

CITY OF

Lee's Summit

Municipal Court Operational Review

Final Report
February 18, 2026



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February 18, 2026

Mark Dunning, City Manager
City of Lee's Summit
220 SE Green Street
Lee's Summit, MO 64063

Subject: Municipal Court Operational Review

Dear Mr. Dunning:

Thank you for the opportunity to conduct this independent operational review of the Lee's Summit Municipal Court. Our objective was to perform a rigorous assessment of current state operations in order to provide a strategic roadmap to ensure the Court's long-term efficiency and effectiveness as a vital component of local public safety.

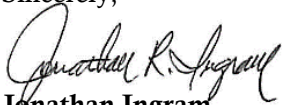
The Court is supported by a dedicated team of judges and staff who demonstrate a sincere commitment to the community. In recent years, the organization has been navigating a critical transitional period following significant turnover in leadership and personnel. While the current team has made commendable strides in stabilizing daily workflows, our analysis indicates that these processes have evolved informally, lacking centralized oversight and the integration of technical best practices.

This presents risk to the City and Court. The absence of formalized guidance has resulted in a lack of structured planning to ensure full compliance with State Rule 37 guidelines governing municipal court operations and respond to Office of State Court Administration (OSCA) reviews.

To mitigate these risks, the Court must prioritize the formalization of its management structure, expand both judge and internal staff capacity, develop policies and procedures, and leverage external expertise and technical assistance. These steps are essential to establishing a high-performing organization that meets state mandates, protects the City's interests, and efficiently serves the public.

We are confident that the recommendations contained within this report provide a robust framework for addressing these challenges. Thank you again for choosing us as your partners in this engagement.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'Jonathan R. Ingram'.

Jonathan Ingram

Vice President - Organizational Assessment

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Executive Summary

The City of Lee’s Summit is a premier community in the Kansas City metropolitan area, providing essential municipal services to over 106,000 residents. Central to the City’s commitment to public safety is its Municipal Court, which adjudicates a diverse range of offenses including traffic violations, domestic violence, and substance abuse. While the Court is an indispensable partner in the local justice system, this assessment identifies critical gaps in staffing, operational procedures, and internal controls that must be addressed to ensure long-term stability and compliance.

Since 2022, the Court has undergone a near-total turnover of personnel, including both the Court Administrator and Court Clerk Supervisor, as well as the election of a new judge. This transition was hampered by a lack of documentation from prior staff, forcing new staff to establish roles and procedures from the ground up. Currently, the Court’s structure does not adequately support its evolving needs. The two elected judges—tasked by the State with supervising operations and certifying compliance—are only each onsite one day per week, leaving insufficient time for staff supervision, inter-departmental collaboration, or strategic management.

To mitigate risk and enhance the Court’s effectiveness, the following strategic improvements are recommended:

- **Formalize Management and Communication:** The Court must bridge the gap between its judicial functions and City administration. Formalizing communication channels will ensure the Court can effectively leverage City and external resources while maintaining its mandated independence.
- **Expand Staffing Capacity:** Current staffing levels have not kept pace with the City’s growth. Analysis indicates an immediate need for additional judicial capacity and increased personnel. Raftelis recommends increasing judge time at court for additional bench hearings as well as administrative oversight, converting a part-time clerk to full-time, and adding a dedicated Court Clerk for Probation to address administrative backlogs and improve probation oversight.
- **Standardize Procedures:** The Court requires a formalized manual of policies and procedures, including cross-training for clerks to ensure continuity of operations. Implementing operational efficiencies—such as firm deadlines for continuance requests—will allow for better docket planning and resource allocation.
- **Optimize Technology and Training:** The State-mandated case management software is currently underutilized. Full optimization and comprehensive staff training are required to streamline case processing, reduce human error, and enable data-driven decision-making.

The Lee’s Summit Municipal Court is staffed by dedicated professionals, but the current infrastructure is strained. By investing in additional personnel, formalized procedures, and technological optimization, the City will establish a high-performing, transparent, and resilient judicial operation to support local public safety for the Lee’s Summit community.

Table 1 below provides a detailed summary of the recommendations contained within this report.

Table 1: List of Report Recommendations

Number	Recommendation
1	Prioritize implementing a formal management system connecting the City’s Court Liaison/Assistant City Manager, Judges, and Court Administrator.

Number	Recommendation
2	Engage experienced outside assistance to drive needed changes.
3	Establish an internal policy that any external reviews of the Court be shared with the judges and City Manager, along with an action plan that includes deadlines to correct any deficiencies.
4	Develop a policy manual consistent with Missouri state law, Supreme Court Rule 37, and 16 th Circuit Court Rules to guide the work of Court staff.
5	Train Court staff in their specific roles and ensure a backup for each position.
6	Provide mandatory supervisory and leadership training for all supervisors.
7	Ensure all Court employees receive timely annual performance evaluations.
8	Close Court on specific days each month to focus on implementation of needed changes and to train staff.
9	Develop a prioritized plan to address Court backlogs.
10	Increase judge onsite time by one Court day per judge, for a total of four judge office days per week, and supplement with an on-call Pro Tem judge position as needed.
11	Promote one Probation Compliance Officer to a manager or lead position overseeing the Probation program.
12	Add one new Court Clerk position to support the Probation program and reduce Probation Compliance Officer time on data entry and recordkeeping.
13	Increase Court Clerk capacity by making the current part-time Clerk position full-time to assist with overall Court operations.
14	Request funding to hire temporary help to clear backlogs and perform special projects as part of the annual budget process.
15	Re-evaluate docket assignments to better balance workload across the two judges.
16	Implement cut-off times for Court check-in.
17	Establish policies consistent with the 16 th Circuit Court Rules that include deadlines for actions such as case filing and requests for continuances.
18	Review judge standards for assigning cases to probation and the public defender to manage workload and improve consistency.
19	Provide alternate resources to provide information and assistance on assistive resources and programs to probation and judges.
20	Consider developing an online request option for payment plans to reduce appearances.
21	Engage an IT professional/OSCA to ensure the Court is maximizing the use of Show Me Courts software.
22	Create a culture of data-driven decision making for the Court and establish performance metrics.

In the short-term, the Court should add capacity and technical assistance to quickly develop policies and procedures to guide operations. To continue the cycle of improvement, the City and Court should work together to add additional staff capacity in order to address process and backlog issues. Continuous analysis of workload and backlogs, through review of data captured in the SMC system, can show progress made as well as identify whether additional capacity is still necessary going forward.

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Introduction

Background and Methodology

In September 2025, the City of Lee's Summit (City) engaged the project team to conduct an operational review of the Municipal Court (Court). The purpose of this study was to evaluate the Court's staffing, operations, resources, and organizational structure to identify opportunities for improved efficiency and effectiveness.

To accomplish these tasks, the team conducted interviews with the City Manager, both judges, and all Municipal Court staff. Additionally, the project team spoke with Court stakeholders, including some local attorneys and the public defender. Raftelis also reviewed and analyzed documents and materials provided by the City, such as workload information, budgets, project plans, and programmatic data. Finally, the project team reviewed the structure and operations of the Court compared to several other similar municipal courts in the region.

About Lee's Summit Municipal Court

The Lee's Summit Municipal Court adjudicates a variety of alleged offenses to fulfill its mission to ensure the safety of the local community. The Court provides judicial functions through two elected judges who are on the bench two days per week. The court is also responsible for court administration and compliance with State legal requirements as outlined in Rule 37 and local court rules, courtroom management, and monitoring of probationers.

ORGANIZATION STRUCTURE

At the time of this review, staff could not provide an organizational chart for the Court. Based upon staff job descriptions, Raftelis prepared the organization chart below for the Court.

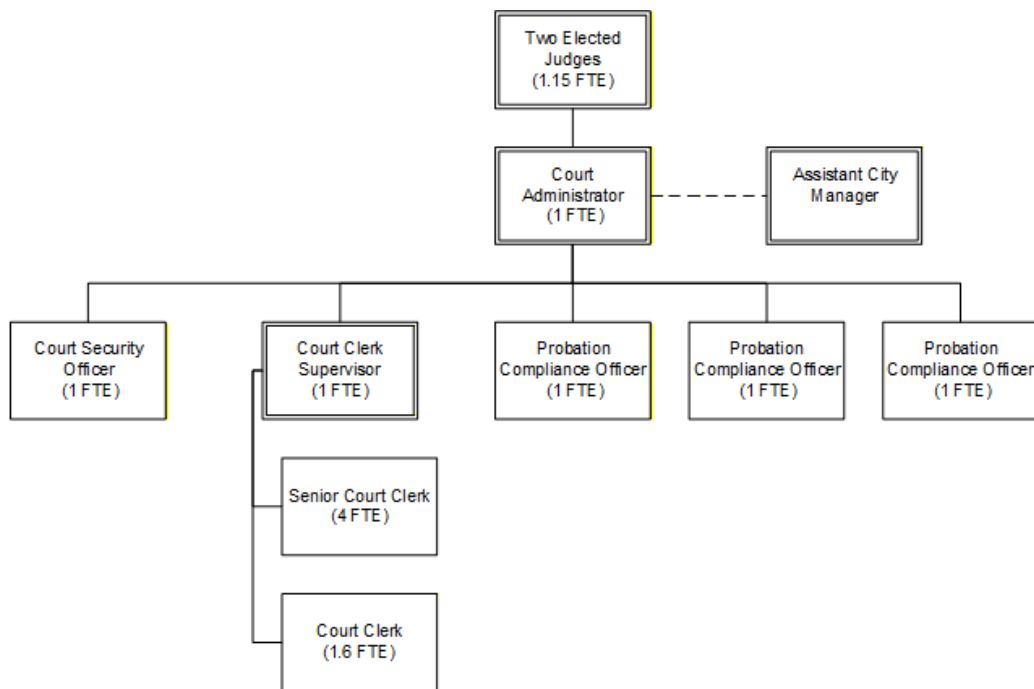


Figure 1: Lee's Summit Municipal Court Organization Structure

It should be noted that, in the City’s job descriptions, both the Court Clerk Supervisor and the Court Administrator are responsible for supervising Court Clerk staff; this issue has been raised to be addressed in a classification and compensation study now underway. For purposes of this organizational chart and in practice, they are reporting to the Court Clerk Supervisor as the job title would imply.

STAFFING LEVELS

The City’s population has grown significantly in the past 40 years, with 216% growth in population from 1985 to 2025. Police Officer staffing has similarly been increased to meet demand, with a 188% growth over the same time period. Workload for the court has increased as well, with new case filings up by 15% since 2019 and up 20% from 2023 to 2024.

Despite these impacts, the structure of the municipal court has not changed, with the number of judges and court days remaining the same. Table 2 below shows Court authorized staffing in the City’s budget over the past five years, from 2022 to 2026.

Table 2: Authorized Full Time Equivalent Staffing, FY2022 – FY2026¹

Job Title	FY2022 Budget	FY2023 Budget	FY2024 Budget	FY2025 Budget	FY2026 Budget	Percent Change FY2022 to FY2026
Court Administrator	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	0%
Court Clerk /Senior Court Clerk*	2.00	2.00	2.00	5.00	5.00	5%*
Senior Court Clerk*	2.75	2.75	3.00	n/a	n/a	n/a
Court Clerk Supervisor	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	0%
Court Security Officer	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	0%
Municipal Judge	1.15	1.15	1.15	1.15	1.15	0%
Probation/Compliance Officer	2.00	2.00	3.00	3.00	3.00	50%
Totals	10.90	10.90	12.15	12.15	12.15	11%

**Court Clerk and Senior Court Clerk classifications were reported together beginning in FY2025 budget.*

As can be seen, the probation program was increased by 50% due to the addition of a third Probation Compliance Officer. Otherwise, staffing has remained unchanged over this time period.

AUTHORITY

One of the biggest complexities of municipal court operations in Lee’s Summit is the shared authority and responsibility for court operations, which is summarized for the reader in the figure below.

¹ Data sourced from the FY2024, FY2025, and FY2026 adopted budgets.

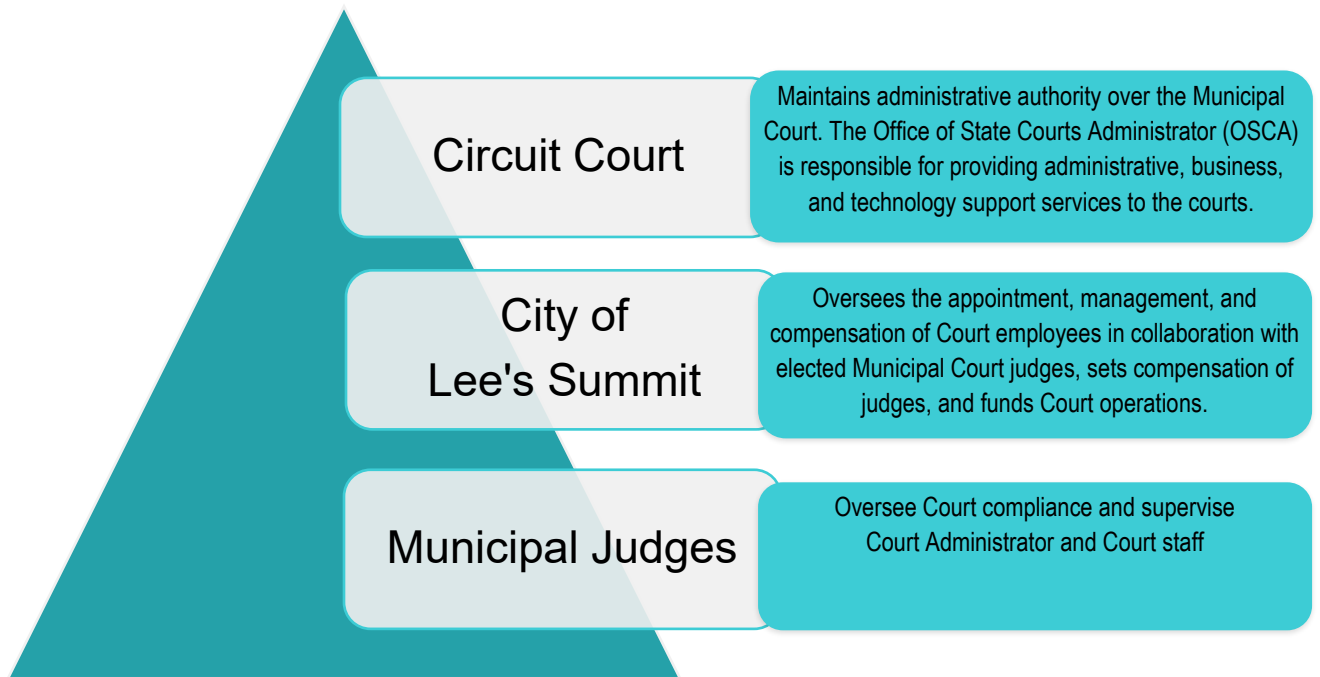


Figure 2: Summary of Authority over Court Operations

Under the constitution of the State of Missouri and the Missouri Revised Statutes, municipal courts are divisions of the state circuit court, with original jurisdiction over violations of the City Code, traffic offenses, and other minor infractions. The Presiding Judge of the Circuit Court has administrative authority over Municipal Court Judges and court personnel. Municipal Judges are judges of the Circuit Court and are subject to the rules of the Circuit Court and the Supreme Court.

The City, by Charter or ordinance, determines the selection method (e.g., by election or appointment), tenure, and compensation of municipal court judges. The City provides Clerks and such other nonjudicial personnel as may be required for the proper functioning of the Municipal Court and suitable facilities and pays the salaries of the judges, clerks and other nonjudicial personnel and other expenses incidental to the operation of the municipal divisions.

The City hires and terminates the Court Administrator with concurrence of Municipal Judges. If the Municipal Judges and City are unable to reach an agreement on personnel matters involving Court employees, the City Code provides that the matter may be addressed by the Circuit Court Presiding Judge, and if no action is taken, the matter is submitted to binding arbitration at the City's expense. The City code also establishes a complex matrix of responsibility, concurrence, and final decision-making authority for various personnel actions involving Court employees such as evaluation, discipline, and termination depending on whether the issue relates to a court-related function or a City function carried out by court personnel.

The elected judges, and the Presiding Judge in particular, annually certifies Court compliance with the State's rules and procedures, known as "Rule 37." The judges supervise Court-related functions performed by Court Administrator and collaborate with City and each other on issues related to discipline and termination. Judges are responsible for evaluating the job performance of the Court Administrator in collaboration with each other and hire and supervise Court personnel in collaboration with Court Administrator, Municipal Judges, and City.

This complex blend of elected officials, Circuit Court, and City oversight for one agency can result in confusion and a lack of role clarity.

BUDGET

As noted above, the City of Lee’s Summit is responsible for funding Court operations through the City’s annual operating budget. Table 3 below shows budgeted and actual Court expenditures over the past five years. Overall funding for the Court has increased by 69% over the past five years, in part the result of staffing increases in 2024.

Table 3: Municipal Court Expenditures by Category, FY2022 – FY2026²

Category	FY2022 Actual	FY2023 Actual	FY2024 Actual	FY2025 Budget	FY2026 Budget	Percent Change FY2022 to FY2026
Personnel services	679,592	730,740	844,275	958,130	1,086,519	60%
Other supplies, services and charges	140,919	192,709	203,048	326,563	295,160	109%
Repairs and maintenance	6,053	6,200	4,505	5,950	5,950	-2%
Interdepartment charges	49,719	56,982	70,105	88,682	90,329	82%
Transfers out	-	-	2,100	-	-	N/A
Totals	876,283	986,631	1,124,033	1,379,325	1,477,958	69%

The same figures are broken down by Court division in Table 4 below. As would be expected, the majority of funding is spent on Court operations, with other components for the probation program, security, and administration.

Table 4: Municipal Court Expenditures by Programs and Services, FY2022 – FY2026³

Programs and Services	FY2022 Actual	FY2023 Actual	FY2024 Actual	FY2025 Budget	FY2026 Budget	Percent Change FY2022 to FY2026
Department Administration	176,467	201,783	256,028	220,582	237,399	35%
Operations Division	416,791	453,148	487,152	705,611	758,070	82%
Probation	144,461	165,790	219,197	251,563	275,815	91%
Court Security Operations	138,566	165,910	161,657	201,568	206,673	49%
Totals	876,285	986,631	1,124,034	1,379,325	1,477,957	69%

The following table reports net collections data for the City’s Court, as published and categorized by the State of Missouri’s judicial branch. Data is presented from FY2019 through FY2024 (as opposed to the time periods used in prior tables) because the Covid-19 pandemic impacted driving patterns and associated traffic citation rates, as well as court operations.

² Data sourced from the FY2024, FY2025, and FY2026 adopted budgets.

³ Data sourced from the FY2024, FY2025, and FY2026 adopted budgets.

Table 5: Lee’s Summit’s Municipal Court Net Collections and Disbursements, FY2019 – FY2024⁴

Type	FY2019 Actual	FY2020 Actual	FY2021 Actual	FY2022 Actual	FY2023 Budget	FY2024 Budget	Percent Change FY2019 to FY2024
Fines	861,359	593,854	515,296	756,117	881,713	996,063	16%
Clerk/Court Fee (costs)	87,756	65,667	52,233	78,625	94,354	112,016	28%
POST Fund Surcharge	7,313	5,473	4,353	6,518	7,863	9,335	28%
CVC Fund Surcharge	54,842	41,045	32,646	48,887	58,971	70,010	28%
LET Fund Surcharge	14,590	10,935	8,727	25,304	28,050	29,934	105%
Dom Violence Shelter Surcharge	29,151	21,839	17,448	26,068	31,472	37,310	28%
Inmate Prisoner Detainee Security Fund Surcharge	14,562	10,909	8,731	13,033	15,736	18,659	28%
Court Automation Fee (JIS Courts ONLY)	51,095	38,225	30,470	45,614	55,040	65,343	28%
Restitution	2,601	5,471	500	535	-	-	-100%
Other	51,354	39,936	38,966	39,091	42,041	34,180	-33%
Total bond forfeitures NOT used for costs/fines	55,226	41,195	500	45,172	20,619	18,811	-66%
Total Bond Refunds	352,327	276,006	224,307	361,250	354,547	311,569	-12%
Total Net Disbursements	1,582,177	1,150,554	934,175	1,446,213	1,590,404	1,703,229	8%

From FY2019 to FY2020 and FY2021, there were decreases to all types of collections and disbursements, but the table indicates that most types now exceed pre-pandemic levels annually.

Raftelis analyzed Court fees and fines revenue against total expenditures and found that, on average from 2021-2025, over 97% of court expenditures were covered by that year’s Court revenues, with some years exceeding 100%. While this is not a detailed analysis of cost recovery, as an outcome of its regular operations the Court does bring in revenues to offset a significant share of its expenditures.

WORKLOAD

The Lee’s Summit Municipal Court recovered quickly from the Covid-19 pandemic backlog, but has since faced growing caseload, staff turnover, and technology changes. From FY2019 to FY2024, total case filings rose by 15%. Alcohol and drug-related traffic filings increased significantly, by 101%, over the same period. Other traffic cases comprised 88% of 2024 filings and had grown by 22% since 2019.

Court cases are initially filed or brought to the court. When a judge makes a decision, the case is “disposed,” and filings are “pending” when they remain active, but the court’s requirements are not yet complete. Courts often measure workload in terms of the clearance rate, e.g., the number of cases disposed divided by the number filed. A

⁴ Data sourced from the FY2019 through FY2024 state-reported data for Municipal Divisions on Net Collections/Disbursements (<https://www.courts.mo.gov/page.jsp?id=218793>).

higher clearance rate equates to more cases being started and completed. The clearance rate is a commonly used court performance measure.

Figure 3 below shows actual cases filed, disposed, and pending in Lee’s Summit for FY2019-FY2024.

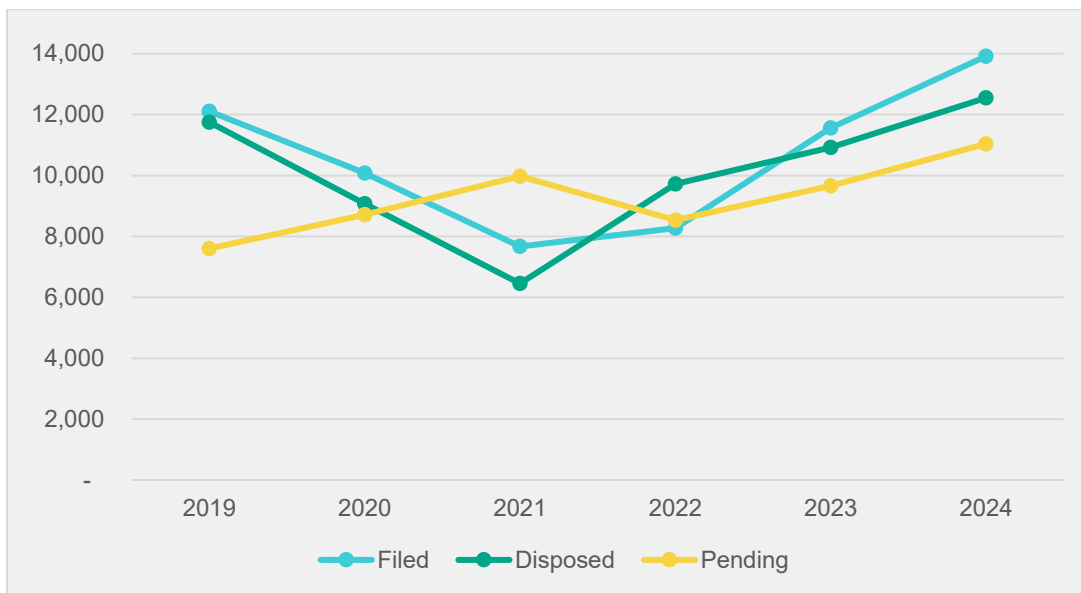


Figure 3: Lee's Summit Cases Filed, Disposed, and Pending FY2019-FY2024

The graph shows the Covid-19 pandemic drop in case filings and dispositions in 2021, but a rapid and increasing return in subsequent years to prior volumes. Clearance rates for these years is shown in Table 6 below.

Table 6: Lee's Summit's Municipal Court Clearance Rates, FY2019 – FY2024

	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
Clearance Rates	97%	90%	84%	118%	95%	90%

Clearance rates have remained high with the exception of 2021; in 2022, the Court made up some of the backlog that resulted from the Covid-19 pandemic. While productivity to clear cases is apparent, the increasing trend in volumes has resulted in significant workload for the court.

OFFICE OF STATE COURTS ADMINISTRATOR (OSCA) REVIEWS

As noted earlier in this report, the Municipal Court is required by State law to comply with State guidelines for operations. These guidelines are outlined in detail in Rule 37 and overseen by OSCA, to which the judges submit their certified compliance on an annual basis. As part of its services, OSCA will send its staff onsite to audit and review court operations, later presenting its report and findings. The purpose of these reviews is to verify and ensure compliance with State requirements.

The Lee’s Summit Municipal Court has been the subject of two recent OSCA reviews in 2022 and in 2025. Key findings from both are outlined in Table 7 below.

Table 7: OSCA Review Findings

OSCA Review	Observations Requiring Corrective Action
<p>July 25, 2025</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The system shows dismissed cases with restitution and probation fees assessed and paid to the Court • The system has 1,525 cases without outcomes • Case processing errors were found in 192 criminal and 62 traffic cases, resulting in potential inaccurate criminal history and records of conviction • No scheduled future court events identified in 949 pending cases • Plea agreements inconsistently presented to the judge for approval prior to disposition • Bonds held on cases disposed and bonds held on cases with no future events scheduled and no bond forfeiture hearing • Bonds in two cases submitted to the Court with no associated case • Checks totaling \$107,703.37, dating back to 2020 were identified as outstanding checks that have not been submitted to unclaimed property • Payment plans are not consistently being set up in Show Me Courts case management system. At review, \$19,163.10 of outstanding costs were not associated to payment plans
<p>February 28, 2022</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • City code provides for the assessment of costs inconsistent with applicable laws and rules • City code sets the Crime Victim’s Compensation Fund surcharge at \$5 while current statutory language sets this at \$7.50; while the City fees ordinance and Court website show the current statutory amount, the Code of Ordinances language has not been updated • City code related to temporary municipal judges should be reviewed for consistency with current statutes and court rules

During the course of this review, one judge was unaware of the 2025 OSCA report results. During our initial visit to the City, Raftelis was informed that the results were not yet available, despite their release almost one month prior. Court staff stated that there was no report prepared on planned corrective actions in response to either the 2022 or 2025 audits.

Some of the items noted in the OSCA reviews will require collaboration between the City Attorney and Court to address inconsistencies in statues, City code, and Court rules.

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Peer Comparisons

As part of this review, Raftelis compared the Lee’s Summit Municipal Court to that in other peer jurisdictions in the region. This comparison helps to determine if the organization aligns with industry standards or if specific areas require heightened attention or investment. While these comparisons are helpful, benchmarking inherently lacks an evaluation of service delivery quality; therefore, integrating knowledge of best practices is necessary to provide accurate context for interpreting the peer comparison data. In addition, benchmarking focuses on identifying outliers or areas requiring additional analysis and review.

Methodology

Raftelis gathered and analyzed data from several categories of peer cities to leverage the varying availability of information for a broader range of comparisons. At the time of analysis, Court data was available for all of the Missouri cities considered for FY2019 through FY2024, but comparable data from Kansas cities was only available through FY2023 and some of these cities were missing data for one to two years. Similarly, information that Raftelis requested directly from peer cities by email is limited to those that responded to inquiries, and details from peer cities’ websites are assumed to reflect the late 2025 time period when the sites were accessed.

Because Court data was reported at the state level for all cities, Raftelis was able to compile Court data for all 15 possible peer cities. Although 15 is a longer list than typical for peer comparisons, the range of comparators is particularly useful when each city and state operates their courts so differently. For example, Lee’s Summit and St. Charles are the only cities considered that elect their municipal judges, and five of six Missouri peers use Pro Tem judges.

The level of detail available for analysis also varied by state, so peer comparisons across states were constrained to new case filings and dispositions (the legal end of a court case), while comparisons within Missouri can include citation types, plus new filings, dispositions, and pending cases (active and unresolved). The following table summarizes the reviewed peer cities, key details, and the available data, with peer data sorted by population size.

Table 8: List of Peer Cities⁵

City	State	2023 Population ⁶	Judge Selection	Number of Judges ⁷	Number of Court Days per Week	Data
Kansas City MO	Missouri	508,233	Appointed	8	5	Courts FY2019-FY2024
Wichita	Kansas	396,488	Appointed	5	5	Courts FY2019-FY2023
Overland Park	Kansas	197,199	Appointed	2	5	Courts FY2019-FY2023; Email response
Springfield	Missouri	169,432	Appointed	2*	5	Courts FY2019-FY2024
Kansas City KS	Kansas	154,776	Appointed	2*	5	Courts FY2019-FY2021; Email response
Olathe	Kansas	143,720	Appointed	2	5	Courts FY2019-FY2023; Email response
Columbia	Missouri	127,200	Appointed	1*	5	Courts FY2019-FY2024
Topeka	Kansas	126,103	Appointed	2	5	Courts FY2019-FY2022; Email response
Independence	Missouri	121,944	Appointed	2	4	Courts FY2019-FY2024
Lee's Summit	Missouri	102,583	Elected	2	2	Courts FY2019-FY2024
Lawrence	Kansas	95,459	Appointed	1	5	Courts FY2019-FY2023; Email response
O'Fallon	Missouri	92,697	Appointed	1*	2	Courts FY2019-FY2024; Email response
St. Charles	Missouri	71,048	Elected	1	1	Courts FY2019-FY2024
Shawnee	Kansas	68,175	Appointed	1	3	Courts FY2019-FY2023; Email response
Lenexa	Kansas	57,986	Appointed	1	3	Courts FY2019-FY2021, FY2023; Email response
Salina	Kansas	46,432	Appointed	1	3	Courts FY2019-FY2022

Another important consideration for the analysis is an awareness of the Covid-19 pandemic’s numerous impacts on municipal courts, especially because such a large share of municipal cases are associated with traffic violations. To varying degrees across the country, court operations experienced growing backlogs from limits or pauses to operating hours and public interaction, while the incoming case volume often decreased from changes to factors including road traffic, enforcement practices, public attitudes, and police staffing.⁸ In the years since 2020, areas have experienced differing post-pandemic trends for the same variety of reasons, while Lee’s Summit also saw continued population growth and all Missouri cities implemented a new court data system.

Observations

The following table illustrates the pandemic impacts across the range of peer cities through a summary of all municipal court cases filed from FY2019 through FY2023, according to annual reporting by each state’s judicial department, with peer data sorted by highest percentage increase.

⁵ All information is from publicly available sources (i.e. municipal and state websites) except where specified.

⁶ U.S. Census 5-Year Population Estimates (2019-2023)

⁷ An * indicates cities that supplement their judicial bench with Pro Tem judges.

⁸ “Critical Issues in Policing: The Current State of Traffic Enforcement.” *Police Executive Research Forum*, <https://www.policeforum.org/assets/Traffic.pdf>

Table 9: All Filed Municipal Court Cases, FY2019-FY2023⁹

City	State	FY2019	FY2020	FY2021	FY2022	FY2023	Percent Change FY2019 to FY2023
Springfield	Missouri	17,227	16,298	7,914	15,621	21,185	23%
St. Charles	Missouri	11,658	6,603	2,662	13,742	12,623	8%
Lee's Summit	Missouri	12,111	10,084	7,669	8,273	11,558	-5%
Lenexa	Kansas	6,579	5,564	5,208	-	6,446	-2%
Wichita	Kansas	41,877	43,395	716	34,292	36,946	-12%
O'Fallon	Missouri	10,203	12,980	7,461	7,982	8,291	-19%
Shawnee	Kansas	6,579	5,528	3,808	4,750	4,900	-26%
Independence	Missouri	36,549	31,883	20,567	24,246	25,577	-30%
Overland Park	Kansas	21,644	18,146	16,744	13,003	14,609	-33%
Lawrence	Kansas	11,247	8,392	4,743	5,822	6,189	-45%
Olathe	Kansas	31,792	24,036	20,344	17,841	16,931	-47%
Columbia	Missouri	5,988	13,688	6,437	3,764	2,657	-56%
Kansas City MO	Missouri	197,351	182,659	132,783	79,401	66,523	-66%
Kansas City KS	Kansas	28,562	25,493	13,643	-	-	N/A
Salina	Kansas	9,712	8,029	5,977	6,655	-	N/A
Topeka	Kansas	22,777	19,563	8,831	8,197	-	N/A

As of FY2023, only Springfield and St. Charles saw case filings exceed pre-pandemic numbers, but by FY2024 (not captured above) filings in Lee's Summit increased such that the City's filings grew 15% over the expanded period. Case filings also grew from FY2022 to FY2023 for Lee's Summit, Wichita, O'Fallon, Shawnee, Independence, Overland Park, and Lawrence, while filings for Olathe, Columbia, and Kansas City, MO have decreased consistently since FY2020.

Peer comparisons are useful as reference points for typicality, but they should not be considered perfectly comparable "benchmarks" or guideposts. Kansas and Missouri are distinct states with varying laws, judicial codes, and court administration structures. Similarly, each municipality sets distinct local regulations, which are enforced through the municipal courts. While the City of Independence is relatively comparable to Lee's Summit in terms of population, its municipal court volume is significantly higher. The filing volume in Independence ranges from two to three times as large as that in Lee's Summit over this period. Population sizes between these two cities are more proximate than the filing data, indicating that the variance is likely due to other causes, such as traffic density variations because Independence is one of the county seats for Jackson County (the other being Kansas City).

Another metric for assessing court caseloads is the "clearance rate," which is a common court performance indicator dividing the number of cases disposed by the number of cases filed. A typical goal clearance rate is at least 100%,

⁹ All data is summarized from annual reporting by judicial branches of Kansas (<https://kscourts.gov/About-the-Courts/Municipal-Courts>) and Missouri (<https://www.courts.mo.gov/page.jsp?id=1919>). Data was not available for Kansas cities where the annual value is zero.

with higher rates resulting from addressing backlogs. The chart below reflects clearance rates up to 200% for cities with available data FY2019 through FY2023, with Lee’s Summit in green and the other cities in light blue.

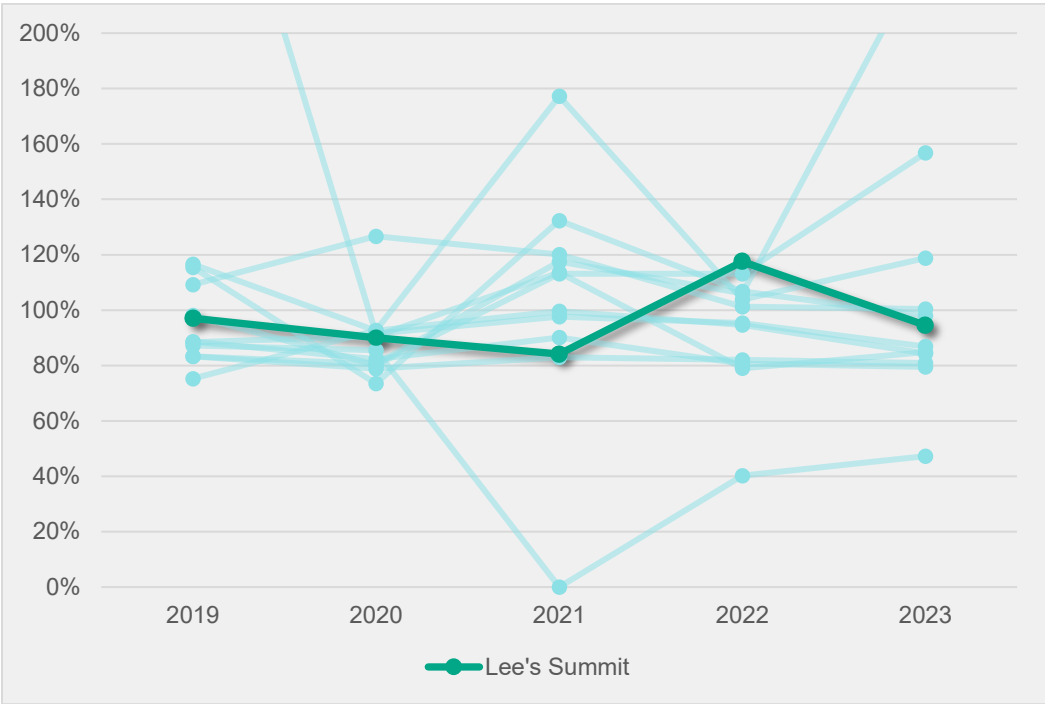


Figure 4: Municipal Court Clearance Rate Changes FY2019-FY2023¹⁰

Relative to the other 11 peer cities with complete data over this period, the City’s clearance rate was near the middle pre-pandemic. Most of the peer cities had decreases in their clearance rates in 2020, with catch up processing clearly starting in 2021 as more than half of peers reached clearance rates above 100%. Interestingly, Lee’s Summit experienced its similar backlog-to-rebound pattern a year later than most peers, and by 2023 the City returned closer to 100% than over half the peer cities.

While filing and disposition figures were available from both Kansas and Missouri, only the latter state also reported the annual counts of pending cases, which are summarized in the table below for FY2019 through FY2024.

¹⁰ Ibid.

Table 10: All Pending Municipal Cases (MO), FY2019-FY2024¹¹

City	FY2019	FY2020	FY2021	FY2022	FY2023	FY2024	Percent Change FY2019 to FY2024
Lee's Summit	7,602	8,715	9,979	8,533	9,662	11,039	45%
Columbia	1,541	4,255	3,412	4,125	2,948	3,910	154%
Independence	132,826	138,489	140,525	145,218	150,479	157,503	19%
Kansas City MO	330,934	368,512	343,528	338,062	251,574	217,781	-34%
O'Fallon	12,606	13,832	12,779	16,797	11,549	12,833	2%
Springfield	9,064	13,383	10,823	14,146	17,043	13,754	52%
St. Charles	13,584	13,850	11,893	31,448	30,079	9,524	-30%
Peer Average	83,426	92,054	87,160	91,633	77,279	69,218	-17%

Impacted by the pandemic, the pending caseloads for all cities grew from FY2019 to FY2020, but the backlog decreased in FY2021 for all cities except Lee's Summit and Independence. Only two peer cities have fewer pending cases than pre-pandemic, St. Charles and Kansas City, MO, the latter of which was supported by significant drops in new case filings over the time period (see Table 9).

Comparing backlogs among Missouri peers is particularly informative because the cities, regardless of population growth or pandemic-operations changes, were all impacted by a major statewide software change to a new case management system. During interviews, City staff reported that the new software does not load quickly enough for active use and updating during court sessions, and post-court data processing contributes to the City's backlogs. Staff from O'Fallon, the only Missouri peer that responded to emailed questions, echoed that the new system's speed prevented live updates. As a result, O'Fallon had to change its processes and must delay entry into the next day's processing.

¹¹ All data is summarized from annual reporting by judicial branch of Missouri (<https://www.courts.mo.gov/page.jsp?id=1919>).

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Analysis and Recommendations

The Lee's Summit Municipal Court adjudicates a variety of offenses through two elected judges who are on the bench two days per week. The Court is also responsible for court administration and compliance with State legal requirements as outlined in Rule 37 and local court rules, courtroom management, and monitoring of probationers.

This assessment indicates that Court staff are hardworking, dedicated to the community, and, as a new team, have been building operational processes and procedures. This represents a strong foundation upon which the Court can continue to improve its operations to ensure compliance with State requirements and provide high-quality, efficient operations to the public.

The analysis and recommendations detailed below identify specific and actionable adjustments that can be leveraged to strengthen service delivery in four topic areas: 1) Court Supervision and Management, 2) Staffing and Capacity, 3) Process Improvement, and 4) Technology.

Court Supervision and Management

Supervision and management of the Court's daily operations is the responsibility of the Court Administrator, under supervision of the two elected judges. The complexity of the Court's authority – split amongst the Circuit Court, City, and judges – results in some lack of role clarity and lack of accountability. This section reviews recommendations regarding supervision and management of the Court.

Recommendation 1: Prioritize implementing a formal management system connecting the City's Court Liaison/Assistant City Manager, Judges, and Court Administrator.

As noted earlier in this report, the Lee's Summit Municipal Court operates with shared oversight, with specific components under the oversight of the Circuit Court, Municipal Judges, and City of Lee's Summit. This shared oversight underscores the need to clarify reporting relationships and expectations between all parties to ensure effective operations as well as continued access to justice and service to the community.

The Court's two judges work part-time in the office one day per week and during this time are solely on the bench in the courtroom serving the public. In addition, outside of their days in court, the judges provide service by responding to emails and signing and approving documents such as warrants and continuances and other requests, with their work going beyond the confines of their one day each on the bench.

While responsible for supervising the Court Administrator, the judges have little to no administrative time in which to do so. The result is that daily Court operations are supervised solely by the Court Administrator with minimal oversight and collaboration with the judges and other City departments.

The current Court Administrator entered service at a point in which there was turnover of one judge and almost the entire Court staff, resulting in a period of operational challenge that requires focused leadership and structure. While a new team has been built over the past 18 months, foundational management structures remain underdeveloped. Key organizational tools—including standardized operational policies, consistent performance evaluation processes, and a current organizational chart—are either incomplete or absent. Best practices in change management emphasize that consistent, timely communication from leadership is essential to building team cohesion and maintaining

stakeholder confidence during transitional periods. The reported lack of responsiveness from the Administrator, cited by both internal staff and external partners, has hindered these critical organizational development efforts.

Our assessment identified several areas where the Court Administrator role requires stronger operational support and accountability structures. The Court’s compliance framework appears underdeveloped, with key responsibilities such as monitoring Missouri Supreme Court Rule 37 requirements and tracking OSCA communications delegated informally to line staff rather than managed through a formal system. Operational policies and procedures have largely been developed ad hoc by individual staff members without centralized oversight or standardization. When discussing the status of findings from OSCA audits conducted in 2022 and 2025, responses indicated that remediation efforts are in progress but the Court could not provide a formal plan with documented timelines or accountability measures. Additionally, despite the availability of technical assistance resources through OSCA, professional associations, and City administrative services, these external support channels have been underutilized.

To address these operational and governance concerns, particularly in the short term, the judges and City leadership should establish a formal management system that creates clearer lines of accountability, communication, and access to resources. Specifically, the City should formalize the role of a designated City liaison (currently an Assistant City Manager) to play a more active role in providing regular administrative oversight and coordination with the Court and supporting the Court in its operations. This liaison should facilitate regularly scheduled check-in meetings with the judges and Court Administrator to review progress on audit recommendation implementation, discuss operational challenges, and identify resource needs. These meetings should be documented and shared with the City Manager and will serve to strengthen the partnership between the Court and City administration. Key roles are summarized in Figure 5 below.



Figure 5: Court Management System

Recommendation 2: Engage experienced outside assistance to drive needed changes.

With limited capacity for administrative oversight from the judges, the Court Administrator plays a pivotal role in the daily operations of the Court, with an array of responsibilities under even the best operational circumstances. Current operations are negatively impacted by a lack of processes and procedures and a need to improve knowledge of Rule 37 requirements, staff training, financial oversight, and performance management or evaluations. At the same time, the Court needs to address prior OSCA review findings and case processing backlog, while continuing to

process both open and incoming new cases. Implementing each critical task and setting the Court up for long-term, sustainable success will require additional assistance.

For this reason, the City should invest in at least a temporary consulting arrangement to bring in an experienced Missouri Court Administrator (independently or through OSCA) to provide necessary leadership and help drive needed changes and improvements forward. Judges and Court staff note that finding such resources may be difficult; nonetheless, additional technical knowledge is necessary to assist in making improvements.

The Court should make use of available resources to jumpstart its efforts to improve. As noted above, moving forward, the Court would benefit from reaching out to other resources more often and consistently, and should be encouraged to engage with OSCA and the 16th Circuit Court for assistance.

Recommendation 3: Establish an internal policy that any external reviews of the Court be shared with the judges and City Manager, along with an action plan that includes deadlines to correct any deficiencies.

As noted earlier, prior OSCA reviews of the Court were not shared with all relevant stakeholders and, to date, no formal corrective action plan with timelines and accountability measures has been developed to address findings.

One of the first policies to be developed and implemented at the Court should be a formal audit response policy. This policy should establish that any internal audit or review, such as those by OSCA, City Finance, or outside consultants, must be shared by the Court Administrator with all judges and the City Manager within two weeks of audit receipt, accompanied by a structured corrective action plan that includes specific remedies, assigned responsibilities, and completion deadlines. Progress on audit remediation should be a standing agenda item in the regular liaison meetings discussed in Recommendation 1. This approach ensures accountability, demonstrates responsiveness to oversight bodies, and reduces organizational risk by preventing recurring deficiencies.

Furthermore, in municipal court operations where judicial independence must be balanced with administrative accountability, transparent sharing of external review findings helps maintain appropriate checks and balances. When audit results are siloed within the administrative function, the judges lose visibility into compliance risks that could affect case integrity, and City leadership cannot fulfill its fiduciary responsibility to ensure proper stewardship of public funds and adherence to state regulations.

Recommendation 4: Develop a policy manual consistent with Missouri state law, Supreme Court Rule 37, and 16th Circuit Court Rules to guide the work of Court staff.

The City and Court have hired staff with prior legal or Court experience, and this has helped to maintain progress. However, the Court Administrator, Court Clerk Supervisor, and judges should collaboratively develop policies and procedures to establish consistent operations within the Court.

As noted, the Court lacks policies and procedures to govern daily operations. A policy manual should be developed that is consistent with Missouri State law, Supreme Court Rule 37, and 16th Circuit Court Rules to guide the work of staff. Information on daily operations, such as how to process writs and bonds or number of allowed continuances, should be included. The Court can use a neighboring court's manual as a foundation and then revise to adapt to Lee's Summit local needs; there is no need to create this from scratch.

Policies should also address technology use. As will be noted later in this report, technology tools exist in the Court but are not being utilized to their maximum extent due to a lack of training and/or system delays. This results in process inefficiencies, introduces the risk of lost emails and human error, limits information available to the judges needed for proper adjudication, does not provide transparent processing for all staff, and hinders authenticated access

tracking as each authorized person logs in and makes entries. For this reason, the Court should create policies on required uses for technology which outlines expectations about how and when judges and staff will use technology in the course of work. For most Court processing, use of SMC capabilities should be the expectation and not an option.

It is important that policies and procedures be developed in collaboration between judges, management, and staff. In interviews, staff noted that at times, time standards and expectations expressed by management were unobtainable and inconsistent with workload realities. These discussions should occur to ensure that any policies and procedures can be practically applied and are understood by all.

Staff should then be regularly trained and updated on specific policies and procedures, and the manual available on a shared drive for easy reference and regular use.

Recommendation 5: Train Court staff in their specific roles and ensure a backup for each position.

During interviews, court staff stated that formal training in their roles was minimal. In some cases, staff have taken it upon themselves to develop processes to improve workflow and tracking (the creation of logging sheets, for example). Almost universally staff reported minimal role-specific training when entering their positions, and cross-training to enable backup coverage and operational continuity has not occurred, primarily due to competing time demands and the lack of structured procedures to guide such efforts. While staff expressed some awareness of Rule 37, most were not familiar with specific rules and expressed a desire for more training to ensure compliance with all State requirements.

After establishing the foundational management infrastructure referenced earlier in this report, these formalized documents should serve as the basis for a comprehensive staff training and development program. The Court Administrator and Court Clerk Supervisor, in collaboration with the judges, should design and implement an onboarding curriculum for new employees and ongoing professional development opportunities for current staff that are directly tied to documented policies and procedures. Additionally, the court should implement a formal cross-training program to build operational resilience and reduce key person risk.

Once procedural manuals are in place to guide task execution, staff should be systematically trained on multiple functions to provide backup coverage during absences and peak periods. The Court Clerk Supervisor should develop a cross-training matrix that documents each staff member's current competencies across core functions and establish a rotation schedule that provides regular exposure to different operational areas. This approach not only improves operational continuity but also enhances staff engagement and career development opportunities.

Additionally, the Court should leverage training resources available through OSCA and professional associations to ensure staff has the technical competency to perform their work efficiently and effectively. Cross-training should be encouraged to provide coverage, and assignments should be rotated among the Clerk staff.

Recommendation 6: Provide mandatory supervisory and leadership training for all supervisors.

In addition to ensuring that staff understand best practices and proper procedures, supervision and leadership can be improved in the Court. There is a history of work culture concerns and employee claims which contributed to almost complete staff turnover approximately 18 months ago. Concerns remain, with some staff noting inconsistencies in treatment and a lack of policies and procedures. All supervisors and leaders in the Court should undergo mandatory leadership training at least annually to support best practices, promote self-reflection on work practices, and help to mitigate potential claims. Ideally, Court staff would receive training with supervisors in other City departments,

building connections and a shared approach to supervision and management. This training would be in addition to the City's regular professional development allowance of two trainings per year.

Recommendation 7: Ensure all Court employees receive timely annual performance evaluations.

Staff interviews indicated that the Court has not consistently conducted timely performance evaluations as part of the City's evaluation process. Conducting employee evaluations annually is a best practice, and universal midyear evaluations can further support staff development, accountability, and retention. In fact, without regular expectation-setting and review, some organizations experience challenges related to performance improvement or discipline, as well as with ensuring that high-performing employees are recognized. Research has demonstrated that feedback processes can help organizations to maintain both necessary skills and job satisfaction among their staff.¹²

The Court should ensure that all employees receive annual performance evaluations, leveraging the City's Human Resources Department as needed to identify existing forms or resources and to support the process. External resources, like the Society for Human Resource Management (SHRM), also have a variety of useful guidance and templates.¹³

Recommendation 8: Close Court on specific days each month to focus on implementation of needed changes and to train staff.

The improvement efforts noted above will require time and investment in the short-term. Judges agreed that having time onsite outside of Court is the primary barrier in implementing necessary changes and improvements.

Raftelis concurs. In at least the short-term, the Court should consider closing for service for one to two full days for staff to meet and focus upon urgent and necessary improvements. In the long-term, the Court should close on specific half-days or days each week in order for staff to meet and devote focused time to improvements and training. This is done in other peer courts, such as in St. Charles, which recently closed for a half-day for training, and Kansas City, MO reserves one half day of the presiding judge's docket each week for "Administrative Time." It is a reality that judges and Court staff will need time outside of Court and daily operations to address improvement efforts.

Recommendation 9: Develop a prioritized plan to address Court backlogs.

In interviews, staff noted several areas in which backlogs of work existed and repeatedly discussed having no free time for training or proactive problem solving. Examples included a file room of case records that needed to be addressed and backlogs for public records requests and copies, bond forfeitures and refunds, and more.

The 2025 OSCA review also noted several areas in need of attention, including:

- Show Me Courts included 1,525 cases without outcomes entered
- 949 cases without a current court date in the system
- Payment plans were not consistently being set up in the system
- Bonds were held on cases disposed
- Outstanding checks were not submitted to unclaimed property
- Cases of potential inaccurate criminal histories and records of conviction

¹² Basu, Ranita, "The Importance of HR Policies on Employee Performance, Employee Engagement and Employee Motivation in Various Organizations," *Educational Administration: Theory and Practice*, <http://dx.doi.org/10.53555/kuey.v30i5.3617>.

¹³ "What You Need to Know About Performance Appraisals," SHRM, <https://www.shrm.org/topics-tools/tools/need-to-know-performance-appraisals>.

Aside from current training and policy/procedure development that needs to occur in the short-term, the Court has several areas of backlog that need to be addressed and which will be “special projects” for staff outside of their daily duties. The court should develop a prioritized plan and request resources from the City to accomplish it.

Staffing and Capacity

A key desired outcome for this review was to assess staff capacity needs, including the judges. This proved challenging for several reasons. First, the Court, as currently operating, lacks significant data to review. Raftelis received few reports showing actual workload volumes and processing information. Second, staffing levels should be set to run an efficient system, and the current processes are inefficient; several recommendations are provided below to improve efficiency which, in turn, impacts staffing needs. Finally, the Court has not optimized its use of technology, which also can impact staffing requirements.

On November 4, 2025, in the midst of this assessment, the two judges made a presentation before City Council requesting additional compensation for additional court dates to address workload needs, reduce public wait times, and improve court operations. The judges noted that, while the City’s population and police staffing – both of which drive Court workload in part – had increased since the 1980s, judge court days and staff capacity had not, remaining at two Judges and two court dates. The judges proposed that the City of Lee’s Summit increase court days to six per week, with three days per judge. In this way, there would be overlap of one day for collaboration and administrative work with staff. The City Council requested additional peer information and the results of the Raftelis review before moving forward. Raftelis has reviewed the judges’ peer comparisons for numbers of judges and court days and notes that the peer comparisons appear to be accurately represented.

With this context in mind, and with knowledge that the elected status of the Lee’s Summit Judges makes job time requirements unclear, an assessment of staffing needs is provided below.

JUDGE CAPACITY / COURT DAYS

As noted earlier in Table 2, the number of judges in Lee’s Summit has not changed since at least 2022, remaining static at a total of 1.15 full-time equivalents (FTEs) for two elected judges. This represents one court day per judge per week (two days per week). The judges are not in the office on other days but do respond to emails and sign required documents on their personal time.

Raftelis began by reviewing the number of judges and court days in use in some of the peer municipal courts in nearby communities. Peer cities operate with a variety of arrangements, making the total court hours per judge difficult to determine using publicly available data. Several peers also make use of Pro Tem (on call) judges, noted with “+”. As mentioned earlier, only Lee’s Summit and St. Charles have elected judges, noted with “*”. In O’Fallon, a single judge works both of the two court dates. The table below shows a matrix of weekly court days and number of judges on staff.

Table 11: Number of Judges and Weekly Court Days for Peers¹⁴

No. of Judges	Weekly Court Days				
	5	4	3	2	1
8	Kansas City, MO				
5	Wichita, KS				
2	Springfield, MO+ Kansas City, KS+ Olathe, KS Overland Park, KS Topeka, KS	Independence, MO		Lee's Summit, MO	
1	Columbia, MO+ Lawrence, KS		Lenexa, KS Salina, KS Shawnee, KS	O'Fallon, MO+	St. Charles, MO

A 2017 assessment by the National Center for State Courts (NCSC) evaluated the judicial officer workload in Missouri and defined weighting in minutes for the time judges need to accomplish specific case types (new filings).¹⁵ NCSC recently developed a revised judicial needs assessment model based on cases filed with disposition data from calendar years 2022, 2023, and 2024, and the model was reviewed by a Missouri circuit court committee in April 2025.¹⁶

It's important to note that NCSC's assessments in Missouri solely reviewed circuit courts, which have a much wider variety of case types and severity relative to municipal courts. However, Missouri circuit courts have the authority to process municipal cases, and many do so for smaller communities without municipal courts. As such, the NCSC case weights remain an instructive tool for estimating the City's workload. The relevant case weights from the assessment included:

- Traffic / Municipal Ordinance: 4 min.
- Misdemeanors / Municipal Cert. / Trial de Novo: 18 min.

Using the State's reported case type categories, four minutes was applied to Non-Traffic Ordinance and Other Traffic cases in Lee's Summit, while 18 minutes was applied to Alcohol/Drug Related traffic cases. This assessment also estimated that judges need 99 minutes or 1.65 hours of non-case activity per day to complete non-court tasks such as training, administration, presiding judge duties, etc.

The case weights were applied to the City's FY2024 caseload data for newly filed and pending cases. Although the reported 11,039 pending cases likely includes at least some of the 13,919 new cases, both figures provide a reliable approximation for estimating the City's FY2025 workload. Meaning, the City's new case filings have grown

¹⁴ Per municipal court websites at the time of November 2025.

¹⁵ "Missouri Circuit Court Judicial Officer Weighted Workload Assessment Study." *National Center for State Courts*, <https://www.courts.mo.gov/page.jsp?id=59023>.

¹⁶ "Missouri Circuit Courts Judicial Needs Assessment Model." *National Center for State Courts*, <https://www.courts.mo.gov/file.jsp?id=56903>.

consistently since FY2021, so it is likely that there will be at least as many new cases filed in FY2025 as FY2024. At the same time, the 11,039 pending cases reflect the volume of backlog carried into FY2025, which has also grown consistently since FY2022.

Most of the City’s cases fall under Traffic/Municipal Ordinance, totaling 13,674 new cases filed in FY2024, weighted at four minutes each. The remaining 245 new cases in the same year were weighted at 18 minutes each. Pending cases were similarly weighted, with 10,823 pending cases weighted at four minutes each, and 216 weighted at 18 minutes each.

The results of applying these time standards to the FY2024 caseload are provided below in Table 12. Assuming that each court day requires 1.65 hours of non-case activity, processing all the new court cases would require 155.1 court days in a year, or 3.0 court days per week. When accounting for both new and pending cases, the total grows to 279.0 court days annually, or 5.4 court days per week. The estimate indicates a need for 3.4 additional court days over the existing two.

Table 12: Estimated Court Days Needed from City's Judicial Workload

Case Type	Per Week
New Case Filing	3.0 Court Days
Pending Cases	2.4 Court Days
Total	5.4 Court Days

It is useful to note that Lee’s Summit Court filings in FY2024 would call for 18% more court days than in 2019, not including non-case time or the time needed to address backlogs. The need for court days grew faster than actual case filings over the same period (15%) due to rising alcohol/drug-related cases in recent years, which take more time to adjudicate. Relatedly, the above calculations could even underestimate the workload because municipal cases besides Alcohol/Drug Related Traffic (e.g., domestic violence) may go to trial or require additional judicial attention, but the State data does not provide this level of detail.

Recommendation 10: Increase judge onsite time by one court day per judge, for a total of four judge office days per week, and supplement with an on-call Pro Tem judge position as needed.

The current arrangement of having the judges only available for two court days per week does not provide sufficient oversight for court operations, nor for collaboration with the Court Administrator and staff. This is a vital component to ensuring that the Court is operating effectively and to building trust, rapport, and understanding of the work requirements. While many elected officials operate in a policy-making capacity, the Court manages both administrative and judicial functions with a high-volume, continuous workflow that necessitates ongoing engagement.

Because some efficiencies should be gained when other needed courtroom process improvements are implemented as outlined later in this report, Raftelis conservatively recommends that in the short term the City and Court increase each judge’s onsite time to two days per week for a total of four judge workdays per week. At least one-half day for each judge should be used to provide overlapping time when both judges are in the office together for use in meeting with staffing and collaborating on administrative needs, resulting in 1.5 court days per Judge per week, a total of three court days per week to serve the public.

In addition, it is recommended that like some of its peer courts, the Court contract with a Pro Tem (on-call) judge who can be brought in to cover judge vacancies and to assist when there are peaks in workload. While short-term absences can be covered free of charge as a favor between courts in the region, longer-term peaks can be addressed through the addition of a paid Pro Tem judge.

This is a conservative first step to be undertaken until 1) procedural and process improvements are made, and 2) more data and trend analysis can occur to better analyze Court operations, at which point additional analysis may point to the need for more court days.

Because the judges receive flat-rate compensation and are not compensated hourly or by days of service, appropriate compensation for additional time would be subject to City Council discussion and approval. The cost of a contract for a Pro Tem judge is difficult to estimate, but the City could assume a first-year budget of \$10,000 and analyze actual use in the subsequent year.

PROBATION PROGRAM CAPACITY

The Lee's Summit Court stands out amongst peers in having a strong probation operation. The program is well-regarded by both internal and external stakeholders. Lee's Summit has placed a priority on providing this as an option for defendants, and judges refer a high number of offenders to the probation program for both supervised and unsupervised probation to ensure compliance with requirements.

Recommendation 11: Promote one Probation Compliance Officer to a manager or lead position overseeing the Probation program.

The Probation program is staffed by three equal Probation Compliance Officers who report to the Court Administrator. In reviewing the Court organization chart, this is unusual in that 1) any Court Administrator will likely have limited probation knowledge and experience to supervise the program, and 2) the program is, in actuality, currently run as a collaborative effort of three equals.

Probation is a significant program of the Lee's Summit Court and deserves standing as such. A manager or lead position would be beneficial to document Probation policies and procedures, ensure consistency across Officers, and manage contacts with assistive programs and treatment centers that are resources for probationers. The Court Administrator could continue to provide formal supervision of the Officers, as is already the case, and the City should ensure that the job description require some knowledge of probation and/or social services, diversion, or alternative sentencing programs.

The exact title and classification of the position can be determined by the City as appropriate within its classification and compensation scheme. The estimated cost of this promotion is approximately \$7,100 for a 10% promotion at the top end of the salary range (LSNE8).

Recommendation 12: Add one new Court Clerk position to support the Probation program and reduce Probation Compliance Officer time on data entry and recordkeeping.

Probation Compliance Officers report high workloads and rising caseloads, though reports to support this were not provided from the case management system. One Officer provided the workload information below at the time of this assessment; this was supported by more recent caseload numbers between 694 and 800 per Officer.

Table 13: Probation Compliance Officer Workload – November 2025

Category	Number
Supervised Cases (those with required regular in-person reporting visits)	200 (63 of which are Domestic Violence)
In warrant status not reporting	75
Unsupervised Cases (visits not required but Officers track for completion of Court requirements)	371
In warrant status (other)	107
TOTAL FOR ONE OFFICER	753

According to the American Probation and Parole Association (APPA), Low Risk caseloads have a recommended ratio of 200 cases per officer, Administrative (minimal risk) caseloads have ratio of 175:1 to 300:1, and Specialty cases, such as early Domestic Violence, have ranges of 45:1 to 80:1. While most Lee’s Summit cases would be considered low risk, some are higher risk (domestic violence, mental illness). In all instances, the caseload is higher than recommended ratios.

In interviews, Officers noted spending a significant amount of time on basic data/case entry and administrative tasks as part of their work. One Senior Court Clerk has provided administrative assistance to probation when possible, but this is secondary to her primary duties. Her assistance has been greatly appreciated by the Probation team.

In order to provide an increase in available Probation Compliance Officer capacity, it is recommended the City add one new Court Clerk position (1.0 FTE) to provide support solely to the Probation program and free up Officer administrative time to handle cases. The exact workload would need to be defined but could include entry of cases into the case management system and tracking of unsupervised compliance for Officer review, among other tasks. Ideally the position would be able to cross-train with other Court Clerks, adding more bench strength to provide coverage for court operations overall. The estimated cost of this position at the midpoint is \$44,054 plus benefits.

Consideration for adding potential new Probation Compliance Officer positions should occur once data is tracked and the impacts of this new administrative position on overall Officer workload is better understood.

COURT CLERK CAPACITY

A similar National Center for State Courts (NCSC) assessment in Missouri, as applied to judge time above, provided weighted time standards in minutes for court clerks for specific new filings by case type.¹⁷ As previously discussed, the weights were developed for Missouri’s circuit courts but include case types that are also processed by municipal courts. The same relevant case types were used, and the weighted times included 68 minutes for each traffic violation case and municipal ordinance, and 137 minutes for each misdemeanor, municipal certification, or trial de novo case.

Like the judicial workload measures, 68 minutes was applied to Non-Traffic Ordinance and Other Traffic Cases, while 137 minutes was applied to Alcohol/Drug Related traffic cases for Court Clerk work. The study also estimated

¹⁷ “Missouri Circuit Court Clerk Workload Assessment Study, 2017.” *National Center for State Courts*, <https://www.courts.mo.gov/file.jsp?id=112813>.

81 minutes or 1.35 hours of non-case activity per day for Clerks, accounting for such tasks as customer service, financial processing, training, and more.

These time standards were applied to the Lee’s Summit FY2024 caseload data for newly filed and pending cases, but here the resulting calculation can be translated to project the number of FTE clerk staff needed to process the workload. A full-time public employee is typically budgeted for 2,080 hours per year, so the time needed for the City’s Clerk workload is represented in hours.

Namely, the new case filings would require 16,057 hours to process, which can translate to a number of FTE when divided by the available 2,080 hours per employee. Using this calculation, Raftelis projects 9.3 FTE needed to process just the new caseload. When accounting for both new and pending cases, and the needed non-case time each day, 34,666 hours are needed, or 16.7 FTE. Table 14 below shows the results of these calculations, including the daily non-case time:

Table 14: Estimated FTE’s Needed for City’s Clerk Workload

Case Type	Hours Needed per Year	Clerks Needed (2,080 Hours per FTE)
New Case Filing	19,316	9.3 FTE
Pending Cases	15,349	7.4 FTE
Total	34,666	16.7 FTE

As of the time of analysis, the City had six clerk FTE positions budgeted, which is 11.7 FTE less than the amount projected. Given this difference in the budgeted positions relative to projected need, Raftelis compared the same projections for Missouri peers with position details available—Columbia, O’Fallon, and Springfield—using their respective FY2024 caseloads. Most of these peers also have fewer budgeted clerk FTE positions than their weighted caseloads project would be needed, although their variances are smaller. When considering their FY2024 new case filings, pending cases, and non-case time, Springfield has nearly zero variance with 0.2 FTE less than the 12.7 projected, Columbia has 2.1 FTE less than the 5.1 projected, and O’Fallon has 3.6 FTE less than the 7.1 projected.

A couple of factors indicate that these projections are high for Lee’s Summit, and more data would be needed to justify such a large increase in clerk staff. First, the recent OSCA review for Lee’s Summit included findings that would impact the reliability of the case data used in the calculation, like the over 1,500 cases in the Show Me Courts system without outcomes, and almost 950 pending cases without scheduled future court events. Second, although Missouri Circuit Courts process some similar case types to municipal courts, the clerks tend to perform different functions. For example, Circuit courts have more severe cases and jury trials, adding more time-consuming responsibilities to manage jurors and process litigation, while Missouri Municipal Courts solely have bench trials before the judge and Municipal Clerks are processing cases that can resolve faster and more simply.

The following recommendations and strengthened court management discussed are expected to improve both the overall clerk workload and efficiency. In particular, improving data reliability and use for decision making will enable the Lee’s Summit Court to more concretely evaluate its clerk workload needs. Based on Raftelis’ professional experiences in court operations, it can be common for courts to offer their staff overtime opportunities to address processing backlogs, which could further contribute to reducing the current backlogs.

Recommendation 13: Increase Court Clerk capacity by making the current part-time Clerk position full-time to assist with overall Court operations.

Given the numerous backlogs noted above and consistent input from staff in interviews that they lack sufficient time for proactive work, it is apparent the Court requires additional staff resources to operate efficiently and effectively. In addition, the Court Clerk Supervisor reports performing operational duties such as processing jail mail, public defender applications, and bond forfeitures, that reduce her ability to focus on strategic efforts such as staff training and management. This indicates the need for additional staff capacity.

At present, the Court Clerk Supervisor supervises four Senior Court Clerk positions and 1.6 Court Clerk positions. It is recommended that the Court increase the part-time position from 0.6 to 1.0 FTE, making it full-time and adding 0.4 new Court Clerk capacity to assist the unit. The incumbent part-time employee is already trained and knowledgeable about Court operations, making an easy transition if she is agreeable. If not, outside hiring can occur to add this capacity.

Recommendation 14: Request funding to hire temporary help to clear backlogs and perform special projects as part of the annual budget process.

As outlined above, the Court has not only current, but also backlogged work to address, requiring additional resources. Only after the Court Administrator develops a prioritized plan to address the backlogs should the Court submit a budget request to the City for additional assistance, either through regular part-time staff or contracted temporary assistance.

Two prior recommendations, Recommendation 15 and 16 above, will add approximately 1.0 new Court Clerk capacity to the Court by making the existing part-time clerk full-time (+0.4 FTE) and by moving Probation assistance from a Senior Court Clerk (roughly estimated at +0.6 FTE). Raftelis believes that, in the short term, these and other recommended changes will be sufficient to assist in addressing daily work and improving Court operations.

Process Improvement

As part of this assessment, Raftelis observed courtroom operations with each judge, as well as conducted staff interviews and document review to identify process improvements that can be implemented to improve court operations and workflow.

Recommendation 15: Re-evaluate docket assignments to better balance workload across the two judges.

The Lee's Summit Municipal Court, like most others, utilizes a system of "dockets" or groupings of like case types to organize operations and hopefully allow the judge to rapidly proceed through similar case types efficiently. For example, in Lee's Summit, currently all domestic assault cases are brought before one judge on Tuesday at 1:30 p.m. each week. Animal control cases are set for 10:30 a.m. on the first Thursday of each month. Domestic violence trials/probation violations are brought at 3 p.m. on Tuesdays, and probation violations are also brought on Tuesdays at 3:30 p.m. and Thursdays at 3 p.m. All in-custody arraignments are brought before the judge at 1 p.m. on Tuesdays and 1:30 p.m. on Thursdays.

During observations, defendant wait times were up to 1.5 hours for individuals in the Court and Raftelis was told that these were lighter caseload days. In some cases, defendants were waiting on attorneys to arrive at the courthouse, and in others, dockets were pushed beyond their timeslots such that other case types had to wait.

At present, docket times are not clearly related to docket volumes, meaning that an hour set aside for a docket may be insufficient for the typical number of those cases. While there will be some variation and flexibility needed, data on case volumes and rates of failure to appear should point to typical averages to help in setting docket timeslots. One Missouri peer city, O’Fallon, shared that during the first three quarters of 2025 they issued warrants (for failure to appear in court) for 37-40% of cases. In addition, dockets as now configured are not balanced across the two judges, with one judge’s caseload regularly exceeding court hours and going into the evening, impacting overtime costs for staff and also staff morale and work-life balance, with an inability to plan for family obligations.

A review of peer municipal courts shows that most of them structure cases in groups by type and set times of day. For example, one court allows walk-ins for the first hour only and sets afternoons for trials only. A sample docket schedule from Lawrence, Kansas, is provided in Figure 6 below. Lawrence operates with one judge holding Court daily, Monday through Friday (five court days a week).

	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY
8:30 AM	ADD-ON	ADD-ON	ADD-ON	ADD-ON	ADD-ON
9:00 AM	INMATE		INMATE	INMATE	
9:30 AM	PLEA/SENTENCING/STATUS	WEEK 1 - ATTORNEY PLEA	TRAFFIC ARRAIGNMENT	TRIALS	WEEK 1 - LEGAL AID
10:00 AM	↓	WEEK 2 - ATTORNEY PLEA	↓	↓	X
10:30 AM	↓	WEEK 3 - DWI - ANNUAL COIDS	CRIMINAL ARRAIGNMENT	TRIALS	X
11:00 AM	↓	WEEK 3 - DWI PUA/STATUS	↓	↓	X
11:30 AM	↓	X	↓	↓	X
12:00 PM	XXXXXXXXXXXX	XXXXXXXXXXXX	XXXXXXXXXXXX	XXXXXXXXXXXX	XXXXXXXXXXXX
12:30 PM	XXXXXXXXXXXX	XXXXXXXXXXXX	XXXXXXXXXXXX	XXXXXXXXXXXX	XXXXXXXXXXXX
1:15 PM	XXXXXXXXXXXX	INMATE	XXXXXXXXXXXX	XXXXXXXXXXXX	INMATE
1:30 PM	REVOCATION	PLEAS	XXXXXXXXXXXX	TRIALS	PLEAS
2:00 PM	↓	↓	XXXXXXXXXXXX	↓	↓
2:30 PM	↓	↓	XXXXXXXXXXXX	TRIALS	↓
3:00 PM	↓	XXXXXXXXXXXX	PARKING	↓	XXXXXXXXXXXX
3:30 PM	↓	XXXXXXXXXXXX	↓	↓	XXXXXXXXXXXX
4:00 PM	↓	XXXXXXXXXXXX	XXXXXXXXXXXX	↓	XXXXXXXXXXXX
4:30 PM	↓	XXXXXXXXXXXX	XXXXXXXXXXXX	↓	XXXXXXXXXXXX
5:00 PM	↓	XXXXXXXXXXXX	XXXXXXXXXXXX	↓	XXXXXXXXXXXX

Arraignments are all on Wednesdays
 Traffic at 9:30; Criminal at 10:30; Parking at 3:00.

Figure 6: Sample Peer Docket Schedule - Lawrence, KS¹⁸

It is recommended that the Lee’s Summit Court re-evaluate current docket assignments to better balance workload across the two judges and to improve court efficiency. Matters that are more administrative in nature, such as the issuance of warrants for failure to appear, can be handled at the end of the court day. The Court should review average caseloads by case type over the past several years, balance load between the two judges, and establish new docket timeslots. It is recognized that the specific time for each case is unique and that dockets may occasionally run long, but this should be the exception and not the rule. While a hearing may be delayed a week should an attorney have a conflict this week, that hearing may be much shorter under a new structured docket system than in the current more free-flow system of having to wait, and it will not disrupt the flow of other attorneys and defendants.

¹⁸ “Municipal Court Docket Types and Times.” *Lawrence Municipal Court*, <https://lawrenceks.gov/attorney/docket-times/>.

Recommendation 16: Implement cut-off times for Court check-in.

Upon arriving at court, defendants and attorneys check in at the front counter window to make an appearance in front of the judge. The Lee's Summit Court allows these check-ins throughout the entire Court day until 4 p.m., something that is unusual in comparison to peers.

For each case, staff must prepare documentation (backer sheets) that is handed to the judge for review and noting disposition, criminal and/or driving history, and more. Staff typically prepare cases for the next day's Court appearances on the prior day, requiring significant time for preparation and printing.

The Lee's Summit Court is much more flexible in allowing attorneys and defendants to walk-in to Court and be seen at their convenience. Trials occur throughout the day as attorneys and defendants appear. While this is certainly beneficial in terms of customer service, it negatively impacts the Court's efficiency and requires a constant shuffling of paperwork and adjustments on the fly to docket timeslots.

In reviewing peer courts in the region, many have a cut-off time for court check-in or otherwise regulate unscheduled arrivals. Many list these deadlines on their websites; Raftelis obtained the following responses via emailed survey to other courts. In Kansas, Shawnee gives defendants a specific arrival time and typically closes its gates within 15-30 minutes of the last time setting of a docket, and Lenexa similarly has a check-in deadline of 15 minutes after the last setting. Kansas City, Kansas cuts off check-ins 15 minutes after the docket begins, but arrivals after the grace period can either post bond or file a motion requesting a continuance that states why they missed court and should not have to post bond. Lawrence, Kansas has an add-on docket from 8:00-8:30am on all five court days, which is a firm cut-off for walk-ins. O'Fallon does an attorney docket separate from pro-se (non-attorney) dockets, and Lenexa offers an attorney-only Public Defender Docket and its Thursday Plea Docket sets different times for attorney and pro se appearances, with attorneys able to appear at any of the set aside times.

As improvements are made, Lee's Summit should implement specific times in the morning at which point defendants and attorneys can no longer check in for Court on a given day. Having such a cut-off will allow staff to adequately prepare for all hearings on that date to ensure a smoother, more efficient flow of cases and information to the judges on the bench. In Lenexa, Kansas, for example, the check-in time is 15 minutes after the last scheduled/calendared docket time for all dockets, e.g., if the last scheduled hearing for a docket is at 11:00 a.m., then the check-in deadline is 11:15 a.m. For example, in Lenexa, Kansas, the Tuesday Traffic and Thursday Plea are scheduled every 30 minutes as, in their experience, this type of scheduling has proven to be more efficient and convenient than scheduling more people at fewer times.

Over time, once the Court has more visibility on appearance patterns and courtroom time for cases, it could limit the number of cases set for each docket and establish fixed periods for walk-ins. For example, Shawnee staff reported that they manage their dockets so there aren't more cases set than could be seen during the docket, and their calendar has a set "add-on docket" held online on most Tuesdays.

Recommendation 17: Establish policies consistent with the 16th Circuit Court Rules that include deadlines for actions such as case filing and requests for continuances.

At present, the Lee's Summit Municipal Court does not have deadlines for case filings or requests for continuances. During observations a high number of cases were continued to future hearings dates (meaning the defendants and/or attorneys must return to Court later). In interviews, staff noted receiving requests for continuances from attorneys on the same day as their court hearings, sometimes with very short notice, requiring a shuffling of paperwork to remove those cases from the docket. In interviews, some stakeholders noted that cases were often being filed just one or two days prior to appearance date, resulting in their late requests for continuances.

A review of peer courts in the region shows that having deadlines for these items is common. For example, in Olathe, Kansas, requests for continuance are required to be made 48 hours prior to the scheduled court date. Similarly, the small Missouri city of St. Ann requires that requests for continuances be filed 72 hours before the court date, with the same deadline for all other requests such as change of address or pleas and payment plans. Court workload research reinforces that this type of process change can have an important impact on expediting case processing and adjudication. A study that the National Center for State Courts published, from the Effective Criminal Case Management project, found that “the primary drivers of case-processing time are the number of continuances per case and the number of hearings per case.”¹⁹ By implementing structured docket management practices and reducing the need for multiple court appearances, Lee's Summit can significantly improve case flow efficiency.

Lee's Summit Municipal Court should establish policies that are consistent with 16th Circuit Court rules including deadlines for case filing and requests for continuances. Once policies are drafted and adopted, they should be communicated to Court stakeholders to ensure that local attorneys and frequent Court users understand and comply. The Court should, at the chosen implementation date, begin to enforce these standards and reject requests outside of the timeline.

Recommendation 18: Review judge standards for assigning cases to probation and the public defender to manage workload and improve consistency.

As noted earlier in this report, Lee's Summit Municipal Court has a strong probation program and strives to provide offenders with the tools and resources to avoid future interactions with the criminal justice system. In observations and through a review of staff workloads, it is apparent that many who appear are sentenced to either supervised or unsupervised probation as an outcome of their hearings. This is appreciated by staff and community stakeholders as a way to give second chances to offenders to improve their situation and avoid reoffending.

The use of probation is a policy decision of the judges imposed at their discretion and is also subject to the constraints of available staffing and resources in the Court. In observations, many probation referrals were made. Given that probation has a time-lag between disposition and completion, should the number of referrals regularly exceed the number of probationary completions, the workload will quickly overwhelm Probation Compliance Officers' ability to keep track and provide the necessary supervision.

Similarly, the City contracts with a single part-time attorney public defender, to whom many cases are being referred. Defendants must qualify financially in order to utilize her services, information that should be provided to them prior to court; this would minimize delays when defendants are given the information and then, when unable to qualify, have to re-appear in court later in the day. The impacts on the public defender's caseload are significant, and although there is a desire to ensure offenders have the assistance of counsel to facilitate case processing and improve outcomes, not all offenders qualify financially.

For this reason, the two judges should, with input from the Court Administrator, Court Clerk Supervisor, and Probation Compliance Officers, review and agree upon acceptable standards for referring cases to probation and/or the public defender. The goal of this discussion is to ensure that both remain a viable opportunity but to ensure that the number of referrals does not exceed capacity.

¹⁹ “Timely Justice in Criminal Cases: What the Data Tells Us.” *National Center for State Courts*, https://ncsc.contentdm.oclc.org/digital/api/collection/criminal/id/352/page/0/inline/criminal_352_0

Recommendation 19: Provide alternate resources to provide information and assistance on assistive resources and programs to probation and judges.

In interviews, Probation Compliance Officers, Judges, the Public Defender, and stakeholders expressed the need for assistance in identifying outside resources for defendant referrals. This includes mental health assistance, substance abuse treatment, police department programs, and resources specific to people who are 18 to 25 years old. Staff stated they spend their own time researching and making calls on an *ad hoc* basis to connect with such resources, and that they did not have sufficient time to do so. Collaborative efforts and community partnerships aimed at improving outcomes and more proactive management of existing service agreements are needed.

Staff indicated that some courts have specific internal staff resources and/or contract with a social worker to connect the Court with available options in the community and manage service agreements. In prior professional experiences, Raftelis staff worked in courtrooms with a list of contacts, referrals, and resources on-hand, and some agencies receive these resources from local Public Defenders or community support organizations. As a long-range goal, the Lee's Summit Court should add resources in this manner to strengthen its toolbox of available treatment options to defendants.

Recommendation 20: Consider developing an online request option for payment plans to reduce appearances.

The Court's current online services allow defendants to enter pleas and pay fines in full through the state website, called Plead and Pay, which has improved convenience and reduced unnecessary in-person appearances for routine matters. As captured in the website's name, those accused of eligible offenses, such as minor traffic violations, can resolve their citation online and before their court appearance by pleading guilty and paying the full amount owed. However, defendants seeking to establish payment plans must still appear in person at the Court to make these arrangements, contributing to higher courtroom volume for what are largely administrative transactions.

Best practices in court administration increasingly emphasize the use of technology to expand access to justice while improving operational efficiency. Online payment plan enrollment represents a logical extension of existing online plea and payment capabilities, allowing defendants to review their cases, enter pleas, and request court-approved payment schedules remotely. These systems typically include automated eligibility screening based on offense type and amount owed, require electronic acknowledgement of payment terms and consequences of default, and integrate with existing case management systems to track compliance.

Another state web feature available to the Court's users, called Pay by Web, enables online payments through installments but the defendant's case must be disposed, meaning legally closed, and the use and format of a payment plan must already be court approved. Under Missouri court rules, judges may determine appropriate terms and conditions for payment plans and the requests are not required to be made in-person before a judge.

The Court should explore the feasibility of adding an online payment plan request options to reduce in-person court traffic. This enhancement would provide the benefits of reducing the number of initial appearance hearings required for defendants who wish to resolve their cases through payment plans, freeing up courtroom time for more complex matters requiring judicial attention, and improving access for defendants who face transportation challenges, work schedule conflicts, or childcare barriers that make in-person appearances difficult.

This approach has been successfully adopted by municipal courts in the region, including Kansas City, Missouri and St. Ann, Missouri, both of which offer online payment plan requests through their court websites. These implementations provide relevant models for Lee's Summit to examine during the feasibility exploration, particularly regarding system integration, user experience, and operational workflows. Implementation should also include

coordination with the City's IT department and Finance department to ensure compatibility with existing tools and records management, as well as secure data storage for any personal financial information.

Technology

Technology is a vital part of running efficient operations in the current era. As part of this assessment, Raftelis provides the following recommendations with regard to the Court's use of technology.

Recommendation 21: Engage an IT professional/OSCA to ensure the Court is maximizing the use of Show Me Courts software.

At present, based upon courtroom observations and staff interviews and observations, the use of available technology is not being maximized in the Court. The Court is required by statute to use the State of Missouri's software, "Show Me Courts" (SMC) which has a public-facing version called "Case.Net" on which members of the public can log in to access records and make online payments.

While on the bench, the judges do not make case disposition entries directly into SMC, stating that the system is too slow to do so. For this reason, staff print hard copy paper "backer" sheets with basic hearing information and onto which the judges handwrite dispositions. The rulings are then entered into SMC by court staff so that they can assist the defendant/attorney after their appearance. Other peer courts, including O'Fallon, Missouri, also reported lags with SMC and have adjusted their processing strategies following the State's mandate to adopt the system in 2022. When a hearing requires information not already prepared by staff, the backer information is supplemented by the judge querying the SMC system for case history, while information on traffic/driving history had been provided on the bench by the Court Security Officer (bailiff), who had access to those records.

According to staff members, several of whom have worked previously in other jurisdictions, tools exist in Show Me Courts which are not being used in Lee's Summit. Because Lee's Summit judges are not onsite most days of the week, requests for continuances are emailed back and forth between staff and the judges for approval, outside of the SMC system. This increases the risk for human error in potentially losing or missing emails; Action Queues within SMC allow all users to log in, approve/reject requests, and see this action immediately rather than waiting for someone to manually enter this after an email is returned. This also enhances communication in that all staff can see case status rather than emails being sent to specific individual members while others are unaware of status updates. Finally, SMC provides a formal and legal record of actions being taken and by whom, as user logins are tracked in the system.

The Court Administrator and Court Clerk Supervisor state that they do go into SMC imports to review work in progress by staff. In requests for information for this assessment, however, no reports from SMC were provided to show data or workload volumes. City Finance Department staff noted that Court staff were unable to produce specific financial reports upon request as well.

While technology tools are in place for the Court, they are not being maximized. For this reason, as an immediate priority, the Court should engage an IT professional and/or OSCA to provide training and ensure the Court is maximizing the use of Show Me Courts software where possible. This can include a review of system-wide issues and also include more specific OSCA-provided training for judges and Court staff on key SMC processes such as use of Action Queues.

In the long term, the Court should identify and expand online options that might reduce the need for court appearances. For example, Lenexa, Kansas, has an online form to request continuances and amendments.

Recommendation 22: Create a culture of data-driven decision making for the Court and establish performance metrics.

Performance metrics and standards in the Court are few and primarily used when required by law, such as turnaround times for processing public records requests. The Court receives some data on operations from OSCA, such as information on compliance with standards such as percent of dispositions entered within 7-10 days of the hearing. This information is reviewed by staff but Raftelis was not provided with any plan to address operations based upon workload or other data.

This assessment proved challenging in many ways due to a lack of available data from the Court. No reports were provided from the SMC system on workload data or processing times, despite the information being there. Staff reported a lack of knowledge on how to prepare specific reports to review operations and also a lack of access, referring all such requests to the Court Administrator.

Peer courts do use some performance metrics. The Columbia and Springfield, Missouri, courts have defined performance metrics including, for example, the percentage of clerks having achieved certification and percentage of cases disposed within 270 days of filing. These metrics help staff to have a goal to work toward and allow supervisors to gauge operations from the big picture. The National Center for State Courts has developed a series of performance measures for use in trial and appellate courts which they call “CourTools.”²⁰ While some will not be applicable to a municipal court setting, the court could review and implement those that might be.

The Court should, over time, move to build a culture of data-driven decision making and establish performance metrics for key processes. This could include beginning by tracking judge and courtroom hours, which will assist not only in tracking workload and resources needed but also provide potential judge candidates with a realistic understanding of workload requirements. Other metrics might include average days to fulfill a public records request, percent of dispositions completed within seven days, percentage of failures-to-appear, and more.

²⁰ <https://www.ncsc.org/our-centers-projects/courtools>

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Conclusion

This organizational assessment was undertaken to assess operations and identify opportunities to enhance efficiency and effectiveness within the Lee’s Summit Municipal Court. The recommendations in this report were developed to build upon the Court’s high service level and community-focused approach and to ensure appropriate resources to address current and future workload.

The recommendations include increasing staff capacity by adding two additional court days for judges, for a total of four court days per week; increase a part-time Court Clerk to full-time (+0.4 FTE), adding one new Court Clerk position dedicated to the support of the Probation program (+1.0 FTE), and creation of a promotional Probation Compliance Officer position. A proposed new court organizational chart is provided below.

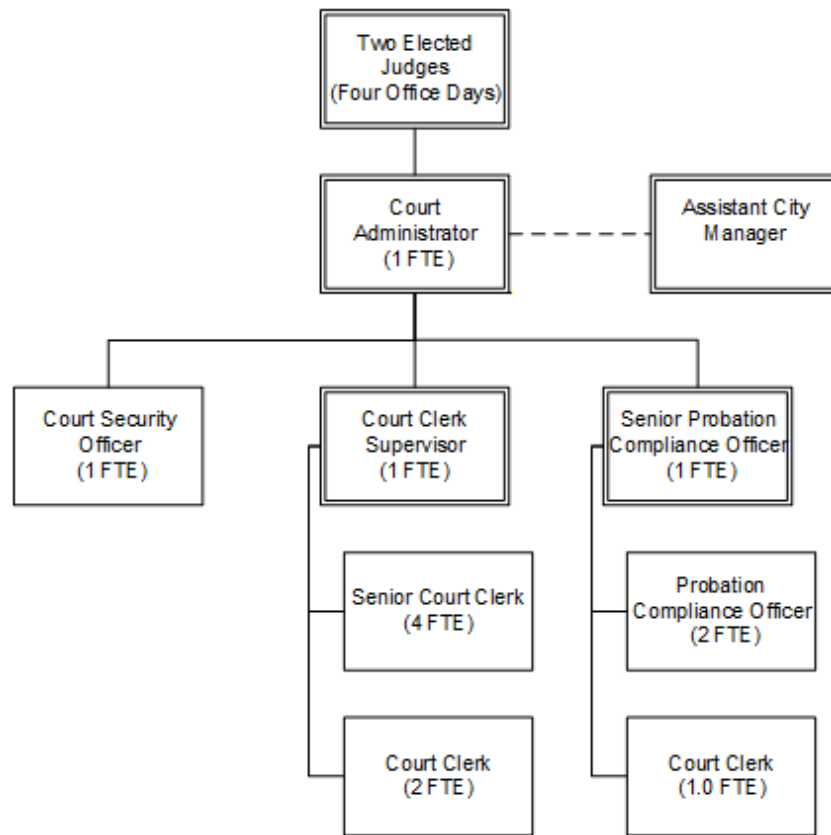


Figure 7: Proposed New Court Organizational Structure

By embracing the recommendations in this report and outlined in the accompanying Implementation Action Plan, the Lee’s Summit Municipal Court is poised to set a new standard for excellence in judicial service. With a strategic investment of time and resources, the City and Court can transform these challenges into a foundation for a high-performing, modernized court system that will deliver streamlined processes and enhanced public safety to serve the Lee’s Summit community for generations to come.