

# FAC Follow-Up from Municipal Court presentation

Krista LaFave

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To: James Moldenhauer <jmoldenhauer@wauwatosa.net>; Margaret Arney <margaretmichele.arney@gmail.com>; Joseph Makhlouf II <jmakhlouf@wauwatosa.net>; David Lewis <dlewis@wauwatosa.net>; Rob Gustafson <rgustafson@wauwatosa.net>; Joe Phillips <jphillips@wauwatosa.net>; Mike Morgan <mmorgan@wauwatosa.net>; Melissa Dolan <mdolan@wauwatosa.net>;

Cc: tclerks <tclerks@wauwatosa.net>; Dennis McBride <dmcbride@wauwatosa.net>; Brad Foley <bfoley@wauwatosa.net>; Robin Brannin <rbrannin@wauwatosa.net>; Ernst-Ulrich Franzen <efranzen@wauwatosa.net>; Sean Lowe <slowe@wauwatosa.net>; Aletha Champine <achampine@wauwatosa.net>; Amanda Fuerst <afuerst@wauwatosa.net>; Jason Wilke <jwilke@wauwatosa.net>;

📎 3 attachments (10 MB)

Wauwatosa's Municipal Court.pdf; Funding .6 for court.pdf; Funding .6 FTE for Court.pdf;

Dear Chair Moldenhauer, Vice Chair Phillips, Alder Arney, Alder Makhlouf, Alder Lewis, Alder Gustafson, Alder Morgan, and Alder Dolan:

Thank you for your a week or so ago and allowing me to address your concerns. Attached is the slideshow that I presented. As you know, the Municipal Court is our third branch of local government, and, as Wauwatosa's elected judge, it is my duty to advocate for the Court's needs. My intention here is not to create any opposition with Mayor McBride or city administration. Rather, my intention is to ensure the independence of the Court and ensure that it has dedicated staff to fulfill its important work. I reiterate my request for the Court to hire one individual for the .6 FTE position.

After I reflected on the evening, there are additional items I'd like to share. In reviewing the chart on p. 4 of the pdf, it is not far-fetched to opine that additional revenue will be generated if the Court can more quickly move from ordering a forfeiture to the collection of payment. Revenue directly correlates to the number of citations written by police officers. To date in 2024, we have received 4,477 citations (4,281 traffic and ordinance violations; 196 parking tickets). With the removal of the credit card processing fee, the Court is seeing more immediate payments of citations. It is not historically unusual for Wauwatosa to have an unfunded office assistant position, which could be done here.

To put it simply: the plan to staff a .6 position with three separate people is not feasible or wise. Having one well-trained individual in the .6 role is in the best interest of the Court, the City, and the community as a whole. Three separate people (who are already split between multiple departments) spending a handful of hours in Court will not provide this branch with the consistency needed to ensure a smooth and timely operation. I also feel it is unreasonable to task the Court's only full-time employee, who is already under the strain of a heavy workload, with training three individuals instead of one. There should not be one point of failure (i.e., the full-time employee) in this branch of Wauwatosa's city government.

I recognize that the decision before you is a challenging one. Like the Wisconsin Legislature when dealing with the Governor's budget, I hope there will be good discussion and consideration of amendments. The statute is

clear that the Court “shall be maintained at the expense of the municipality.” Given the City’s budget of \$78 million, it is unfortunate that so much time has been spent on 0.01%. Attached are some ideas for funding the \$38,983 so that the Court can hire its own part-time clerk.

Two of my goals when elected was to make significant improvements to the Court and look for new ways to hold defendants accountable. The Wauwatosa residents who elected me likely are the same who voted for many of you. I cannot make these changes with a limited, scattered staff. Because my position is only part-time, the continuity of court operations relies on my staff. I need two individuals dedicated to and passionate about the Court.

I respectfully request that you support the Court with your vote on Tuesday and provide funding for the .6 position. If further questions arise, please do not hesitate to reach out to me. My cell phone is 414-882-3120. Thank you.

Respectfully,  
Krista

*Krista G. LaFave*  
Judge, City of Wauwatosa