

Seattle Municipal Court

The Honorable C. Kimi Kondo, Presiding Judge

(206) 684-5600

<http://www.seattle.gov/courts/>

Judicial Branch Overview

The Seattle Municipal Court (Court) processes more cases than any other municipal court in the State of Washington with seven elected judges and five and one-half appointed magistrates. The Court is authorized by the State of Washington and the Seattle Municipal Code to adjudicate misdemeanors, gross misdemeanors, infractions (e.g., traffic infractions, parking violations, and other infractions), and civil violations related to building and zoning offenses.

The Court is committed to excellence in providing fair, accessible and timely resolution of alleged violations of the Seattle Municipal Code in an atmosphere of respect for the public, employees and other government entities. The Seattle Municipal Court values and recognizes its employees and volunteers. The Court is a contributing partner working with the Police Department, the City Attorney and the defense bar toward a safe and vital community.

The Court works with community organizations to increase access to services for residents and enhance compliance with court-ordered conditions. Court probation and day reporting staff monitor defendant adherence to court orders, assess treatment needs and help direct them to social service resources. The Court leverages additional outside agency resources with City funds to encourage defendants to successfully complete court orders. The Court Resource Center, staffed by volunteers, offers services, including, but not limited to, the following:

- GED preparation classes;
- assistance in voicemail, cell phone, and PO Box sign up;
- employment readiness classes;
- chemical dependency "Living in Sobriety" classes;
- housing assistance;
- identification replacement assistance;
- assistance in applying for state Department of Social and Health Service benefits;
- mental health treatment referrals; and,
- direct computer connection to Seattle Public Library.

Alternatives to jail have substantially reduced the City's jail expenditures. Some of these alternatives include the following:

- work crew;
- community service;
- day reporting with random breath testing and urinalysis;
- Electronic Home Monitoring (EHM) and SCRAM (Secure Remote Alcohol Monitoring); and,
- ignition interlock devices.

Ensuring access to justice for defendants with limited English proficiency is another priority. About 6,000 of interpreted events, including hearings, attorney-client interviews, Washington State Hospital doctor evaluations, probation and EHM appointments were conducted with the help of interpreters in 2013 in 51 languages,

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American Sign Language and Real Time Captioning. In 2014, the Court expects 6,500 interpreting events. Currently, nearly 40% of the requests are for Spanish language interpreters. In addition to Spanish, frequent requests for interpretation include the Vietnamese, Somali, Amharic, Cantonese, Mandarin, Russian and Tigrinya languages.

In addition to the three general trial courts, the jail arraignment calendar and the master jury trial calendar, the Court serves defendants and the community through four specialty courts.

The **Mental Health Court**, established in 1999, is nationally recognized for serving misdemeanor offenders who are mentally ill or developmentally disabled. Defendants are expected to maintain treatment compliance, contact social service providers and adhere to other conditions of release. Once defendants opt into the court, frequent reviews are held. Judges become familiar with defendants, obtain input from dedicated probation staff, and make informed decisions while holding defendants responsible for their actions. The court holds contested competency and contested restoration hearings. Defendants may elect to opt out or enter into a disposition and remain under MHC supervision. Defendants can also be referred for supervision from mainstream courtrooms.

Seattle Community Court was established in 2005 as a way of enabling non-violent misdemeanor offenders to access social services while completing court supervised community service hours rather than spending time in jail. Defendant connections with social services are designed to help address the causes of underlying repeated criminal behavior. Offenders are also typically required to attend a Self-Awareness Workshop, where participants discuss the consequences of choices they make for themselves and the community.

Seattle Veterans Treatment Court was established in 2012 to meet the needs of defendants who previously served in the military and were generally discharged. The Court works closely with the King County Department of Community and Human Services, the Washington State Department of Veterans Affairs, and the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs to access agency resources available to veterans. Typically the veterans come before the court with substance abuse and/or serious mental health issues. Treatment incorporates core values of military life including integrity, initiative and accountability.

The **Domestic Violence Courts** are staffed by 1.5 judges and specialized probation counselors. These courts preside over dedicated pretrial, trial, review and revocation courts each week. Victim safety is a primary concern in these cases and special emphasis is placed on accountability for offender actions. Intensive court supervision increases compliance with court conditions and scheduling more immediate violation reviews provide greater assurance of public safety. The Court addresses no contact order violations swiftly.

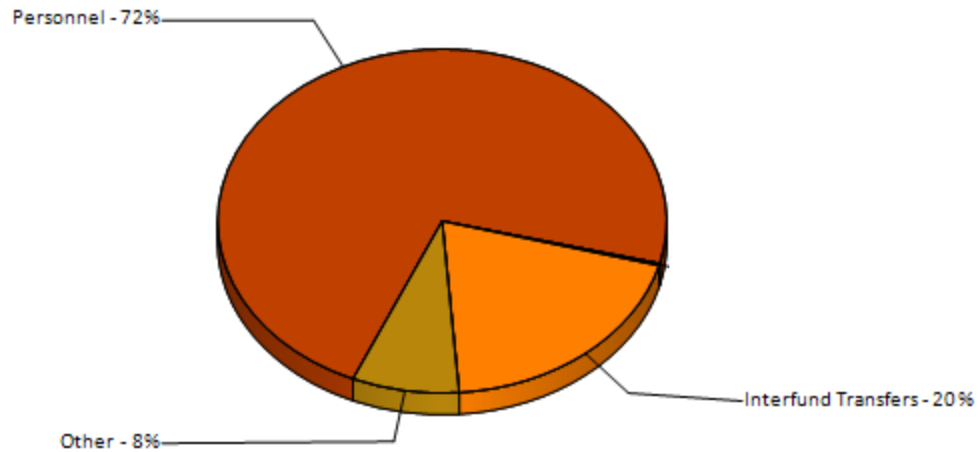
Budget Snapshot

Department Support	2013 Actual	2014 Adopted	2015 Proposed	2016 Proposed
General Fund Support	\$27,641,724	\$28,666,035	\$29,495,623	\$29,838,534
Total Operations	\$27,641,724	\$28,666,035	\$29,495,623	\$29,838,534
Total Appropriations	\$27,641,724	\$28,666,035	\$29,495,623	\$29,838,534
Full-time Equivalent Total*	212.60	213.10	213.60	213.60

* FTE totals are provided for information purposes only. Changes in FTEs resulting from City Council or Human Resources Director actions outside of the budget process may not be detailed here.

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2015 Proposed Budget - Expenditure by Category



Budget Overview

The 2015-2016 Proposed Budget provides resources to enable the Court to continue to adjudicate criminal cases while re-invigorating the problem solving courts. Those courts maintain the goal of helping defendants avoid future criminal charges while protecting public safety.

The proposed budget allocates \$150,000 in Finance General to begin planning for the replacement of the Municipal Court Information System (MCIS). MCIS is nearly 25 years old and was developed using the legacy IBM Informix operating system. The Seattle Police Department, City Attorney, King County Department of Public Defense, King County Jail, the Department of Licensing, State Administrative Office of the Courts (AOC), and all criminal justice related stakeholders rely on MCIS. The Court is mandated to provide a continuous permanent record of court case events, including dates, hearings and outcomes. MCIS also tracks defendant compliance with court ordered sanctions and tracks all related fines, costs, fees and restitution. The Court will work with the Department of Information Technology and stakeholders to identify the case management, information collection and data exchange needs of the criminal justice stakeholders. Additionally, the AOC is developing a new case management system for courts of limited jurisdiction. The AOC anticipates having the requirements for a new system identified sometime in 2015 or 2016. The Court will continue to participate in the AOC Court User Work Group. If the AOC system cannot meet the business needs of Seattle Municipal Court, funding will be needed to develop an independent replacement for MCIS.

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In 2012, the City began an automated school zone speed camera program, an effective tool for reducing speeding in school zones. Revenue from the school zone ticket fines goes to a special fund to pay for school traffic and pedestrian safety projects. The fund also pays the cost of administering the program. In 2015 six new school zones will be added. Five cameras will be added in 2014 for a total of 15 school zones. In the 2015-2016 Proposed Budget, a portion of the City's revenue from the cameras will fund a half-time administrative specialist and an increase in vendor contract costs due to the additional workload.

Incremental Budget Changes

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	2015		2016	
	Budget	FTE	Budget	FTE
Total 2014 Adopted Budget	\$ 28,666,035	213.10	\$ 28,666,035	213.10
Baseline Changes				
Citywide Adjustments for Standard Cost Changes	\$ 755,016	0.00	\$ 847,839	0.00
Proposed Changes				
Increase Staffing and Vendor Costs for Expanded School Zone Camera Program	\$ 70,721	0.50	\$ 70,721	0.50
Proposed Technical Changes				
Citywide Training and Travel Reallocation	-\$ 15,432	0.00	-\$ 15,432	0.00
Transfer Funding for DSHS Contract from CJCS to the Court	\$ 32,000	0.00	\$ 32,000	0.00
Final Citywide Adjustments for Standard Cost Changes	-\$ 12,717	0.00	\$ 237,371	0.00
Total Incremental Changes	\$ 829,588	0.50	\$ 1,172,499	0.50
2015 - 2016 Proposed Budget	\$ 29,495,623	213.60	\$ 29,838,534	213.60

Descriptions of Incremental Budget Changes

Baseline Changes

Citywide Adjustments for Standard Cost Changes - \$755,016

Citywide technical adjustments made in the "Baseline Phase" reflect changes due to inflation, central cost allocations, retirement, healthcare, workers' compensation, and unemployment costs. These adjustments reflect initial assumptions about these costs and inflators early in the budget process.

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Proposed Changes

Increase Staffing and Vendor Costs for Expanded School Zone Camera Program - \$70,721/.50 FTE

Using revenue from the school zone speed camera program, this change increases the Court's capacity to administer the expanded school zone camera program. A new 0.5 FTE administrative specialist position will address increases in:

- citations and case initiations;
- hearings scheduled in the magistrate's division of Municipal Court;
- issuance of reminder notices; and,
- process both pre- and post-adjudication payments.

An additional \$25,000 is allocated for the vendor contract providing notification services for the increased number of citations.

Proposed Technical Changes

Citywide Training and Travel Reallocation - (\$15,432)

This adjustment makes small reductions to training and travel budget appropriations Citywide. The Budget reallocates these funds to a new Centralized Management and Leadership Development program in the Department of Human Resources. More information on the new training program can be found in the Department of Human Resources budget section.

Transfer Funding for DSHS Contract from CJCS to the Court - \$32,000

The Court Resource Center houses a half-time DSHS contract employee to assist defendants in applying for State benefits. The budget for this contract has been in the Department of Criminal Justice Contracted Services (CJCS). This adjustment will transfer the budget authority for the contract from CJCS to the Court who manages the contract.

Final Citywide Adjustments for Standard Cost Changes - (\$12,717)

Citywide technical adjustments made in the "Proposed Phase" reflect changes due to inflation, central cost allocation, retirement, healthcare, workers' compensation, and unemployment costs. These adjustments reflect updates to preliminary cost assumptions established in the "Baseline Phase."

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Court Operations Budget Control Level

The purpose of the Court Operations Budget Control Level is to hold hearings and address legal requirements for defendants and others who come before the Court. Some proceedings are held in formal courtrooms and others in magistrate offices, with the goal of providing timely resolution of alleged violations of City ordinances and misdemeanor crimes committed within the Seattle city limits.

	2013	2014	2015	2016
Program Expenditures	Actual	Adopted	Proposed	Proposed
Court Operations	16,093,760	16,557,752	16,877,501	17,054,215
Total	16,093,760	16,557,752	16,877,501	17,054,215
Full-time Equivalent Total*	138.75	138.75	139.25	139.25

** FTE totals are provided for information purposes only. Changes in FTEs resulting from City Council or Human Resources Director actions outside of the budget process may not be detailed here.*