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CASA Kane County to move out of courthouse at county's request, looks to raise funds for new space



Community leaders and residents join hands for a moment of silence at a child abuse awareness event hosted by CASA Kane County at the Kane County Courthouse in Geneva on Thursday, April 10, 2025. CASA will eventually be leaving its space in the courthouse where they've long been based, and is looking to raise funds for its move and its future operations. (Molly Morrow/The Beacon-News)

CASA Kane County is moving.

The nonprofit organization — whose Court Appointed Special Advocate, or CASA, volunteers advocate for children in foster care — recently indicated that the county is asking them to relocate out of the courthouse building in Geneva, where they've long been based. The organization is now looking to raise funds for its move and its future operations.

CASA volunteers are Guardians ad Litem, meaning they act as legal advocates for children under the care of the courts and make recommendations to judges. The nonprofit recruits, trains and supervises volunteers who represent children in the foster care system in juvenile courts.

And now, the organization is seeking a new home of its own.

CASA's move came up at a Kane County Board Committee of the Whole meeting in late February, at which board members heard about the organization's upcoming move and plans for the future.

At the meeting, CASA Kane County Executive Director Jim Di Ciaula explained that CASA had been told, based on conversations with Kane County Board Chair Corinne Pierog and the Kane County State's Attorney's Office, that it would need to find a new location.

CASA's most recent three-year lease with the county expires this year. But it includes in it an option to — if the county had not found a new space for the organization by then — extend the lease for up to two years, which is currently under discussion, according to the county's spokesperson.

But, knowing that its time at the courthouse is coming to an end, CASA has its eyes on a new space, with plans to purchase it and move in later this year.

CASA Kane County has been housed out of the courthouse, at essentially no cost to the organization, for almost three decades, according to Di Ciaula.

Kane County State's Attorney Jamie Mosser told The Beacon-News that conversations about CASA's place in the courthouse had been some time in the making, as the county grappled with financial troubles and a lack of space in its buildings for county purposes.

"Budget discussions for the county are always grim, and they always talk about the fact that we don't have enough money," Mosser said. "We don't have enough money for salaries, for space and for everything like that. And so, there have been offices that have grown and were running out of space for our employees."

"It came to my attention because we have county funding needs," she said of CASA's leasing of the courthouse space.

Mosser pointed to state statute indicating that, whenever there is space in a county's courthouse not needed for county purposes, the county board is able to lease the space to "the state or any court thereof, to any city, village, town, sanitary district or other municipal corporation."

But this wouldn't include a nonprofit organization like CASA, explained Mosser.

So, she advised the county that CASA being housed in the courthouse violated state statute — and put Kane County in a position to potentially get sued by a resident in the

event that taxes are raised to add space in county buildings while simultaneously loaning out a portion of one of its buildings to a non-county entity.

Mosser also indicated that — since abuse and neglect cases are no longer heard in the Geneva courthouse, and instead take place at the county's Juvenile Justice Center in St. Charles — she doesn't see the move as having a negative impact on CASA's ability to perform its duties in court.

At the Committee of the Whole meeting, Kane County Chief Judge Robert Villa explained that the authority to decide who can use the courthouse space is ultimately the Chief Judge's Office, and, like Mosser, indicated that an issue arises when a county office needs county building space, but is leasing that space to a nonprofit organization like CASA.

That "places (an organization) at risk" of needing to move if county entities are competing for space, Villa said at the meeting, calling CASA's impending move a "long-term play for sustainability."

Villa pointed to the county's predicted future growth, saying more court cases will likely follow, and it is unlikely the county board would approve the construction of an addition or new courthouse to account for population growth.

"This county's not getting smaller," he said.

And, with limited remaining space, the Chief Judge's offices are the only space at the county's Judicial Center in St. Charles that could be turned into an additional courtroom, according to Villa. If that were to occur, the Chief Judge's Office could move to the Geneva courthouse, further limiting the available space there.

Pierog, in an interview with The Beacon-News, similarly pointed to population growth and demand for space in county buildings.

"We have small buildings," Pierog said, "and sometimes we just don't have enough room for things."

She said the county suggested two possible county spaces CASA could move to, but that the organization had decided those spaces wouldn't work for its purposes.

So, explaining that there had not been a suitable alternative county space available for them, Di Ciaula said CASA had landed on purchasing a new space, and was in the process of launching a capital campaign to raise funds for the move and the organization's operations more generally.

The organization has since found an office condominium, Di Ciaula said, which it plans to close on in the summer and move into during the fall.

"We're looking at this, not only from a move, but what's right for the organization and the mission a little bit longer-term," Di Ciaula told The Beacon-News in a recent interview. "As (an) organization that is about finding permanent and stable environments for the children

that we serve, we, too, need to have a stable, permanent environment for us, so that we could spend our time on … the children and families which we serve."

CASA Kane County works on over 300 cases annually, and served more than 600 children in 2025, according to Di Ciaula. In 2025, it saw fewer new children in its care than in some prior years, he said at the meeting, but warned that preliminary numbers indicate that CASA is on track for higher figures in 2026.

Di Ciaula pointed to some of the organization's current financial concerns as it prepares to buy its own space.

CASA Kane County has an endowment of about $2.5 million, he said at the February Committee of the Whole meeting, but can't access those funds for the purchase of the building. It previously received funding from the county's Grand Victoria Riverboat Fund and federal pandemic relief funds, but in 2025 did not receive any county funding. The organization found itself with a net operating shortfall of around $75,000 last year, he said.

At the meeting, Di Ciaula pointed out that CASA has long partnered with the county, noting that, if not for CASA, Kane County would have to appoint attorneys to serve as Guardians Ad Litem for minors in abuse and neglect cases.

And its impending move is likely to increase the organization's capital costs and expenses.

"Without ongoing support, which we rely on, we don't want to be in a position to scale back our services if we were forced to," Di Ciaula said.

Di Ciaula said CASA is submitting a capital grant request for county riverboat funds this year, but is also looking to potentially secure additional financial support from the county.

As for the riverboat funds, Pierog confirmed that there have been no allocations of those funds for the coming year, as requests for these grants are still being submitted.

"We (the county) still have a lot of financial concerns," Pierog said, noting that riverboat funds are sometimes used to pay for county expenses when "internal needs are very, very critical."

She said riverboat funds are typically intended to go toward projects related to education, economic development and the environment, but that the board has some discretion when it comes to allocating them.

Pierog also pointed to continued economic uncertainty when it comes to the county's budgeting process and its ability to provide funds to organizations like CASA.

But she continued to emphasize the county's belief in the work CASA does.

"They have been a vital partner to us," Pierog said of CASA. "Their child advocacy has been just extraordinary, and I'm sure, going forward, as we can, we will always support them to the best of our taxpayers' ability."

Going forward, Di Ciaula said that fundraising for CASA's capital campaign will be happening over the next few years, parallel to its move.

And he said that, while the new building and improvements are expected to come in at close to $1.3 million, the group's upcoming fundraising is not just limited to the purchase of the new space, and is spurring on conversations about the organization's vision for its operations going forward.

"The capital campaign, led by the building," Di Ciaula said, "is about our future."

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