

Thornton, Colorado

Presiding Municipal Judge Position Overview

Brief Position Overview:

Under the general direction of the Mayor and City Council and in cooperation with the City Manager, this position is responsible for administering the operations of the juridical branch of the city government according to the ordinances adopted by City Council. Cases adjudicated in Municipal Court typically include traffic, criminal, animal, and other municipal code violations. The Judge oversees, mentors, and provides guidance to the Associate Municipal Judges, who fill in the Judge's absence or in case of conflict or additional courtroom coverage, to ensure consistent and professional hearing of cases. Primary responsibilities include ensuring effective, fair, and respectful municipal processes to take place. The Judge provides leadership and support to the Court Administrator who leads a staff of thirteen (13) full-time and part-time employees.

General Duties:

- Preside over the Municipal Court and its functions and administer the judicial component of the Municipal Court.
- Represent the City and the Municipal Court in a professional manner and positive light.
- Exhibit problem-solving skills leading to sound judgement and quality decisions.
- Facilitate best practices on emergent issues of diversity, equity, and inclusion in judicial and legal practices and provide strategic guidance to enhance diversity, equity, inclusion, and cultural competency.
- Achieve goals and handle the assigned workload and new assignments effectively.
- Perform work with complete technical independence.
- Provide judicial coverage to ensure efficient and expeditious hearing of all matters scheduled for hearing in the court.
- Performs such other duties as may be prescribed by the Charter or by the Council.
- Effectively manage workload to achieve goals and assure that responsibilities are performed in compliance with federal, state, and municipal regulations, Thornton policies and procedures, and the Thornton Municipal Code.
- Contributes to the preparation and review of policies and procedures, as necessary.
- Advises applicable administrators or departments of potential problems or concerns.
- Compiles, interprets, and prepares data for studies, reports, and recommendations; coordinate activities with other departments and agencies as needed.
- Assists in recommending and implementing modifications to systems, policies and procedures. May conduct studies, analyses, and research on a wide variety of topics.
- Work effectively with judicial colleagues and court staff, and other City departments as necessary.
- Administer equitable, fair, and impartial justice in a timely and courteous manner.
- Protect fundamental rights and promote public safety.
- Participates in partnership with Municipal Court staff to establish and maintain protocols and procedures to ensure efficient, fair, and legally defensible Courtroom processes.
- Attends meetings, workshops, and conventions as necessary for the maintenance of effective services.
- Maintains liaison with other departments. Provides verbal and written information to departments.
- Works collaboratively with key stakeholders in the Municipal Court system to ensure effective, fair and respectful municipal processes take place, as well as with key leaders on policy issues related to the Court in order to provide joint policy recommendations to City Council.

- Conducts arraignments, hearings, and trials in an efficient and appropriate manner. Advises defendants of their rights, administers oaths and affirmations, rules on admissibility of evidence and methods of conducting testimony, examines evidence and interprets applicable law, and enforces orders, rules, and judgments in compliance with all applicable law.
- Reviews files for Municipal Court defendants who have recently been placed in custody at the Adams County Jail or other facility. Sets bond types and amounts and/or holds video advisements in an efficient and appropriate manner.
- Imposes fines per the approved fine schedule and sentences upon finding of guilt or responsibility according to City Code, and state and federal law. Enforces penalties consistently, according to City Code and Charter as well as state law.
- Protects and preserves the record to ensure that the City and defendants have a record on which to appeal, if necessary.
- Participates in procedures to respond quickly and appropriately to failures to appear, pay, and/or comply with sentencing conditions.
- Periodically revises bond schedule to ensure appropriate bond amounts for various levels of offenses: in accordance with City Code as well as state law.
- Considers and recommends to City Council for adoptions appropriate, new or revised fine, costs and fees schedule to charge in applicable cases, taking into consideration existing costs and fees charged by this as well as other Colorado Courts.
- Reports to and receives feedback from City Council as requested, necessary, and appropriate to keep Council informed of the Court's activities while respecting proper separation of powers.

Necessary Knowledge, Skills, and Abilities:

- Thorough knowledge of local ordinances, state, and federal laws, and constitutional provisions affecting municipal operations.
- Extensive knowledge of judicial procedure and Colorado rules of evidence and of the principles and procedures of municipal law, criminal law, civil procedure, and constitutional law.
- Excellent communications skills – written, verbal and interpersonal; able to exhibit presence in various settings, tailor communication style to diverse audiences, and present complex information in a clear, diplomatic, and understandable manner.
- Demonstrated cultural competence to effectively interact, work, and develop meaningful relationships with people of various cultural backgrounds. Establish and maintain effective working relationships with City Council, City Manager, Court Administrator, other City staff and judicial colleagues.
- Able to balance confidence and humility.
- Demonstrated confidence in rendering decisive, well-founded factual findings, legal opinions and sentencing without regard to popularity of decision.
- Demonstrated capability to work collaboratively and effectively with employees in all City departments, such as the City Attorney's Office, Police Department, and other departments as needed.
- Possesses judicial temperament with respect to attentiveness, patience, impartiality, promptness, and courtesy.
- Confidence in making sound judgments and exhibiting patience when dealing with stressful situations.
- The ideal candidate will be able to bring compassion into challenging situations, and have unquestionable personal integrity, character, and conviction.
- A strong attention to detail and strong learning orientation.
- Demonstrated capability in anticipating, adapting, and innovating Municipal Court practices and solutions effectively and right-sizing them to the needs of the organization.

A Typical Work Week:

The Presiding Municipal Judge is expected to devote four days a week (40 hours) to fulfilling job duties; Monday – Thursday 6:45 a.m. – 5:15 p.m. Court is open to the public Monday – Thursday 7:00 a.m. – 5:00 p.m. Court sessions are scheduled to begin at 8:00 a.m. – 3:45 p.m. and may go through lunch or extend beyond normal work hours due to large dockets and/or longer court proceedings, such as Trials to Court, Jury Trials, etc.

Municipal Court is held four days per week on Monday, Tuesdays, Wednesdays, and Thursdays. Trials are held Wednesdays, adult arraignments on Monday, Tuesday, and Thursday mornings, juvenile arraignments on Tuesday afternoons and pre-trials and other various hearings on Monday and Thursday afternoons. Video arraignments are held with the Adams County Jail on Monday, Tuesday, and Thursday. Presiding Judge and Associate Judges conduct Jury Trials on Monday and Wednesdays.