



MUNICIPAL COURT JUDGES

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 1 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.

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 the employees is to 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.

Municipal Court Judges

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.



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 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 performing 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 investigation.

STRATEGIC PRIORITIES FOR 2015

Issuance of bids for the Municipal Court Building Master Plan – Phase 1 Renovation, began in late summer 2014. Work will begin during 2015 to upgrade major core building elements including mechanical and electrical plant, IT backbone, electrical service and switchgear, passenger and prisoner elevators, and replacement of all windows.

In 2015, there will be an increase in the strategic and efficient usage by probationers of electronically monitored home incarceration, work release, and SCRAM (Secure, Continuous Remote Alcohol Monitoring).

The Probation Department installed a “Pupilometer” during the spring of 2014. This new technology detects drug and alcohol use via a retinal scan and has the potential to reshape how the Court monitors its population of probationers. The Court will continue to study the effects and cost efficiencies (if any) to determine if additional machines are necessary. The probation user fee fund was used for the purchase of this equipment.

During 2014, the Court developed an electronic search warrant application. Now in its “beta” testing phase, the Court is currently identifying additional essential needs based on experience using the application. In 2015, the Court hopes to refine this process and get all local and suburban law enforcement agencies using the electronic process.

Audio and video recording equipment was installed in the magistrates’ courtrooms and the traffic arraignment courtrooms during 2014. The systems are the same as those installed in the judges’ courtrooms in 2013. For 2015, the Court will continue to develop its standards and protocols for long-term storage and maintenance of audio-video recordings and will investigate additional uses for the equipment.

The Ohio Supreme Court asked this Court to be a pilot partner to implement and evaluate video language interpreting in the courtrooms. Due to the increasing diversity of our local population, language interpreting is an increasing and costly demand. The Court has accepted the Supreme Court’s offer of participation and anticipates the pilot to be underway during 2015.

In 2014, the Supreme Court of Ohio’s Commission on Specialized Dockets granted final certification to each of the Court’s five specialized dockets – Mental Health Program, Alcohol and Drug Addiction Program (ADAP), Changing Actions to Change Habits (CATCH), Military and Veteran Service (MAVS), and Opiate Extension Program (OEP). In 2015, the Court will continue to make efforts to enhance program effectiveness and will evaluate several technological advances to help increase offender accountability while making the programs easily accessible for staff, attorneys, and treatment providers.

Effective September 1, 2014 the Court increased court costs from \$1.00 to \$3.00 on certain case types to help provide financial sustainability to the Specialized Docket Program. These funds are set aside and designated to the operations of the Specialized Dockets.

2015 BUDGET NOTES

The 2015 general fund budget includes \$359,856 to fund the Court’s contract for evening and weekend security. In addition:

- General fund monies continue to offset a portion of the costs associated with the ADAP (Alcohol and Drug Abuse Program), CATCH (Changing Actions to Change Habits), and the MAVS (Military and Veteran’s Services) programs.
- In 2010, the Court began requiring current employees to pay a portion of the employee share of OPERS retirement contribution. In 2015, employees hired before 2010 will be paying five percent of their OPERS contribution. All employees hired after January 2010 are required to pay the full ten percent employee share of pension contribution.

Municipal Court Judges

- Most of the Court's technology costs are paid from the Court's computer fund, not the general fund.
- In 2011, the Court increased the probation user fees paid by probationers. The increased fees continue to result in revenues used to pay for programs, training, staff salaries, and other expenses.

Department Financial Summary by Area of Expense					
Fund	2012 Actual	2013 Actual	2014 Budget	2014 Projected	2015 Proposed
General Fund					
Municipal Court Judges					
Personnel	\$ 14,045,375	\$ 14,035,388	\$ 14,413,517	\$ 14,413,389	\$ 15,291,641
Materials & Supplies	25,008	30,430	27,500	27,219	41,906
Services	980,956	1,213,701	1,409,597	1,375,214	1,445,768
Other	150,000	340,000	-	-	-
Transfers	-	-	340,000	340,000	340,000
General Fund Subtotal	15,201,339	15,619,519	16,190,614	16,155,822	17,119,315
Computer Fund					
Municipal Court Judges					
Personnel	-	20,600	85,333	96,493	99,165
Materials & Supplies	106,063	316,182	92,000	159,754	75,500
Services	207,329	234,845	242,054	270,640	266,626
Computer Fund Subtotal	313,392	571,627	419,387	526,887	441,291
Department Total	\$ 15,514,731	\$ 16,191,146	\$ 16,610,001	\$ 16,682,709	\$ 17,560,606

Department Personnel Summary					
Fund	FT/PT	2012 Actual	2013 Actual	2014 Authorized	2015 Authorized
General Fund					
Municipal Court Judges	FT	176	179	186	188
	PT	10	9	11	11
Computer Fund					
Municipal Court Judges	FT	0	1	1	1
Total		186	189	198	200

Municipal Court Judges

Operating Budget by Program					
Program	2014 Budget	2014 FTEs	2015 Proposed	2015 FTEs	
Administration	\$ 5,670,604	51	\$ 6,078,696	52	
Assignment	805,656	13	826,064	13	
Service Bailiffs	720,060	17	703,690	17	
Courtroom Bailiffs	1,539,978	17	1,613,924	17	
Probation	4,692,044	59	4,950,819	59	
Small Claims	609,773	5	603,848	6	
Legal Research	170,498	1	161,436	1	
Court Reporters	1,208,796	14	1,218,876	14	
Jury Office	394,301	2	401,301	2	
Home Incarceration/Work Release	228,293	3	237,365	3	
Mental Health Program Docket	150,611	2	150,502	2	
Environmental Court	-	0	172,794	2	
Computer Services	419,387	1	441,291	1	
Department Total	\$ 16,610,001	185	\$ 17,560,606	189	

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.



2015 PROGRAM GUIDE

ADMINISTRATION

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

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.

SERVICE BAILIFFS

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

COURTROOM BAILIFFS

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.

PROBATION

To provide administration, regular supervision, non-reporting probation services, and the domestic violence, chemical abuse, multiple OMVI offender, sex offender, investigation services, community service, restitution, and no convictions programs.

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.

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.

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.

JURY OFFICE

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

HOME INCARCERATION/WORK RELEASE

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

MENTAL HEALTH PROGRAM DOCKET

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

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.

COMPUTER SERVICES

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