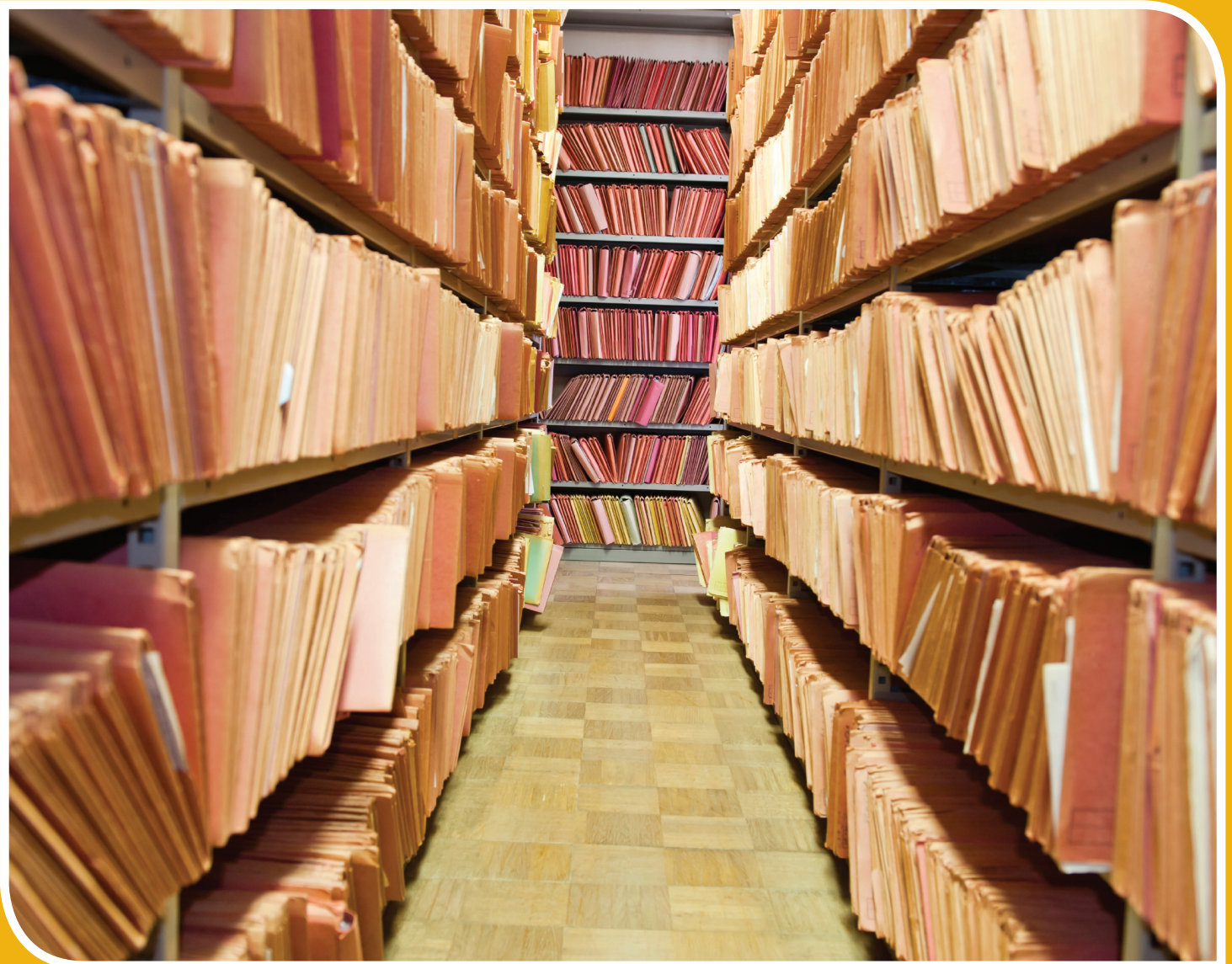


**JACOBS**

Capabilities and Approaches  
**Municipal Courts  
Services**





## Municipal Courts

### a) Technical Approach

A court's reputation and overall perception is established and shaped by the customers and citizens who grace its halls. For citizens, it does not matter if it is a minor traffic offense, a local ordinance violation, or a misdemeanor case – the most important component of a court is its ability to promote and conduct efficient customer service. We define customer service as how the court's customers are treated and how their time is used. Is it used efficiently or poorly? Staffing, organization, and technology all have a critical role in the perception and day-to-day operation of a court. Within this response we highlighted our partnership approach and some innovations/ recommendations that will not only **help strengthen the Municipal Court of Roswell with its functional operations**, but will **help to streamline and create efficiencies** throughout the entire

municipal court experience.

**Approach Process & Methods** - In order for the city's Municipal Court Services to expertly service citizens and customers coming through its doors, it is critical for the court to exhibit responsiveness and efficiency in operations to its citizens. We will create a partnership with you that will provide true public service. It is also important to create value of service by doing more with less. By doing this we can help facilitate a proper functioning Municipal Court to implement the strategic vision of the City and provide all services deemed necessary and essential.

One of the primary goals for us as we undertake municipal court administration services is to bring the court technology to a level that will ensure that the city meets all statutory requirements and those of the Department

## Since 2011, Jacobs has provided court operations for the City of Sandy Springs Municipal court.

of Driver Services via Georgia Electronic Conviction Processing System, Georgia Superior Court Clerk's Cooperative Authority, and The Georgia Crime Information Center. There is a critical need to focus on accuracy and accountability of the court records submitted to these agencies and to the city administration.

One element of our approach is to leverage and extend the use of technology with a goal of reducing time and staff resources. For example, by using a networked case management system, information can be stored once, analyzed numerous ways, and shared in cross-functional capacities to keep you informed. The centralization of key information within the system will reduce personnel time and errors generated by redundant entries and bring efficiencies into play across several managerial routines – from personnel reviews, to training best practices.

The system's capability will extend to assist the prosecutor with tools for case preparation and post judgment relief to reduce the number of court appearances required by defendants and attorneys. This, in turn, will reduce the city's cost.

We propose conducting a thorough and comprehensive evaluation of all court software and hardware to make certain that case management is running as smoothly as possible and if not, evaluate options to eliminate or prevent identified problems and issues from recurring. Our evaluations will help uncover any recurring errors or gaps in training that will aid in the creation of a streamlined approach to all operations. In addition, our evaluation of the current system will include recommendations, upgrades, and/or modifications to meet the

critical criteria that can save the cost of replacement.

One strategic option for consideration is the use of e-tickets, on-line payments, digital record retention, digital recording of court sessions, connectivity with the Georgia Technology Authority via the SSL/ VPN connections, and e-filing.

Moving the courtroom into a paperless system saves time, space, and cost. It also eliminates the possibility of misfiling, lost documents, and enables immediate retrieval and exchange of the court's records. Digital recording of the court sessions will bring the court into compliance with the Uniform Rules for Municipal Courts and provide a record of the hearing for use in post judgment motion hearings.

### **Identifying, Analyzing and Mitigating Risks -**

The focus of the personnel's use of the system will include proofing reports to reduce errors and ultimately reduce the city's risk of liability that is associated by a false arrest due to errors on driver or criminal histories, failing to clear a warrant, or proper application of receipted payments. Having all clerks trained and certified in security and integrity, signed awareness agreements, and a regular review of the court operation will reduce the city's risk of liability.

Within our approach to risk assessment and mitigation, we also seek to significantly reduce risk regarding personnel. An initial evaluation will be performed with each court employee taking into consideration their position, responsibilities, and daily performance.

The results of this personnel risk assessment will be used to determine if a person performs at an acceptable level, indicates



additional training needs, or has scored in a sub-standard, unacceptable level. Personnel scoring at an unacceptable level will be further reviewed to determine if additional training can produce a more desirable employee or requires replacement.

The operation of the court will be evaluated taking into consideration number of incoming cases, docket management, customer service, error ratio, and other factors that will rate the performance of the court's function, procedures, and accountability.

The evaluation process will be an ongoing part of the court's accountability process and reporting to the city. The suggested frequency of the evaluation schedules is:

- Once a month for the first 12 months
- Once a year, thereafter

## **b) Innovation**

### **1. Identifying Innovative Technologies**

Training is an important part of keeping a team of professionals at the top of their game, executing, and competently servicing all aspects of the municipal court. We intend to take staff through both necessary and advanced courses to improve all court processes and systems. Our experience and knowledge shows that legislation requires the Lead Clerk (Clerk of Court) attend mandated training where he/she will be exposed to the most utilized exchange of information systems and new technology offered in courts.

These training seminar facilitators invite vendors in court ware systems, recording, and video conferencing packages to exhibit. Additionally, the network of clerks within the state contributes ideas and best practices via the clerk's listserv. Here, they can discuss and share system use and recommendations

based on performance and needs. System upgrades from the state agencies concerning the courts and those available via potential vendors will be collected and reviewed, as well.

To make sure we are exploring all avenues of information available, we will contact and request mailings from vendors of court management software and technologies for constant review to ensure that we are knowledgeable of current and upcoming technical advances. We will continually seek and review technology advances for problem solving and streamlining capabilities and make recommendations that will keep the court meeting and/or exceeding the needs of the City, state, and your citizens.

One innovation for consideration is technological innovations that could help the court with its case management and filing systems. We know that there are very few courts today utilizing e-filing systems on an extensive level. We are familiar with several companies offering specific software programs that can manage an entire court's e-filing system, but some of these are not deployed on the municipal court level. Our relationships with these software vendors could open the door to implementing an e-filing system on the misdemeanor level with the potential for much of the cost being absorbed by the filing attorney. There is interest from attorneys as their time is highly important to them - the cost of coming to the court office to file, their time in a court appearance, or sending a courier seems to outweigh the minimum cost of e-filing. There is a possibility the City could become the first misdemeanor court to implement the e-filing system.

### **2. Evaluating and Adopting Innovations**

A complete evaluation of the current court

ware system will be performed to determine the efficiency, accuracy, and overall use capabilities to reduce time required to complete mandatory tasks, which ultimately will reduce cost. This evaluation focuses on auditing the information produced to ensure quality and quantity measurements are being met and determine full utilization of the system to eliminate any processes currently being handled manually.

We also will evaluate the use of electronic payments, courtroom recordings, and electronic exchange of information between the police department and court services to reduce duplication of efforts and data entry errors. This will make payment of citations available to the public almost immediately and ultimately reduce the number of people needing to appear in court. We will consider the use of e-filing for attorneys to reduce personnel contact and enhance the availability of the use of the court to attorneys.

By reducing errors, sharing data electronically, and managing time and personnel efficiently, the result will create an overall cost savings.

The process of upgrading technology in the court system will include reviewing, comparing cost, and a process of rating the technology to keep the court service compliant with city, state, and federal requirements.

### 3. Implementing Proposed Innovations

We will ensure that the implementation of necessary upgrades will be scheduled so as not to interrupt the court's day-to-day process and that it will be staged in a manner that will allow personnel to train as changes are made.

A schedule will be set to review the court, personnel, and how the technology is being

applied in the day-to-day process. A report of this review will be available to the city administration to include any recommendations to move the court forward to meet new innovations.

### c) Staffing & Skill Mix

In order to operate an efficient, cost-effective, and operationally functioning municipal court, it is essential to have trained and skilled staff who knows the ins and outs of how a municipal court system works.

**Court Clerk:** This is a supervisory position responsible for the administration of the municipal court, including maintaining the day-to-day operation, setting policies and procedures, and resolving complaints. Assists in processing court cases and maintaining Municipal Court records, retention, and integrity and is responsible for the collection, disbursement, and reporting of all fines and fees. This position will supervise, train, and guide court staff with daily court operations; oversees and attends court sessions; assists judge and solicitor in the courtroom; prepare, maintains, and distributes various reports, records, and other documents required by state agencies and the city's administration. Oversees proper usage of GCIC/NCIC access, training, and mandatory certification required to access these records. Must possess knowledge of the functions, policies, and procedures of the Municipal Court and court operations; knowledge of city and departmental policies and procedures; applicable state and federal laws; GCIC/NCIC and GTA operation and procedures; legal forms, documents, and terminology; applicable record keeping requirements; and organization and prioritizing skills.

**Data Entry Clerk I:** Operates the court case management system entering non-arrest citations, court date information, proofing defendant's information against GCIC driver

history print out to ensure accuracy in court records and reduction of errors. Proofs all information entered; mails out court date correction notices; creates the case file; and files case in the pending court docket. This position may assist with phone calls in a customer service capacity.

| Contract labor<br>Category – Key<br>Personnel | Proposed FTEs |
|---|---------------|
| Court Clerk–<br>Incumbent or TBD              | 1.00          |
| Data Entry Clerk I–<br>Incumbent or TBD       | 3.50          |
| <b>TOTAL</b>                                  | <b>4.50</b>   |

## 1. Staffing Rationale

We believe that the proposed skill mix and number of personnel are sufficient and appropriate for the staffing level and skill mix necessary to perform all of the technical duties and responsibilities of the municipal court as laid out in our recommended approach. The policies and procedures as they apply to the court clerk's office will be reviewed to ensure that the UNIFORM RULES OF THE STATE OF GEORGIA MUNICIPAL COURTS are being met. All court personnel will be required to obtain and maintain security and integrity certification through GCIC.

Staffing requirements and level of education and experience ensures the court is operational and has the ability to cover duties when personnel are absent or on leave. The bulk of the personnel will be cross-trained which will enable each position to assist each other and ensure that all tasks are completed in a timely manner.

Advances in networking, computer storage, data integration standards, and scanning technology solutions can be used to automate the process and can be

implemented quickly and cost effectively. This would result in cost savings for the city and more efficiency within the clerk's office. For example, moving to the use of e-tickets will eliminate data entry of the citations within the court and allow more time for editing on the front end of the citation processing. Using a paperless system, which can be obtained by scanning the court documents within the case management system, not only allows for instant retrieval reducing clerk time in filling and searching for documents, it also gives the judge and prosecutor instant access to review a case in the courtroom. This and the use of a process similar to the higher courts e-filing for discovery, conflicts, leave of absences, request for continuances, and demand for jury trials could reduce the activities in the courtroom allowing the courtroom to perform at a higher level of efficiency. Creating an e-filing capability within a municipal court would bring the City of Roswell to a new level on this judicial level. A review of each manual task currently being performed by clerical employees within the court could be reviewed to determine if an automated process could better serve.

## 2. Assumptions

We have a few very basic, yet essential, assumptions regarding the requirements that influenced the staffing level and skill mix we have proposed. We assume that the Assistant City Manager would serve as the direct contact to the City Government and be responsible for overall policy. We assume that the court has been following all required court procedures and there is not a backlog of cases to be entered into the GCIC system or other past issues that would affect the present operations of the court.

We also assume the court has a full time prosecutor and that the clerks assist that position and case preparation or post

judgment relief. Lastly, we assume that there is an option of evaluating and possibly retaining all or part of existing personnel.

#### **d) Related Experience**

In July of 2011, Jacobs was awarded the Sandy Springs court operations contract. The Jacobs staff immediately uncovered that several of the court operations needed to be overhauled. Over the first two years, operations have been streamlined, old tickets have been input into the system and cases have been closed.

Jacobs was awarded the court operation for the newly incorporated court of Brookhaven in December 2012. Jacobs' staff was able to obtain all needed certificates and personnel to open the court on time. Personnel were also instrumental in the designing of the court layout and helping the city acquire the court and other needed software.

Since 2004, Jacobs provides operations and maintenance services for California's Administrative Office of the Courts (AOC) in the Bay Area and in Southern Regions. Our area of responsibility spans 26 counties where we provide full-service building management services required to maintain and preserve the court buildings and infrastructure.

Jacobs has worked with municipal clients all over the world and with its recent acquisition of JG, it has worked with most metro and Georgia municipalities and counties. Jacobs is one of the largest providers of engineering, planning, and environmental consulting services in the state. The list of clients includes counties like Fulton, DeKalb, Gwinnett, Cobb and Forsyth as well as many cities like the Cities of Atlanta, Lawrenceville, Columbus, Duluth and many others.

Other local contract operations services include operation of the City of Sandy Springs

Recreation and Parks, the City of Dunwoody Public Relations Department, the City of Chamblee Planning Department; the Bear Creek Water Reservoir and Water Treatment Plant. Jacobs also provides contract operations in many other locations around the world including locations such as the Stennis Air Force Base, Cape Canaveral and the Florida Turnpike.

#### **e) Property**

In order to implement our proposed approach, we would require the appropriate number of desks and computers for all staff with two multi-function networked printers/copiers/fax machine/scanner and one private desktop multi-function machine for discreet printing needs. The computers would need to have a reliable and robust courts software program as well as other selected office productivity program suites.