each records custodian (County Manager, Register of Deeds, Clerk of Superior Court) apply the applicable retention schedule to determine which records are due for destruction or transfer to the State Archives. Records transfers must be approved by the State Archives and, in the case of court records, the Administrative Office of the Courts.

Once everything in the basement has been destroyed or archived it is best to seal or the basement from further use for any reason. Anything stored in this space will become the same issue over again. The air duct-like contraption coming out of the far wall needs to be properly identified by a professional. If it is an air return or anything associated with the HVAC system, then the mold spores are circulating throughout the courthouse contaminating anything it falls on. The source of the copper pipe from the ceiling also needs to be properly identified by a professional and fixed so that water is not constantly dripping into this space further feeding any fungal growth and contaminating the space or the courthouse.

In conclusion, I feel the Franklin County courthouse has some serious moisture intrusion issues that seem to come from the roof that should be addressed immediately. In observing the exterior overhangs of the roof, there are two spots on either side of the front that seem to have had rotten wood that is now missing. This too should be fixed as soon as possible as animals, insects, and water will penetrate the interior structure of the roof and do further damage. As you know, moisture invites mold and mildew as evident on several different types of surfaces in the rooms I inspected. Mold and mildew spores travel by air currents and can grow anywhere there is moisture or increase in relative humidity. Without taking swabs and having them professionally analyzed we will not know what type of spores are collecting, however, I do not believe to the average human there are dangerous amounts collecting, at this time in the courthouse. With that being said, I feel this problem is not getting better or nothing is being done. I feel a new roof is in order to secure the health and safety of the elected officials, employees of this courthouse and the citizens of Franklin County that come to do business. As I stated in my first report further recommendations are:

- All soiled or damaged ceiling tiles need to be replaced.
- Water damaged walls and other surfaces with spore growth should be cleaned with a solution consistent with standards of abating mold/mildew spores.
- The Heating Ventilation and Air-conditioning (HVAC) system should be cleaned, properly serviced and maintained. This should include servicing thermostats, other controls to make sure they are calibrated and in working order, changing filters on a routine basis, cleaning coils, drip pans and other components of the system. Condensation is usually a source of wet or stained ceiling tiles, if this is the case the tiles need to be changed and the condensation controlled.
- Maintaining relative humidity below 60% in the offices/building is important and key to making sure further spores are not growing.
- Buildings should be cleaned for health rather than appearance. Cleaning for health is a process of locating, identifying containing and properly removing and disposing of unwanted soils and contaminants that may spread illness, decrease productivity and decrease morale. Cleaning for health includes use of proper tools and equipment such as vacuums with high efficiency filters that trap and extract particles rather than releasing them into the air. It also includes selection of cleaning chemicals without perfumes and that do not leave residues after cleaning.

Thank you for bringing your concerns to me. I hope this letter is of help. If you have any questions or further concerns, please let me know. I am here to help any way I can. I can be reached via email to sarah.c.west@nccourts.org or by telephone to 919.890.1106.

Warmest regards,

Sarah C. West

Sarah C. West
Safety & Health Specialist
NC Administrative Office of the Courts

CC: Judge Hobgood, Sr. Resident Superior Court Judge
Sean Bunn, Records Manager, NCAOC
Carolyn (Carie) Chesarino, NCDCCR