

MUNICIPAL COURT

Service Description

Eugene Municipal Court was established by City Charter to adjudicate violations of the City's municipal laws occurring within the city limits. The City also adopted the State Vehicle Code by ordinance, which gives the Municipal Court jurisdiction over these offenses within the city limits. In FY08, the Court handled 16,252 traffic violations, 1,279 misdemeanor-level traffic crimes, and 10,540 City ordinance violations/misdemeanors. All Municipal Court proceedings are governed by State of Oregon laws governing justice courts. The Municipal Court provides fair and reasonable adjudication of cases and, where appropriate, imposition of sanctions. Court sanctions may include fines, time in jail, community service, work crew, diversion/probation, or other alternative programs depending upon the severity of the offense and the defendant's history with the Court.

The Presiding Judge is appointed by the City Council and appoints additional judges as needed. At the present time the Presiding Judge is part time and has appointed one part time Associate Judge and five part time Assistant Judges. Court staff is responsible for the flow of all cases through the Court, maintenance and retention of court records, collection of fines and enforcement of Court sanctions. The Municipal Court service includes costs for court operations, contracts for judicial services, public defenders, interpreters, and with Lane County for jail space, work crew supervision and mental health services.

Prior to FY03, prosecution service was provided entirely by contract. In FY03, prosecution service began to be provided by a combination of City staff and attorney contracts. This approach ensures continued high quality of service at a lower cost and is managed through the City Manager's Office.

The Municipal Court FY09 operations budget was \$3,562,298 and includes costs for judicial salaries, court operations, jail space and the attorney contracts for public defender services. An attorney must be made available to indigent defendants who are charged with jailable offenses. The prosecution represents the City in all cases brought before a municipal judge. The FY09 operations budget for the City Prosecutor's Office was \$724,184.

Municipal Court has a total of 23.92 full time equivalent staff. Of the 23.92, 18.87 come from the General Fund, and the other 5.05 are funded through Parking Services. Court staff is responsible for the management and processing of all court cases, including collection of fines, and enforcement of court sanctions.

Historic Perspective

- 1876 Justice of Peace established in City Charter. Position filled by City Recorder.
- 1956 Municipal Court established in the City Charter.
- 1968 Municipal Court joined with other Lane County criminal justice agencies to establish Area Information Records System (AIRS).
- 1987 Jail Contract Established with Lane County.
- 1998 City inmate work crew established.
- 1999 Implemented One Day/One Trial Program for Jury Trials.
- 2001 Implementation of Spanish court session (Paso a Paso).
- 2002 Development of in-house prosecution services.
- 2004 Implementation of Mental Health Court Program.
- 2004 Website application for payment of parking tickets.
- 2007 24-hour interactive phone payment system for payment of court fines and fees.
- 2008 Website application for payment of court fines and fees.

Citizen Involvement

The Court has worked with a variety of groups on issues related to diversity, judicial evaluation and selection, and the Court's role in the criminal justice system. For example, Municipal Court worked with citizen volunteers, Centro Latino Americano, the Human Rights Office, and court interpreters to produce an informational video about court in Spanish, as well as a video for the Paso a Paso, Spanish court session, program.

Customer Input

At least once a year since 1998 the court has mailed surveys to defendants for feedback on court services. The court also uses a juror satisfaction questionnaire and customer comment cards. Survey results are distributed to the Municipal Court Judges and court staff. Each year the survey results are reviewed and service delivery changes based on public input are implemented. Service delivery changes have included expansion of the court web site, improved security, facility upgrades, increased staff availability during peak periods, and the one day/one trial for jurors.

Mission

We provide a neutral forum that ensures defendants the constitutional right to due process through effective and efficient adjudication of cases and ensures enforcement of sanctions.

Outcomes

- Provide for a safe community.
- Enhance the quality of life of citizens.

- Contribute to an effective criminal justice system.
- Ensure due process rights of all citizens.
- Provide efficient and effective City services.
- Encourage defendants to be accountable and responsible.

Operating Principles

- We treat the public and each other with trust, courtesy, respect and equity.
- We are committed to the highest ethical standards and democratic practices.
- We give timely responses to the public in clear, non-technical language, and we take responsibility for making sure they understand.
- We are responsive to change, continually learning and improving what we do as an organization.
- We promote a workplace free of harassment and discrimination. We recognize and honor a diversity of viewpoints, cultures, and life experiences.
- We encourage all employees to be innovative, to contribute ideas, and to work as a team toward positive outcomes.
- We are committed to maintaining a productive and professional work environment in which personal growth and the enhancement of technical skills are encouraged.

Current Operating Environment

External Trends

Partnerships with other courts and local justice community

Reduced budget funding has provided the local justice community with the opportunity to join together to seek new and creative ways to continue providing high quality service. The court will continue to take a proactive role in developing partnerships with the U of O, community service providers, Lane County Mental Health, and Lane County Adult Corrections to provide fair, education-based programs to improve the defendants' ability for successful behavior change. Courts at the state and national level are changing at a rapid pace to address community needs, technology changes, and security concerns. The court monitors best business practice trends through partnerships with other courts and active participation in state and national associations. Limited funding for all service areas throughout the Lane County region will create new challenges for the justice system.

Funding and Local Economy

Budget cuts and program changes affect service delivery. The reduction in number of services offered by Lane County Adult Corrections and increasing costs for the purchase of jail space and City Work Crew has impacted judicial sentencing alternatives. The court also values early intervention programs

focused on education and determent of criminal behaviors. However, there is a monetary cost of implementing and managing the programs, which has an adverse impact on revenue.

Sanctions

Restricted local funding for corrections and treatment service programs impacts the effectiveness of court-imposed sanctions. The jail is no longer able to accept people with certain health related conditions; therefore more resources and time get devoted to such cases to ensure that court sanctions are enforced. Implementation of the City Work Crew continues to be very effective. The program provides flexibility in sentencing and provides needed support to the Public Works Department in completing City related clean-up projects. The Court offers deferred prosecution programs and community service as other alternatives.

Internal Conditions

Corrections

The Court contracts with Lane County Adult Corrections for a small amount of the limited jail capacity for municipal offenders. As federally mandated, the corrections staff must release people daily because of lack of space. In the past, the people released were frequently municipal offenders. In 1998, Corrections adopted the use of a special screening matrix developed by municipal judges to maximize use of the City-paid jail space for municipal offenders. Analyzing optimal use of jail bed capacity is based on the number of arrests and the ability to hold offenders to complete sentences. The lack of jail space continues to be a major issue for the justice system throughout this community. The goal is to reduce the number of people released from custody by maintaining adequate levels, and increasing the use of alternate sanctions, i.e. electronic surveillance.

Technology and Access to Court Services

Replacement of the AIRS system used for supporting law enforcement and court operations is anticipated to be completed within the next three to four years. The conversion will move court from a legacy mainframe system to an integrated software system. Court staff will be involved in adapting existing business practices and developing new procedures to capitalize on the enhanced capabilities of the new system, and integrating AIRS with other court case processing software.

Court staff and judges are developing a phased approach to implementing an electronic case flow management system, which will require collaboration with criminal justice partners, i.e. police, corrections, attorneys and social service providers.

Space

The Court is currently prohibited by lack of adequate courtroom, juror, attorney/client, lobby and judicial space. Facility improvements and increased space at Municipal Court will provide an opportunity to improve court service delivery to the public and provide better access for people with disabilities. The security management for staff and the public within the existing space constraints creates difficult challenges. At times, there can be 100-150 people in the courtroom and lobby. This large number of people poses a security concern for all of City Hall.

Community Relations

Municipal Court plays a vital role in the community and places a high level of importance on educating and developing relationships with local citizens. Court regularly surveys defendants regarding the quality of service they are receiving and uses the surveys as a tool to improve service delivery. The input has been used to make changes to security, increased staff levels at peak periods during the day, and expansion of the web site. The court is an active participant in the Citizen's Police Academy and works with local media to inform the public of changes in court business practices.

Performance Measures

Core Processes

Process Cases

- Number of days from arraignment to case disposition, by case type
- Number of new case filings assigned to a court appointed attorney
- Interpreter hours

Enforce Sanctions

- Number of people who complete their jail sentences
- Number of defendants released from jail prior to in-custody arraignment
- Percentage of people who complete assigned probation and DUII diversion

Total System

Effectiveness

- Ratio of the number of cases dispositioned per month to the number of new cases
- Average number of working days from entry of not guilty plea to trial (non-jury)

Efficiency

- Age of active pending caseload
- Reduce number of court case events scheduled to complete a misdemeanor court case

Financial

- Percentage of cases paid in full by the end of the month following adjudication

- Percentage of victim restitution dollars collected

Customer Satisfaction

- Percent of court users who rate the service delivery of court staff as satisfactory or better

Strategy 1: Efficiently utilize available sanctions and programs to impose meaningful penalties in support of Safe Community goals and defendant accountability.

Objectives: Reduce the percentage of Eugene Municipal Court offenders released from custody due to jail capacity by 5% per year.

Improve program compliance and reduce the number of further court actions taken. By FY13, reduce the number of show causes ordered for non-compliance by 30%.

Achieve 90% completion rate for alcohol and marijuana deferred prosecution programs.

Work Activities:

- Work with Lane County Jail to develop contract language that addresses fluctuating jail bed space needs.
- Review sentencing practices.
- Work with criminal justice partners to efficiently manage limited local resources.
- Evaluate re-referral policy for program completion.
- Collaborate with local justice system partners to find solutions for reducing non-compliance.
- Monitor program completion.
- Establish recidivism goals and develop benchmarks for high volume programs.
- Survey program participants and program providers to determine causes of non-compliance.

Strategy 2: Use technology to improve efficiency in case processing.

Objective: By 2013, 90% of all court documents will be generated, accessed, received and stored in electronic format reducing the need for hard copy files.

Work Activities:

- Establish list of all documents eligible for electronic submission.

- Work with City Prosecutor and court appointed attorneys to establish document submittal process.
- Implement electronic process for all documents distributed to attorneys.
- Actively support electronic document creation, storage and management legislation.

- Modify website to manage electronic document submission.
- Develop electronic workflow.
- Communicate electronic records implementation plans with local bar association and other service partners.

