

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. There are seven elected judges and six appointed magistrates (5.5 FTE). 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. Community organizations also partner with the Court 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.

Ensuring access to justice for defendants with limited English proficiency is another priority. In 2015, more than 6,000 interpreted events, including hearings, attorney-client interviews, Washington State Hospital doctor

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evaluations, probation and EHM appointments were conducted with the help of interpreters in 51 languages, American Sign Language and real time captioning. Approximately 40% of the requests are for Spanish language interpreters. Other 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 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 Calendar 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 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 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.

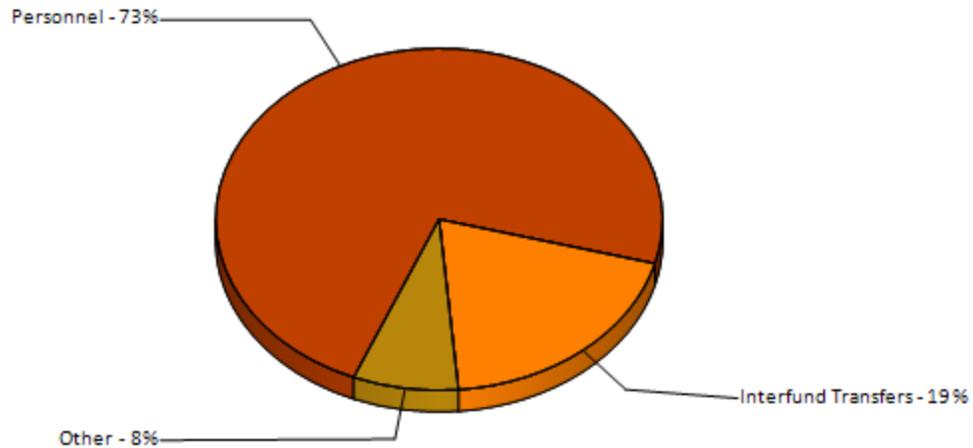
Budget Snapshot

Department Support	2015 Actual	2016 Adopted	2017 Proposed	2018 Proposed
General Fund Support	\$29,351,624	\$30,333,987	\$31,855,425	\$32,366,470
Total Operations	\$29,351,624	\$30,333,987	\$31,855,425	\$32,366,470
Total Appropriations	\$29,351,624	\$30,333,987	\$31,855,425	\$32,366,470
Full-time Equivalent Total*	213.60	214.10	212.10	212.10

* 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.

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2017 Proposed Budget - Expenditure by Category



Budget Overview

The 2017-2018 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 planning for the replacement of the Municipal Court Information System (MCIS). MCIS is over 25 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 Administrative Office of the Courts (AOC). Over time, the Court has enhanced this system to provide important case management information, 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 outcomes. MCIS also tracks defendant compliance with court ordered sanctions and tracks all related fines and fees. Data related to the collection of \$44 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. Seattle Municipal Court is unique as the largest court of limited jurisdiction in Washington. The AOC is developing a new case management system for courts of limited jurisdiction and the Court will continue participating in the AOC Court User Work Group. However, the AOC system may not be a practical option to meet the robust needs noted above.

In 2016, a project manager and two business analysts were added to Seattle IT and assigned to SMC to work on the MCIS replacement project. They began to define current and future business practices and system requirements. The project has convened Executive and Steering Committees and a feasibility study has been commissioned.

In 2017, \$2.5 million is appropriated to Seattle IT to complete the feasibility study comparing available options, while concurrently documenting MCIS current business practices. This project is included in the Seattle IT capital

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improvement program with an estimated total cost of \$41 million over six years. Once the feasibility study and business requirements are completed in 2017 a more defined budget will be developed. During 2017, the work will also commence on development of the request for proposals.

Independent of the MCIS replacement project, the 2017-2018 Proposed Budget adds a Project Manager to the Court Technology Division to address a gap in the area of project management. The manager will report to the Court Technology Director and provide key leadership on crucial projects, bring structure to processes, engage stakeholders more functionally and reduce risks associated with information technology projects.

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 2016 and the proposed 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.

Incremental Budget Changes

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	2017		2018	
	Budget	FTE	Budget	FTE
Total 2016 Adopted Budget	\$ 30,333,987	214.10	\$ 30,333,987	214.10
Baseline Changes				
Adjustment for One-Time Adds or Reductions	-\$ 222,250	0.00	-\$ 222,250	0.00
Citywide Adjustments for Standard Cost Changes	\$ 1,295,688	0.00	\$ 2,041,733	0.00
Proposed Changes				
Judicial Salary Adjustment	\$ 53,000	0.00	\$ 53,000	0.00
Court Technology Project Manager	\$ 155,000	1.00	\$ 160,000	1.00
Citywide Summit Re-Implementation Project	\$ 240,000	0.00	\$ 0	0.00
Proposed Technical Changes				
Transfer Position from Court Operations to Court Administration	\$ 0	0.00	\$ 0	0.00
Eliminate Three Unfunded Positions	\$ 0	-3.00	\$ 0	-3.00
Total Incremental Changes	\$ 1,521,438	-2.00	\$ 2,032,483	-2.00
2017 - 2018 Proposed Budget	\$ 31,855,425	212.10	\$ 32,366,470	212.10

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Descriptions of Incremental Budget Changes

Baseline Changes

Adjustment for One-Time Adds or Reductions - (\$222,250)

This item includes budget reductions for one-time additions in the 2016 Adopted Budget. Funds appropriated in 2016 for the Citywide Summit Re-Implementation project are backed out and re-appropriated in the 2017-2018 Proposed Budget.

Citywide Adjustments for Standard Cost Changes - \$1,295,688

Citywide technical adjustments made in the initial planning phase reflect changes in the internal services costs, health care, retirement contribution rate, and updates to unemployment and industrial insurance charges. These adjustments reflect initial assumptions about these costs and inflators early in the budget process. Additionally, this adjustment includes various wage adjustments for labor related costs, including the Annual Wage Increases (AWI) from 2015 through 2018.

Proposed Changes

Judicial Salary Adjustment - \$53,000

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 2016 which the Court will absorb within their 2016 budget. The proposed budget funds the 2016 increase and the second increase effective in September 2017. 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.

Court Technology Project Manager - \$155,000/1.00 FTE

A project manager position is added to the Court Technology Division to address a management gap and increase in critical projects and technology innovations. The division is composed of a director and twelve IT professionals. The director's time is spread too broadly to manage application support, desktop support, operations support, quality assurance testing, business analysis, development and project management. This new position will provide key leadership on the new collections contract and payment card industry compliance requirements, Next Generation Data Center server farm migration, Office 365 upgrade, and the Tableau Server implementation, in addition to daily operations primarily associated with MCIS including data purging and clean up in preparation for the MCIS 2.0 project implementation.

Citywide Summit Re-Implementation Project - \$240,000

This item represents the department's work in support of the Citywide Summit Re-Implementation project. A description of the Summit Re-Implementation project is located within the Department of Finance and Administrative Services.

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Proposed Technical Changes

Transfer Position from Court Operations to Court Administration

The Court reallocated a position in 2016 from a Court Clerk to a 0.5 FTE Human Resource Specialist to meet the needs of increasing reporting requirements such as FMLA, ADA, and City wage ordinances. This transfer moves the position from Court Operations Budget Control Level (BCL) to the Court Administration BCL's Human Resource Unit.

Eliminate Three Unfunded Positions/(3.00) FTE

In the 2004 Adopted Budget, the Court implemented a vacancy rate of 2.5% leaving some positions unfunded. This action eliminates three unfunded positions equal to 3.0 FTE and the benefits associated and brings the budget closer in line with funded positions.

Expenditure Overview

Appropriations	Summit Code	2015 Actual	2016 Adopted	2017 Proposed	2018 Proposed
Court Administration Budget Control Level	M3000	6,908,605	7,447,922	7,844,646	7,754,370
Court Compliance Budget Control Level	M4000	5,743,900	5,904,301	6,174,101	6,328,948
Court Operations Budget Control Level	M2000	16,699,120	16,981,764	17,836,678	18,283,152
Department Total		29,351,624	30,333,987	31,855,425	32,366,470
Department Full-time Equivalent Total*		213.60	214.10	212.10	212.10

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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.

	2015	2016	2017	2018
Program Expenditures	Actual	Adopted	Proposed	Proposed
Court Administration	6,908,605	7,447,922	7,844,646	7,754,370
Total	6,908,605	7,447,922	7,844,646	7,754,370
Full-time Equivalents Total*	32.50	32.50	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.

	2015	2016	2017	2018
Program Expenditures	Actual	Adopted	Proposed	Proposed
Court Compliance	5,743,900	5,904,301	6,174,101	6,328,948
Total	5,743,900	5,904,301	6,174,101	6,328,948
Full-time Equivalents Total*	41.85	42.85	41.85	41.85

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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.

	2015	2016	2017	2018
Program Expenditures	Actual	Adopted	Proposed	Proposed
Court Operations	16,699,120	16,981,764	17,836,678	18,283,152
Total	16,699,120	16,981,764	17,836,678	18,283,152
Full-time Equivalents Total*	139.25	138.75	136.25	136.25

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