

Municipal Court Judges

THE CITY OF
COLUMBUS

Department Description

The Franklin County Municipal Court is established pursuant to section 1901.01 of the Ohio Revised Code and traces its origin to the creation of the Columbus Municipal Court in 1916. The geographic jurisdiction of the court is all of Franklin County and those portions of the City of Columbus that extend beyond the boundaries of Franklin County. The Court has 14 judges in the General Division and one judge in the Environmental Division. Judges serve six-year terms unless appointed or elected to fill a vacancy. Annually, they elect one of their peers to serve as the Administrative and Presiding Judge.

The judges preside over civil, criminal, and traffic cases, and conduct both jury and non-jury trials. In jury trials, judges interpret the law and the jury determines factual matters. In non-jury trials, by far the more common, judges have the dual role of interpreting the law and determining the facts. The judges also conduct criminal arraignments and initial appearances on felony cases, set bond on criminal charges, issue search warrants, and impose sentence when a defendant is found guilty of a traffic or criminal charge. The judges hear civil cases where the amount in controversy is \$15,000 or less, and cases that are transferred from the Small Claims Division to the regular docket of the court.

Department Mission

Judiciary: To safeguard the constitutional rights of all citizens and to provide equal access to all; professional, fair, and impartial treatment; timely disposition of cases without unnecessary delay; and a just resolution of all court matters.

Administration: The mission of Court Administration is to oversee the operations and employees of the Court, implement the policies and procedures established by the judiciary and the legislature in a professional and dedicated manner, and to ensure accessibility, fairness, accountability, and courtesy in the administration of justice.

| Budget Summary | | | | |
|-------------------------|----------------------|----------------------|----------------------|----------------------|
| Fund | 2019 Actual | 2020 Actual | 2021 Budget | 2022 Proposed |
| General Fund | 19,454,642 | 20,175,534 | 20,429,897 | 21,537,233 |
| Computer Fund | 369,732 | 484,751 | 665,389 | 478,071 |
| Department Total | \$ 19,824,374 | \$ 20,660,285 | \$ 21,095,286 | \$ 22,015,304 |

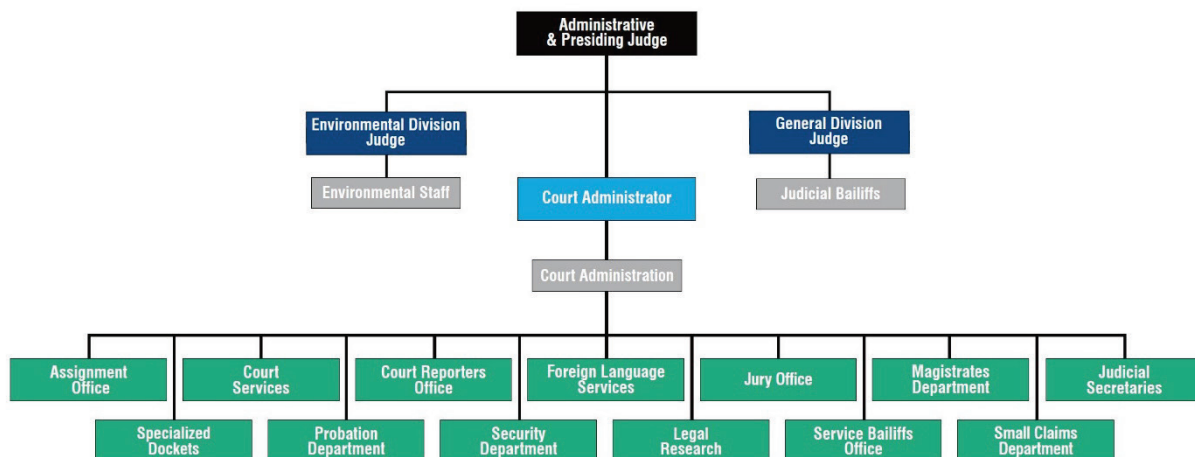
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The jurisdiction and powers of the Environmental Division differ from those of the General Division in several important respects. The Environmental Division has exclusive jurisdiction to enforce local codes and regulations affecting the real property, such as fire and building codes. The Environmental Division has injunctive powers, and there is no monetary limit on the cases that fall within the Environmental Division's exclusive jurisdiction.

Each week, a different judge is assigned to the Duty Session to handle a variety of responsibilities, which include applications for search warrants, motions to dismiss filed by the prosecutor, cognovit notes, motions to excuse jurors, probable cause hearings, motions for default judgments filed in unassigned cases, and the performance of civil wedding ceremonies.

The court administrator is the chief executive officer and reports to the judges of the court, primarily through the Administrative and Presiding Judge. The court administrator is responsible for developing and implementing policies and procedures, and directs and supervises all administrative and operational court functions, which include the following areas: budget and finance, purchasing, facilities, security, human resources, magistrates, jury, case assignment, probation services, service bailiffs, small claims, court reporters, interpreters, vehicle immobilization, court-appointed counsel, and court services.

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Strategic Priorities for 2022

2021 saw a continuation of the Courts efforts to safely conduct and perform court services. It is essential that during times of disaster (like the COVID-19 pandemic), Courts remain open, ready, and able to continue to discharge their constitutional obligations and ensure that the due process of law is not infringed upon.

The sheer volume of cases and business that the Court handles on a daily basis necessitated that an alternative Court location be identified and certain high volume dockets be relocated from the Courthouse. During the majority of 2020 and part of 2021 the Court partnered with the Greater Columbus Convention Center to create and provide a space that safely accommodates employees and the public and allowed for essential court operations to continue. In July 2021 the cases being heard at the Convention Center were moved back into the Courthouse. The Court investigated possible process changes that would allow it to safely conduct these court proceedings onsite. Solutions included staggering of hearing times, reorganization of the dockets, and electronic enhancement opportunities. It is anticipated that the Court will need to continue these practices into 2022.

Additionally, the Court identified, developed, and implemented electronic workflows as well as new means and methods to offer telework options where none previously existed. At the earliest stages of the pandemic outbreak, fortunately, the Court was in the final stage of implementing new web based technology for the Department of Pretrial and Probation Services (DOPPS). The original intent of this software was to be able to better track outcomes, provide more thorough data analyses to funding sources, and inform continued strategic planning. However, it also brought forth the ability (for the first time ever) for probation officers to work remotely, conduct video appointments with their probationers, and manage their caseloads while working offsite. The recent implementation represents the first iteration of this software. During 2022, the Court will continue to refine and make adjustments as the staff gains familiarity with this new functionality.

The DOPPS will continue to incorporate enhancements and follow the recommendations made by the National Institute of Corrections and will continue to follow the best practice standards outlined by the American Bar Association and the National Association of Pretrial Service Agencies. The goals of the DOPPS are to reduce the length of incarceration for pretrial detainees, specifically those with significant mental health issues, and reduce the number of pretrial issuance of failure to appear warrants and order-ins.

Studies that document the spread of COVID-19 clearly illustrate that facilities that provide 24 hour services to residents, such as jails and prisons, incur a disproportionately higher number of COVID-19 infections. The Court, local law enforcement, and other community entities have been collaborating to reduce the overall jail population to mitigate the spread of COVID-19. In keeping with best practices, Judges are examining their cases to determine whether or not an alternative non-jail sentencing option, using a combination of pretrial and probation, is appropriate in certain instances in light of the pandemic. Data concerning individual outcomes and community impact will continue to be collected and evaluated for appropriateness and effectiveness.

The DOPPS will continue to increase the capacity of residential programming options for its moderate and high risk defendants, specifically, for the female population. These residential options include supported housing, residential alcohol and drug treatment, and halfway house services that provide a variety of substance abuse treatments, cognitive behavioral programming, supported employment, and recovery coaches.

Strategic Priorities for 2022 (cont.)

DOPPS will continue collaboration with community partners and the jail to increase access to medication assisted treatment options for opiate dependent defendants. Grant funding will be sought to provide further resources to better support the supervision and treatment needs of this population.

In 2011, the Court began the process of installing audio and video technology in most of its courtrooms. The only courtrooms in 2020 that had not received this technology were the arraignment courtrooms. One of the arraignment courtrooms that the Court operates involves defendants who are in-custody and brought to Court for their arraignment and initial appearance. These arraignments have historically been held six days per week, Monday through Saturday. To reduce the frequency of inmate transport, this docket was reduced to three days per week, Tuesday, Thursday, and Saturday.

Traditionally, this arraignment process involves the Sheriff's Department transporting inmates to the Court facility daily. To reduce the risk of community spread of the COVID-19 pandemic, there was an immediate need to implement video arraigning technology thereby reducing the number of individuals being transported to Court. During 2020, the Ohio Supreme Court provided a grant to the Court so that the video equipment and software could be installed at the Court and at the jails. For 2022, the Court will continue to make improvements in the software solution so that it operates more efficiently and effectively.

For 2022, the Court will leverage the video arraignment technology to equip some of its judicial courtrooms to be able to preside over certain hearings by video where the defendant is in jail or for civil hearings. This will eliminate the need to transport inmates to the Court for certain hearing types in the future as well as allow for video conferencing civil case hearings. This process will reduce the flow of inmate and other foot traffic in the Courthouse and reduce the risk of exposure and spread of COVID-19. The Court is also researching ways to provide public electronic access to proceedings that are held by video conference.

During 2020 and 2021, the Court made changes to its docket sessions and schedules to minimize the risk of exposure and spread of COVID-19. These changes included consolidation of inmate dockets to certain days of the week, centralizing courtroom(s), and reducing the number of judges presiding over these dockets. This effort is reflective of the Court's commitment to maintaining order, stability, and accountability for the public at large during the pandemic and ensures that litigants receive timely adjudication of their legal matters.

While these changes brought about large scale adjustments to the Court, much of what is being accomplished as a result of COVID-19 will have long-term benefits to the Court and those who have business before the Court. All efforts are being taken in concert with the Court's commitment to providing open access, transparency, and protect litigants' rights by ensuring they receive full and fair court hearings.

2022 BUDGET NOTES

The 2022 general fund budget totals \$21,537,233. The general fund supports both personnel and non-personnel costs. Specifically:

- General fund moneys continue to offset a portion of the costs associated with the Mental Health Program, ADAP, CATCH, MAVS, and OEP programs.
- The Court's Work Release Program is an alternative sentencing option in lieu of a mandatory jail sentence, which allows the individual to maintain his/her employment while serving his/her sentence. A total of \$125,000 is included in the 2022 general fund budget for this program.
- The 2022 general fund budget continues support of the Environmental Court's Community Service Program, which provides a sentencing alternative for those individuals who are charged with non-violent offenses.
- A total of \$183,741 is budgeted for additional Environmental Specialist and creation of a Magistrate's Bailiff within the Environmental court.
- Included in the general fund budget for 2022 is \$585,000 in funding for contracted security services, which is an increase of \$10,000 over 2021.
- The full-time staffing level for 2022 reflects the shift of seven security employee positions to the general fund budget from the security fund.
- The majority of the Court's technology costs are paid from the Court's computer fund, rather than the general fund.

| Financial Summary by Area of Expense | | | | | | |
|--------------------------------------|----------------------|----------------------|----------------------|----------------------|----------------------|--|
| Division | 2019 Actual | 2020 Actual | 2021 Budget | 2021 Projected | 2022 Proposed | |
| Municipal Court Judges | | | | | | |
| General Fund | | | | | | |
| Personnel | \$ 17,130,209 | \$ 17,368,813 | \$ 17,855,428 | \$ 18,117,750 | \$ 18,637,072 | |
| Materials & Supplies | 65,563 | 59,874 | 65,000 | 355,286 | 119,712 | |
| Services | 1,778,870 | 2,256,848 | 2,019,469 | 2,040,892 | 2,256,457 | |
| Other | 140,000 | - | - | 210,000 | - | |
| Capital | - | - | - | - | 33,992 | |
| Transfers | 340,000 | 490,000 | 490,000 | 490,000 | 490,000 | |
| General Fund Subtotal | 19,454,642 | 20,175,534 | 20,429,897 | 21,213,928 | 21,537,233 | |
| Computer Fund | | | | | | |
| Personnel | 74,072 | 113,534 | 107,781 | 109,044 | 112,648 | |
| Materials & Supplies | 77,137 | 54,426 | 218,000 | 109,670 | 65,000 | |
| Services | 218,523 | 316,791 | 339,608 | 218,244 | 300,423 | |
| Computer Fund Subtotal | 369,732 | 484,751 | 665,389 | 436,959 | 478,071 | |
| Department Total | \$ 19,824,374 | \$ 20,660,285 | \$ 21,095,286 | \$ 21,650,887 | \$ 22,015,304 | |

Municipal Court Judges

| Department Personnel Summary | | | | | | | | |
|------------------------------|----------------|-----------|----------------|----------|----------------|----------|------------------|----------|
| Fund | 2019 Actual | | 2020 Actual | | 2021 Budget | | 2022 Proposed | |
| | FT | PT | FT | PT | FT | PT | FT | PT |
| General Fund | | | | | | | | |
| Municipal Court Judges | 200 | 11 | 194 | 6 | 216 | 6 | 220 | 6 |
| Computer Fund | | | | | | | | |
| Municipal Court Judges | 1 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 0 |
| Total | 201 | 11 | 195 | 6 | 217 | 6 | 221 | 6 |

| Operating Budget by Program | | | | | |
|---------------------------------|----------------------|------------|----------------------|------------|--|
| Program | 2021 | | 2022 | | |
| | Budget | FTEs | Proposed | FTEs | |
| Administration | \$ 4,097,968 | 20 | \$ 3,439,067 | 10 | |
| Assignment | 925,392 | 14 | 919,344 | 14 | |
| Computer Services | 588,546 | 1 | 401,679 | 1 | |
| Court Reporters | 835,644 | 11 | 695,239 | 8 | |
| COVID-19 | - | 0 | 20,000 | 0 | |
| Environmental Court | 354,808 | 4 | 658,972 | 7 | |
| Fiscal | - | 0 | 69,919 | 1 | |
| General Court | 2,728,113 | 32 | 2,794,283 | 31 | |
| Home Incarceration/Work Release | 396,223 | 3 | 391,572 | 3 | |
| Internal Services | 232,670 | 0 | 227,306 | 0 | |
| Jury Office | 424,017 | 2 | 359,615 | 2 | |
| Legal Research | 304,788 | 3 | 478,426 | 3 | |
| Magistrate Court | 1,806,078 | 21 | 1,853,552 | 21 | |
| Probation | 5,777,868 | 69 | 5,959,563 | 70 | |
| Security Services | 520,618 | 7 | 1,506,167 | 18 | |
| Service Bailiffs | 811,283 | 16 | 756,444 | 16 | |
| Small Claims | 549,712 | 6 | 559,142 | 6 | |
| Specialty Docket Court | 195,588 | 2 | 188,241 | 2 | |
| Support Services | 545,970 | 6 | 736,773 | 8 | |
| Department Total | \$ 21,095,286 | 217 | \$ 22,015,304 | 221 | |

For additional financial information related to the Municipal Court Judges, please refer to the municipal court computer fund contained within the Special Revenue Funds section. Program descriptions begin on the following page.



2022 PROGRAM GUIDE

ADMINISTRATION

To carry out non-judicial policies of the court including personnel management, fiscal management, purchasing, the appointment of counsel for indigent defendants, liaison with other courts, governmental entities and private agencies, public information and report management, settlement week, and secretarial services.

ASSIGNMENT

To control case flow management by making individual case assignments to judges; to prepare individual judges' and magistrates' court sheets and broadsheets; to notify plaintiffs, defendants, prosecutors, attorneys, and suburban solicitors of all court hearings; to schedule and maintain an up-to-date status of all active cases assigned to the judges and magistrates; and process all motions and pleadings.

COMPUTER SERVICES

To provide services for updating and maintaining technological needs for Municipal Court.

COURT REPORTERS

To provide a verbatim record of all court proceedings; to read back any and all portions of court proceedings; to prepare verbatim transcripts of court proceedings, and to maintain records on court exhibits.

COVID-19

To account for the expenses necessary to address the COVID-19 pandemic.

ENVIRONMENTAL COURT

To protect the health, safety, and aesthetics of the properties and environments of our neighborhoods and communities through fair, tough, and compassionate adjudication and mediation.

FISCAL

To ensure that department resources are managed and accounted for in a timely and accurate manner.

GENERAL COURT

To coordinate activities in the courtrooms of judges and magistrates including scheduling cases and providing information to the public regarding the status of pending cases.

**HOME INCARCERATION/WORK
RELEASE**

To provide a cost-effective alternative sentencing option to traditional jail incarceration, consistent with public safety.

INTERNAL SERVICES

To account for the internal service charges of the department necessary to maintain operations.

JURY OFFICE

To summon citizens to serve as jurors, randomly select jurors, postpone and reschedule jury service, and maintain information.

LEGAL RESEARCH

To research and prepare memoranda of issues pending before the court, maintain the law library, review new case law to ensure the court's compliance with the decisions, review pending legislation that may affect the court, advise the judges and employees regarding new legal developments and applications of current law to court procedures, and update local court rules.

MAGISTRATE COURT

To assist the judges by presiding over a variety of legal proceedings, making findings of fact and legal rulings, and rendering decisions, most of which are subject to final approval by a judge. Specific duties of the magistrates include hearing traffic arraignments, evictions, rent escrow proceedings, and post judgment collection matters, small claims cases, parking violation appeals, and any other matters specifically referred to them by the judges.

PROBATION

To provide administration, regular supervision, non-reporting probation services, and the following programs: domestic violence, chemical abuse, multiple OVI (Operating a Vehicle Impaired) offender, sex offender, investigation services, community service, restitution, and no convictions.

SECURITY SERVICES

To ensure the safety of court staff, and the visiting public. Security services are provided 24 hours a day, 365 days a year, so that law enforcement and the public have access to file warrants and clerk bonds, and to make payments.

SERVICE BAILIFFS

To assist litigants and attorneys by efficiently handling and delivering court documents and the timely enforcement of judgment remedies.

SMALL CLAIMS

To provide citizens with a simplified procedure for bringing civil suits for sums of \$3,000 or less by providing forms and assistance to individuals wishing to file claims, motions, and writs of execution.

SPECIALTY DOCKET COURT

To provide a cost-effective alternative sentencing option to traditional jail incarceration for prisoners with mental illnesses.

SUPPORT SERVICES

To provide support to the Court in the areas of appointed counsel, interpretation services, vehicle sanctions, and other court services related to the scheduling of court dates, the processing of requests to extend the time to pay fines and court costs, the rescheduling of court-ordered incarcerations, and the administration of limited driving privileges.