

JOPLIN
MISSOURI

MUNICIPAL COURT UPDATE

COJ Team | July 21, 2025

MUNICIPAL COURT UPDATE

Municipal Court Overview:
Governing Authority

Missouri Supreme Court – Office Of State Courts Administrator

- Supreme Court Rule 37
- Supreme Court Operating Rules 1 - 29
- Missouri Revised State Statues, Chapters 476 - 488
- 29th Circuit Court Rules
- City Code, Section 42

MUNICIPAL COURT UPDATE

Municipal Court Overview: Purpose

- As a divisional court within the 29th Judicial Circuit (Jasper County), the Joplin Municipal Court is one of limited jurisdiction, which adjudicates misdemeanor traffic and city ordinance violations that are alleged to have occurred within the city limits of Joplin.
- The main mission of the Municipal Court is to promptly and fairly adjudicate all cases filed with the court and enforce all judgments rendered.
- The Joplin Municipal Court is one of the busiest divisional courts in the 29th Circuit.
- The Joplin Municipal Court is not a court of record.

MUNICIPAL COURT UPDATE

Municipal Court Overview: Key Functions

- Weekly court dockets are held Monday through Thursday, which include in person dockets and video arraignments (persons in custody).
- The Court has various docket types:
  - Initial Arraignment – 1st court appearance: sign language (Web-Ex) and non-English (telephone)
  - In custodies (by video) – persons in custody are arraigned
  - Public Defender – counsel assigned by the Judge to represent defendants
  - Code Enforcement – various nuisance ordinance violations
  - Animal Control – all things related to animals (excluding theft of animals)
  - Appear With Counsel – 1st chance to appear with counsel after initial arraignment
  - Show Cause – hearing where defendant must answer for their failure to comply
  - Bond Forfeiture – hearing to determine if bond will be forfeited by bonding company/defendant, after several failures to appear
  - Attorney Dockets – counsel representing defendants in various cases
  - Trials (Attorney/Pro Se) – persons represented by counsel or representing themselves

MUNICIPAL COURT UPDATE

Municipal Court Overview: Key Functions Continued

- Court clerk primary duties consist of citation entry, processing bonds, sentencing, compliance, processing attorney entries, payment processing, scheduling dockets, issuing/recalling warrants, processing suspended cases, processing customer requests and inquires (in person, phone, fax).
- The following programs are available through the Municipal Court:

  Certified Interpreter services - Web-Ex (sign language) and non-English phone service

  Online Payments – kiosk in lobby of the Justice Center (SMC)

  Phone Payments - person may call in to make a payment (INCODE)

  Community Service – defendant performs work, in lieu of fines, at an approved non-profit organization, where each hour worked is credited, equal to the current amount of minimum wage

  Victim Impact Panel (VIP) – alcohol and drug program for adults

  Driver Improvement Program (DIP) – all ages

  Alcohol and Drug Education Program (ADEP) – program for minors

  Stop-lifting – shoplifting program for adults

  Alternatives To Violence (ATV) – domestic violence and assault education program

MUNICIPAL COURT UPDATE

Municipal Court Overview: Key Statistics/Caseload

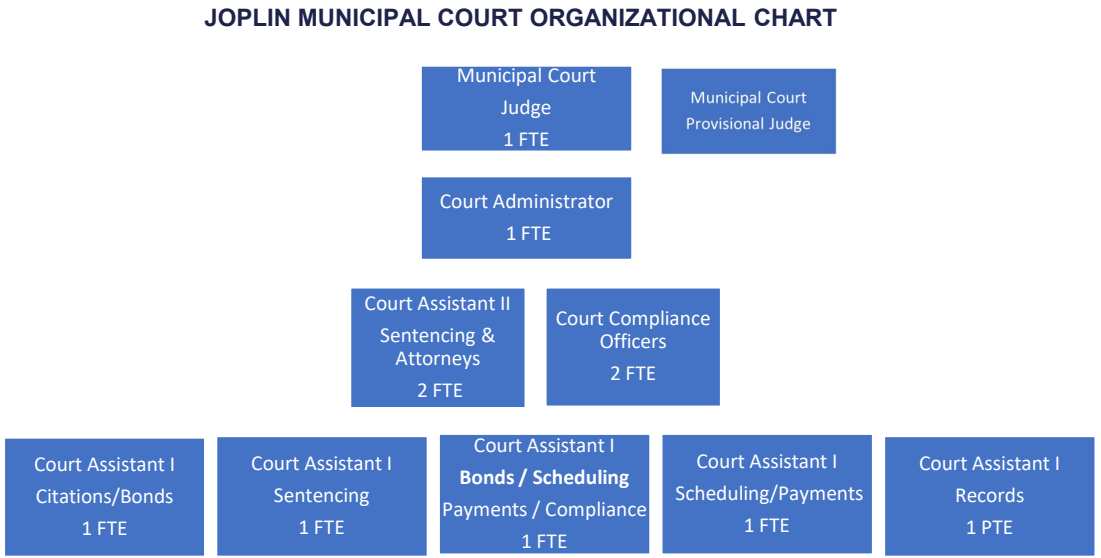
CASELOAD INFORMATION	2022	2023	2024
Cases pending at the start new fiscal year *	2,379	3,196	4,453
Cases (citations/information) filed *	6,149	8,535	7,420
Cases (citations/information) disposed	7,981	8,296	7,749
Completed cases - before Judge	4,204	5,676	4,981
Certified for jury trial (to the Circuit Court)	0	2	7
Pending Caseload - fiscal year end	3,196	4,453	2,267
Trial De Novo an/or Appeal Applications Filed	3	0	7
Warrant Issued During Reporting Period *	4,886	4,904	4,868

Information compiled from INCODE and SMC monthly reports - shared with City Clerk, per Court Rule.

* Indication of the number of files that have been processed during each year.

MUNICIPAL COURT UPDATE

Municipal Court Overview:
Organization Chart



MUNICIPAL COURT UPDATE

Meet the Municipal Court Staff



Front Row: Mark Gordon, Nelson Najera, Tara Banks, Nancy McAllister
Back Row: Jeanne Edster, Melanie Conway, Enjoli Jones, McKenzie Burchell,, Nicole Kaufmann

MUNICIPAL COURT UPDATE

Staffing Update:
All Positions are currently filled

NAME	POSITION	YOS
John Podleski	Judge	11 years
Charles Lonardo	Judge	4 years
Lamonte Ratcliff *	Court Administrator	33 years
Jeanne Edster	Court Assistant II, Sentencing (Senior Clerk)	24 years
Mark Gordon *	Court Assistant II, Attorneys (Senior Clerk)	10 years
Enjoli Jones *	Compliance Officer	15 years
Melanie Conway *	Compliance Officer	10 years
Nelson Najera *	Court Assistant I, (Bonds, Citations, Dismissals, Docket Reset)	5 years
Nancy McAllister	Court Assistant I, Citations	1 year
McKenzie Burchell	Court Assistant I, Payments	1 year
Tara Banks	Court Assistant I, Sentencing	1 year
Nicole Kaufmann	Court Assistant I (Part Time), Suspended Files	6 months

* Worked in another city department before the court office

MUNICIPAL COURT UPDATE

Municipal Court Overview: Staffing Update continued

- Court Assistant II clerks are usually called upon to train new staff. However, with the necessary experience, any Court Assistant can train a new employee, if the new person performs the same duties.
- Senior clerks (Court Assistant II) undergo succession training as time allows.
  - Cross training on specific admin duties and online training on office administration.
- All other clerks receive cross training which allows staff to fill in for absentees, as well as filling in during vacancies within the office.

<u>Impact of the recently added clerk position</u>

- Counsel's recent approval of an additional court clerk has helped to alleviate workloads for several clerks (Payments, attorney, bonds, Compliance).
- A reassigned clerk serves in a hybrid capacity, which is helpful to clerks who do not have a counterpart.
- The transition/reassignment was successful due to staff's commitment to cross training.

MUNICIPAL COURT UPDATE

2024 and 2025 Key Initiatives to begin and/or continue in FY 2025

2024 Key Initiatives

- The administrative reduction of INOCDE software cases has been completed as of January of 2025: INCODE warrant cases (issued prior to January 2019) have been closed by administrative order.

2025 Key Initiatives

- Continue with the administrative reduction of INCODE Software cases from February 2019 to December 2020.
- Revision of the Municipal Court website.
- Revision of Court video – Judge's greeting and explanation of court room procedures.

Thank you!

