

Important Update from Franklin Municipal Court

Many of you may not know, but our Court is one of the few with a part-time judge but also one of the busiest in Ohio compared to other Ohio municipal courts with a full-time judge. Recently, the Ohio Supreme Court completed a review of our caseload and confirmed what we see every day:

- Our overall caseload ranks in the 75th percentile compared to other Ohio municipal courts with full-time judges.
- Our caseload is almost double the next busiest part-time municipal court.
- There are only 7 other part-time municipal courts in the State of Ohio.
- Our caseload is greater than any other municipal court in Warren County and greater than the caseload of Warren County Court, which has two part-time judicial positions.
- Compared to courts with full-time judges, our traffic cases rank in the 88th percentile and criminal cases rank in the 59th percentile.

Despite this, Franklin Municipal Court is still only authorized as a part-time judgeship.

What does this mean for Franklin, Franklin Township and Carlisle residents to still have a part-time judge??

- Greater strain on court staff, resources and law enforcement.
- Less availability of the Judge can result in the justice system moving slower than it should for victims, defendants, and families (i.e. search warrants being signed by the Judge quickly).
- At part-time, the Judge and staff can handle the cases, but there isn't enough time to improve how things are run for the community. This includes adopting new procedures, updating court rules to insure compliance with new laws and rules.
- A full-time judgeship allows more time to plan for growth. Franklin and Warren County is continuing to grow, a part-time court will not keep up with the increasing number of cases.
- A full-time judgeship allows the Court to ensure compliance with changes in the law including recent amendments to the Ohio Constitution.

We have formally requested that the judgeship be converted to full-time. The recent Ohio Supreme Court report validates the requested change. Now, the decision will ultimately rest with the Ohio General Assembly, and they will be looking at the positions of Franklin City Council and the Warren County Commissioners.

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The Judge and Court Administrator provided a presentation to City Council in 2024 concerning the need for the change, the benefits of the change as well as the lack of significant additional cost and the likelihood of some actual cost savings. City Council has not expressed support for the change but recently made an expenditure to hire the National Center for State Courts to perform a study. The study is solely concerned with whether the Court timely processes cases. The City has previously raised questions about the proposed change, especially regarding costs. These concerns will be part of the conversations once again, although not part of the study paid for by the City. The Court will also participate in meetings with state leaders to consider the future of our Court.

We want you, the citizens we serve, to know why this matters. A full-time court means faster, fairer, more efficient justice for our community. It also means a minimal net increase in the cost of operating the Court and could result in overall cost savings for taxpayers.

We'll keep you updated as this moves forward. Thank you for supporting your local court.

Please review our Q&A page for more information.

Franklin Municipal Court – Judgeship Conversion Q&A

Q: Why does the Court need a full-time judge now?

A: Our caseload is already greater than any other court in the state of Ohio with a part-time judge and a majority of full-time municipal courts in Ohio. The Supreme Court confirmed that Franklin ranks in the 75th percentile overall, with traffic cases in the 88th percentile and criminal cases in the 59th percentile. A part-time court can no longer keep pace with this level of work without delays along with the changes in law and requirements placed upon local courts.

Q: Is Franklin Municipal Court part of the City of Franklin?

A: The City of Franklin and City leaders are part of the executive and legislative branches of government, and they handle city services, budgets, and local ordinances. The Franklin Municipal Court is part of the judicial branch, and we adjudicate cases, uphold the law, and ensure fair access to justice. Franklin Municipal Court is established by law and is a separate entity from the City.

Although we are separate, the City of Franklin provides part of the funding for the Court – “holds the purse strings”. That means city officials don’t direct how the Court operates, but they do decide upon the level of financial support for the Court’s operations.

Q: Will this increase costs for taxpayers?

A: Converting the position will involve a minimal increase in costs for the Court’s local funding authorities, but it is not creating a new position. It is merely an adjustment to the current time of the Judge to match the workload. The cost is an investment in efficiency: fewer continuances, reduced conflicts of the Judge (as part-time judges are also practicing attorneys), increased adherence to rules given to courts by the Supreme Court of Ohio, new laws and constitutional amendments as well as less wasted time for our officers and citizens who would need to appear in court more times than they should have to.

Specifically, the City of Franklin only pays a portion of the Judge’s salary. The portion paid by the City will increase by \$15,750.00 each year and the County’s share will increase by \$10,500.00. As noted, however, this may result in cost savings as well. The need to appoint and pay assigned judges in the event of a conflict will be reduced as a full-time judge is not permitted to privately practice law and must devote all of his or her professional time to being a judge and not representing private parties in any capacity. Additional cost savings are possible as a full-time judge may be able to secure additional funding for programs operated by the Court.

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Q: Who decides if the position can be made full-time?

A: The Ohio General Assembly must pass legislation authorizing the change. Before they act, they will consider input from Franklin City Council and the Warren County Board of Commissioners, who fund the court. Over 60% of the additional cost is borne by the state of Ohio.

At this time, the City has not expressed support for making the judgeship full-time.

Q: Has the Ohio Supreme Court approved this change?

A: The Ohio Supreme Court does not make the final decision. However, they reviewed our caseload and the data included in their report provides support for moving to a full-time judgeship. That independent review adds weight to our request. The report specifically finds that Franklin Municipal Court handles more cases than approximately 75% of all full-time judges in all municipal courts in the State of Ohio.

Q: Why is traffic such a big factor in the numbers?

A: Traffic cases make up much of our docket, and Franklin Municipal Court ranks in the 88th percentile statewide in that category. Traffic cases are not “minor” as they include serious offenses such as OVI, reckless driving, and incidents that put public safety at risk. Franklin Municipal Court’s jurisdiction includes several miles of Interstate 75.

Q: How will the Judge going full-time benefit our community?

A:

- More consistent judicial availability for warrants, hearings, trials, search warrants and emergencies.
- Faster case resolution, reducing frustration and costs for everyone involved.
- Stronger support for law enforcement and victims.
- A justice system that keeps pace with community growth and needs.
- Fewer conflicts requiring the appointment of an acting judge.
- Greater ability to keep pace with changing laws, constitutional amendments and requirements mandated by the Supreme Court of Ohio for municipal courts.

Our goal is to keep the residents of Franklin, Franklin Township and Carlisle informed. We may be adding information to this page, so check back anytime. If you’d like more information about the judgeship or the Court, please contact the Court Administrator – Mandy Turner at mturner@franklinohio.org.