

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 fourteen 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 preliminary hearings 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 non-judicial officer and oversees the administrative and operational functions of the Court pursuant to policies established by the Court. The court administrator works on a day-to-day basis with the administrative and presiding judge. The court administration office consists of the court administrator, assistant court administrator, director of finance and administration, human resources manager, and court administration secretary. Functional units within court administration include court investigation, volunteer services, court-appointed counsel, interpreter services, Spanish interpreters, and vehicle immobilization.

Direct services are provided to the judges and the Court by the following departments or offices: magistrates, court reporters, assignment, jury, judges' and magistrates' bailiffs, service bailiffs, secretaries, the small claims division, and the dispute resolution program.

The largest department is the Department of Probation Services, whose task is to provide the judiciary with a viable sentencing option with the assurance that probationers who are placed in the community receive appropriate direction and management, consistent with public safety. The department consists of regular supervision officers and several specialized probation supervision programs that focus on domestic violence, chemical abuse, multiple OMVI offenders, sex offenders, and probationers with mental health issues. The department also has an investigation unit, community service program, and restitution program, in addition to a support staff of receptionists, transcriptionists, and intake assignment coordinators.

Department Mission

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

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.

Strategic Priorities for 2008

- Increase usage of the new electronic monitored home confinement program in the Department of Probation Services that was introduced in 2007.
- Seek ways to address the ever-increasing challenge of providing interpretation and translation services to the growing number of those who have business with the Court for whom English is not their primary language.
- Develop plans for major projects such as additional employee policies, employee training programs, and improved recruitment, screening, and hiring procedures.
- Prepare and issue bids and award new contracts for forensic psychological examinations, security services, interpreter services, and court reporting services.
- Develop methods and forms to create detailed periodic financial reports so that hiring and purchasing decisions can be more accurately made.
- Formalize a work group to explore ways to improve the Court's mail service.
- Work with the City's Facilities Management Division and organize a users committee to develop priorities, plans, and schedules for Courthouse repairs and renovations.
- Undertake limited remodeling to enhance the Duty Room, create a small meeting space, and provide several new office spaces.
- Provide increased training for financial and administrative staff on budgeting, bidding, and purchasing.

- Evaluate the efficiency and cost-effectiveness of audio recording equipment installed in magistrate courtrooms in 2007.
- Prepare and issue a Request for Qualifications seeking potential vendors to update the Court's job classifications and salary ranges, and to develop an employee evaluation system.
- Prepare the first draft of a Request for Qualifications seeking potential vendors to engage in a complete review of Court structure and operations.

2008 Budget Notes

- The 2008 budget for professional services includes \$130,000 for court-appointed counsel in cases in which the public defender's office has a conflict; \$100,000 for foreign language (other than Spanish) and deaf interpreters; and \$70,000 for forensic psychological evaluations.
- Court costs and fees fund core Court functions that would otherwise require general fund support. The security fund, which is budgeted at \$1,597,670, pays for all Court security, including a 16-person security department, contracted evening and weekend services, and equipment. The Court's computer fund is budgeted at \$608,056 and pays the salaries of legal research staff and all technology needs.
- The computer fund budget includes funding to add audio recording capability to four additional magistrate courtrooms, for which \$60,000 is budgeted.
- \$68,000 is included to continue the program to replace public-area and courtroom furniture that is original to the building.

Budget and Program Summary

DEPARTMENT FINANCIAL SUMMARY					
DIVISION SUMMARY	2005 Actual	2006 Actual	2007 Original Appropriation	2007 Estimated Expenditures	2008 Proposed
Municipal Court Judges	\$ 12,167,639	\$ 13,088,546	\$ 14,261,278	\$ 13,746,805	\$ 14,592,491
TOTAL	\$ 12,167,639	\$ 13,088,546	\$ 14,261,278	\$ 13,746,805	\$ 14,592,491

NOTE: For the general fund, 2008 budget figures, unlike in preceding years, do not include technology expenditures, which are budgeted in Finance and Management. For an adjusted historical comparison, see page 26-9.

DEPARTMENT SUMMARY BY CHARACTER					
MUNICIPAL CT JUDGES GENERAL FUND	2005 Actual	2006 Actual	2007 Original Appropriation	2007 Estimated Expenditures	2008 Proposed
Personnel	\$ 10,364,265	\$ 11,241,269	\$ 12,096,682	\$ 12,009,033	\$ 12,821,821
Materials & Supplies	86,943	133,996	139,850	137,214	119,750
Services	1,415,359	1,234,801	1,483,834	1,049,983	1,042,864
Other	-	-	-	7,500	-
Transfer	12,500	-	-	-	-
TOTAL	\$ 11,879,067	\$ 12,610,066	\$ 13,720,366	\$ 13,203,730	\$ 13,984,435
MUNICIPAL CT JUDGES COMPUTER FUND	2005 Actual	2006 Actual	2007 Original Appropriation	2007 Estimated Expenditures	2008 Proposed
Personnel	\$ 114,789	\$ 160,945	\$ 199,562	\$ 192,285	\$ 243,406
Materials & Supplies	58,924	154,700	86,200	75,525	93,200
Services	114,859	162,835	255,150	275,265	271,450
TOTAL	\$ 288,572	\$ 478,480	\$ 540,912	\$ 543,075	\$ 608,056

DEPARTMENT SUMMARY BY FUND					
FUND SUMMARY	2005 Actual	2006 Actual	2007 Original Appropriation	2007 Estimated Expenditures	2008 Proposed
General	\$ 11,879,067	\$ 12,610,066	\$ 13,720,366	\$ 13,203,730	\$ 13,984,435
Municipal Court Computer Fund	288,572	478,480	540,912	543,075	608,056
TOTAL	\$ 12,167,639	\$ 13,088,546	\$ 14,261,278	\$ 13,746,805	\$ 14,592,491

DEPARTMENT PERSONNEL SUMMARY					
DIVISION	FT/PT	2005 Actual	2006 Actual	2007 Authorized	2008 Authorized
General Fund	FT	173	178	181	184
	PT	11	8	7	8
Computer Fund	FT	2	2	2	2
	PT	4	3	4	4
TOTAL		190	191	194	198

*FT=Full-Time PT=Part-Time

**2008 Operating Budget
Municipal Court Judges**

Financial History by Program

Personnel by Program

Program	Mission	Financial History by Program				Personnel by Program			
		2005 Budget	2006 Budget	2007 Budget	2008 Proposed	2005 FTEs	2006 FTEs	2007 FTEs	2008 FTEs
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 management.	\$3,903,010	\$4,412,776	\$4,588,953	\$4,327,380	44	45	50	50
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.	719,447	772,380	776,702	854,488	14	14	14	14
Service Bailiffs	To assist litigants and attorneys by efficiently handling and delivering court documents and the timely enforcement of judgment remedies.	1,046,544	1,077,779	1,159,501	1,210,626	18	18	18	18
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.	1,583,509	1,580,594	1,312,530	1,380,956	22	22	17	17

Municipal Court Judges

2008 Operating Budget
Municipal Court Judges

Financial History by Program

Personnel by Program

Program	Mission	2005	2006	2007	2008	2005	2006	2007	2008
		Budget	Budget	Budget	Proposed	FTEs	FTEs	FTEs	FTEs
Probation	To provide administration, regular supervision, non-reporting probation, domestic violence program, chemical abuse program, multiple OMVI offender program, sex offender program, investigation services, community service program, restitution program and provided no convictions program.	3,244,977	3,425,144	3,539,112	3,948,649	54	56	56	56
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.	259,104	305,887	305,187	336,520	5	5	5	5
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.	1,003,372	1,005,718	1,079,227	1,178,274	14	14	14	14
Jury Office	To summon citizens to serve as jurors, randomly select jurors for panels, postpone and reschedule jury service, and maintain information on prospective jurors.	364,193	384,594	425,902	420,858	2	2	2	2
Home Incarceration/ Work Release	To provide a cost-effective alternative sentencing option to traditional jail incarceration, consistent with public safety. To provide for the court's acquisition of software, technology-related equipment, internal technology billings and on-line services.	-	295,000	411,424	198,695	-	3	3	3

**2008 Operating Budget
Municipal Court Judges**

Financial History by Program

Personnel by Program

Program	Mission	2005	2006	2007	2008	2005	2006	2007	2008
		Budget	Budget	Budget	Proposed	FTEs	FTEs	FTEs	FTEs
Mental Health Program Docket	To provide a cost-effective alternative sentencing option to traditional jail incarceration for prisoners with mental illnesses.	-	-	121,828	127,989	-	-	2	2
Computer Services	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.	428,082	580,313	540,912	608,056	-	2	2	2
		\$12,552,238	\$13,840,185	\$14,261,278	\$14,592,491	173	181	183	183

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Some program data will not match department summary data due to differences in data being reported (i.e., budgeted versus actual). This is compounded in cases of departmental reorganizations during the timeframe.

