

Seattle Municipal Court

The Honorable Karen Donohue, Presiding Judge

(206) 684-5600

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

Judicial Branch Overview

The Seattle Municipal Court (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 including those related to building and zoning offenses. The Judicial Branch of Seattle government has seven elected judges and six appointed magistrates (5.5 FTEs). There are more cases processed here than any other municipal court in the State of Washington.

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, Court employees and other government entities. The Court works closely with the Seattle Police Department, the City Attorney and the defense bar toward a safe and vital community. The Court also partners with community organizations to increase access to services for residents and enhance compliance with court-ordered conditions. The employees and volunteers of the Court are recognized as a valued part of the organization with many of them working directly with the defendants. Court staff involvement with defendants includes monitoring adherence to court orders for probation and day reporting, assessing treatment needs, and directing them to social service resources. Probation Officers and volunteer staff are in contact with defendants at the Court Resource Center offering services that include, but are not limited to:

- GED preparation classes;
- assistance in voicemail, cell phone, and post office 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 connections to the Seattle Public Library.

Alternatives to jail have substantially reduced the City's jail expenditures and created opportunities for defendants to address underlying problems which lead to criminal behavior. Some of these alternatives include the following:

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

SMC has provided **Interpreter Services** in 136 languages since 2005. A Court priority is ensuring access to justice for defendants with Limited English Proficiency (LEP), or are deaf, hard-of-hearing, or deaf-blind (D/HH/DV)

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individuals. The interpreter services are free of charge for criminal and civil matters for court hearings, trials, attorney-client interviews, probation and EHM appointments, prosecution witnesses, mental health evaluations, customer service, and translation of court forms and letters. In 2016, about 7,000 interpreted events were conducted with the help of 166 freelance interpreters in 65 languages, including American Sign Language. Approximately 40% of the requests are for Spanish language interpreters. Other frequent requests for interpretation include the Vietnamese, Somali, Amharic, Tigrinya, Cantonese, Mandarin, and Oromo 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 court calendars.

The **Mental Health Court Calendar (MHC)**, 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 Needs Based Sentencing (NBS) Program implemented on January 9, 2017, is a similar model to the Seattle Community Court, which operated from 2005-2016. The new NBS program aims to build upon the success of Community Court by widening the diversion offer of community service and mandated social service contacts to all mainstream SMC courtrooms. The NBS sentence for individuals admitting to low level, quality of life crimes is in lieu of jail time. The program hopes to expand eligibility criteria and ultimately increase participation for individuals who may benefit from a need based rather than traditional sentence. The target population is individuals charged with non-domestic violence, non-driving under the influence low-level crimes including theft and criminal trespass, who may have some past criminal history. The City Attorney's Office may make an initial NBS offer for program entry or a judge may impose a NBS at time of sentencing later in the case. The defendant receives the opportunity to have his or her charges dismissed upon successful completion of the NBS conditions.

Seattle Veterans Treatment Court Calendar 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 Calendars** were established in 2004 and are staffed by designated judges and specialized probation counselors. These courts preside over dedicated pretrial, trial, review and revocation court hearings 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.

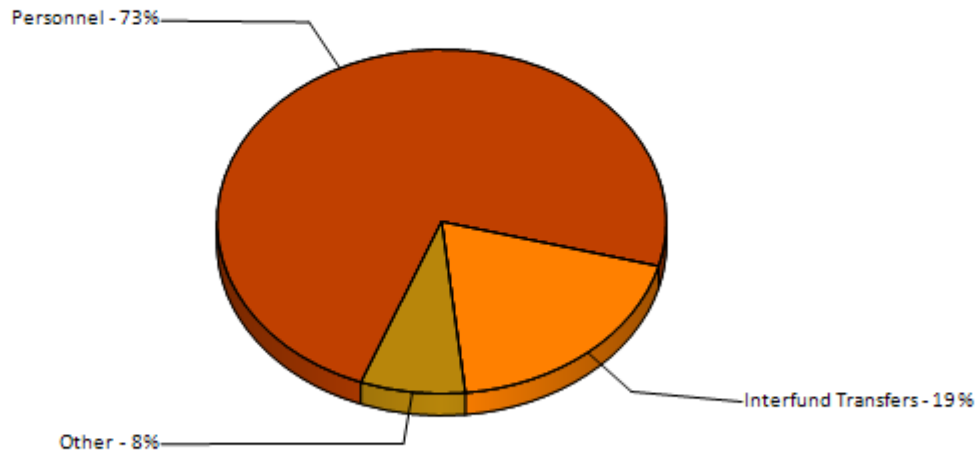
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Budget Snapshot

Department Support	2016 Actuals	2017 Adopted	2018 Endorsed	2018 Proposed
General Fund Support	\$31,518,797	\$31,982,811	\$32,548,425	\$32,682,270
Total Operations	\$31,518,797	\$31,982,811	\$32,548,425	\$32,682,270
Total Appropriations	\$31,518,797	\$31,982,811	\$32,548,425	\$32,682,270
Full-time Equivalent Total*	214.10	213.10	213.10	213.10

* 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.

2018 Proposed Budget - Expenditure by Category



Budget Overview

The 2018 Proposed Budget provides resources to enable the Court to continue to adjudicate criminal cases, citations and infractions.

A priority for the Court is to continue preparing for the replacement of the Municipal Court Information System (MCIS). MCIS is over 27 years old and was developed internally using the legacy IBM Informix platform to capture key court case events and meet the reporting requirements of the state's Administrative Office of the Courts (AOC). Over time, the Court has enhanced this system to provide important case management information, increased application functionality and improved data exchanges and public access. The Court and the City are highly dependent on MCIS to provide a continuing, permanent record of court case events, dates, hearings and

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outcomes. MCIS also tracks defendant compliance with court ordered sanctions and tracks all related fines and fees. Data related to the collection of \$47 million in fines and fees from the Seattle Police Department's parking and traffic ticket devices are highly dependent on MCIS. Daily data exchanges with the City of Seattle departments, King County and the State of Washington agencies rely on MCIS fully functioning with modern technology capabilities.

This project is included in the Seattle IT capital improvement program, as part of the Criminal Justice Information System Replacement Project, with an estimated total cost of \$41 million over six years. In 2017, \$2.5 million was appropriated to Seattle IT to conduct an options analysis comparing available options as well as hold vendor demonstrations and conduct research for information on technology capabilities, while concurrently documenting MCIS current business practices and requirements. The project budget is adjusted to \$5 million for 2018 to reflect updates to the timing and cost of the project. Vendor procurement is expected in July 2018. At that decision point, a better total project cost will be refined.

Elected state, superior and district court judicial salaries are set by the Washington Citizen's Commission on Salaries for Elected Officials. By City [Ordinance 122112](#), SMC judicial salaries are set at 95% of the district court. A final salary schedule and wage increase has been mandated effective September 2017 and the budget will fund this increase. Additionally, setting SMC judicial salaries at this level qualifies the City to receive a contribution from the state for technology improvements at SMC per the aforementioned ordinance.

The U.S. Federal Marshals Security Survey of the Seattle Justice Center recommended the addition of keycard readers to the two doors in the back of each courtroom. The doors lead to a publicly restricted area used by Judges, jurors and Court personnel. This REET funded project will provide courtroom security, particularly when in-custody defendants are attending hearings. A second project is the addition of security doors on floors three and nine to separate the courtrooms' back hallways from the administrative offices. This project will go into the queue for funding in subsequent years.

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Incremental Budget Changes

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	2018	
	Budget	FTE
Total 2018 Endorsed Budget	\$ 32,548,425	213.10
Baseline Changes		
Technical Baseline Changes	\$ 0	0.00
Citywide Adjustments for Standard Cost Changes	\$ 127,345	0.00
Proposed Changes		
Judicial Salary Adjustment	\$ 34,500	0.00
Proposed Technical Changes		
Transfer Expert Witness Budget from Seattle Municipal Court to Indigent Defense Services Budget	-\$ 28,000	0.00
Total Incremental Changes	\$ 133,845	0.00
2018 Proposed Budget	\$ 32,682,270	213.10

Descriptions of Incremental Budget Changes

Baseline Changes

Technical Baseline Changes

In the 2017 Adopted Budget a request to transfer a 0.5 FTE position from Court Operations to Court Administration was approved. The FTE and budget was transferred for 2017, however, the budget of \$50,697 was not transferred for 2018. The budget is transferred with this baseline item with an overall net zero-change.

Citywide Adjustments for Standard Cost Changes - \$127,345

Citywide technical adjustments made in the baseline phase reflect changes to internal services costs, health care, and industrial insurance charges for the department. These adjustments reflect initial assumptions about these costs and inflators early in the budget process. This adjustment also includes the Annual Wage Increase (AWI) for Local 77 Information Technology Professionals B and Cs who were not consolidated into Seattle IT in 2016.

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Proposed Changes

Judicial Salary Adjustment - \$34,500

In Washington state, elected state, superior and district court judicial salaries are set by the Washington Citizen's Commission on Salaries for Elected Officials. As directed in [Ordinance 122112](#), Seattle Municipal Court judicial salaries are set at 95% of the district court. A final salary schedule and wage increase has been mandated effective September 2017 which the Court will absorb within their 2017 budget. The proposed budget funds the 2018 increase. Additionally, setting SMC judicial salaries at this level qualifies the City to receive a contribution from the State for technology improvements at SMC. The state contribution is generally \$150,000 annually and is applied to the Trial Court Improvement Account in Finance General. The Court uses this account to fund one-time technology improvements such as the Electronic Court Filing Project.

Proposed Technical Changes

Transfer Expert Witness Budget from Seattle Municipal Court to Indigent Defense Services Budget - (\$28,000)

This technical adjustment is to transfer the Expert Witness Account and the associated funding of \$28,000 from SMC to Criminal Justice Contracted Services (CJCS) Budget and Indigent Defense Services BCL. The purpose of the Expert Witness Account is to pay for expert witnesses at the request of defense attorneys to testify before court hearings and court trials. SMC judges will still rule upon the defense attorney's requests for expert witnesses and associated expense. SMC will manage the payment processes and invoice CJCS on a quarterly basis for reimbursement.

Expenditure Overview

Appropriations	Summit Code	2016 Actuals	2017 Adopted	2018 Endorsed	2018 Proposed
Court Administration Budget Control Level	M3000	7,678,755	7,844,646	7,754,370	7,896,890
Court Compliance Budget Control Level	M4000	6,134,569	6,239,717	6,449,133	6,457,935
Court Operations Budget Control Level	M2000	17,705,473	17,898,448	18,344,922	18,327,445
Department Total		31,518,797	31,982,811	32,548,425	32,682,270

Department Full-time Equivalents Total*	214.10	213.10	213.10	213.10
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Appropriations By Budget Control Level (BCL) and Program

Court Administration Budget Control Level

The purpose of the Court Administration Budget Control Level is to provide administrative controls, develop and provide strategic direction, and provide policy and program development.

	2016	2017	2018	2018
Program Expenditures	Actuals	Adopted	Endorsed	Proposed
Court Administration	7,678,755	7,844,646	7,754,370	7,896,890
Total	7,678,755	7,844,646	7,754,370	7,896,890
Full-time Equivalents Total*	32.50	34.00	34.00	34.00

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Court Compliance Budget Control Level

The purpose of the Court Compliance Budget Control Level is to help defendants understand the Court's expectations and to assist them in successfully complying with court orders.

	2016	2017	2018	2018
Program Expenditures	Actuals	Adopted	Endorsed	Proposed
Court Compliance	6,134,569	6,239,717	6,449,133	6,457,935
Total	6,134,569	6,239,717	6,449,133	6,457,935
Full-time Equivalents Total*	42.85	42.85	42.85	42.85

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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.

	2016	2017	2018	2018
Program Expenditures	Actuals	Adopted	Endorsed	Proposed
Court Operations	17,705,473	17,898,448	18,344,922	18,327,445
Total	17,705,473	17,898,448	18,344,922	18,327,445
Full-time Equivalents Total*	138.75	136.25	136.25	136.25

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