Agenda Item Report

Legislative Board: City Council
Date: February 7, 2023
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Agenda Item ID / Number: 2023-100- / I.1

ITEM TITLE: Report from Municipal Court Judge Beth Smith updating the City Council on the 2022 activities of the court and related matters (Municipal Court Judge Beth Smith)

1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Report from Municipal Court Judge Beth Smith updating the City Council on the activities of the court and related matters.

2. BACKGROUND/HISTORY

The Buda Municipal Court is the first level of the judicial branch of government. The jurisdiction of the Municipal Court includes Class C misdemeanors occurring within the territorial limits of the City of Buda.

The charges processed by Municipal Court may be filed by citizens and a variety of city employees, including but not limited to police, fire, code enforcement and animal control.

Most cases are criminal in nature, but Municipal Courts have limited administrative jurisdiction over certain city ordinance violations such as animal cruelty and removal of junked vehicles.

3. ANALYSIS

The Court continues to diligently collect and close out current and outstanding cases by using many tools.

Some of the newer tools used are:

- Court Notify – sends reminder phone calls and text messages for hearings, missed payments, and warrant reminders.
- Virtual Hearings – used for Pre-Trials, Juvenile and Indigency Hearings
- Insight - Online Options from City Website – Defendants can make payments, sign up for driver's safety and deferrals and to submit certain paperwork to the court.

The Municipal Court uses several options for collections assistance. We renewed our collection contract with McCreary, Veselka, Bragg & Allen, PC (MVBA) for outstanding violations collection. The Court will be using them to help with two Warrant Round Up initiatives, one in March and another in September.

The Court has also contracted with the OmniBase Program. This program maintains and administers the central database for the cities and counties contracted to use the Department of Public Safety's Failure to Appear Program (FTA). The FTA program provides an effective collection and enforcement tool by restricting the violator's ability to renew their driver's license for outstanding violations.

In the past we have closed/dismissed stale case that were over 7 years old. The new state recommendations are to not do this until the cases are at least 15 years old.

4. FINANCIAL IMPACT
See attachment.

5. STRATEGIC PLAN/GOALS
OTHER

6. STRATEGIC PLAN OBJECTIVES
Not applicable.

7. PROS AND CONS
Not applicable.

8. ALTERNATIVES
Not applicable.

9. REQUESTED ACTION / SUGGESTED MOTION / RECOMMENDATION
Not applicable.

Attachments:

Muni Court Annual Report