



FAIRFIELD MUNICIPAL COURT

675 NILLES ROAD • FAIRFIELD, OHIO 45014-2931 • 513-867-6002

March 20, 2025

Dear Ladies and Gentlemen:

The 2024 Annual Report is submitted pursuant to the Ohio Revised Code §1901.14(A)(4).

Fairfield Municipal Court hears all traffic, misdemeanor criminal and civil disputes (wherein the amount in controversy does not exceed \$15,000) which are alleged to have occurred within the limits of the City of Fairfield. The Court also handles initial appearances and preliminary hearings for felony charges.

The biggest change to the Court in 2024 was the retirement of Judge Joyce A. Campbell. She served as the judge from June of 1999, through October of 2024. Governor Mike DeWine has appointed Zachary O. Zoz to fill the term vacancy through 2025. Appointed Judge Zoz will be sworn in as Judge on March 28, 2025.

During her tenure, Judge Campbell created two specialized dockets to serve the community. These dockets focus on specific types of offenders or offenses and use techniques designed to hold offenders accountable while also addressing underlying causes of their behavior. The Treatment Alternative Court ("TAC") program is the mental health docket and the S.T.A.R. (Sobriety, Treatment, Accountability and Recovery) program is the misdemeanor repeat OVI offender docket. Both dockets have been continuously certified by the Ohio Supreme Court since April 11, 2014 (the first-year certification became available). Appointed Judge Zoz desires to continue Judge Campbell's work, to maintain these dockets and to provide these needed services to the community.

The Court continues to experience a decline in the filing of criminal and traffic charges. This has a direct impact on the monies generated, collected and disbursed to the local funding authority. On a positive note, for the fourth year in a row, the Court received \$70,000 in grant funding from the Ohio and Butler County Departments of Mental Health and Addictions Services for payroll assistance in implementing the specialized dockets. With respect to civil filings, the Court experienced a continued increase in lawsuits especially in credit card / load debt and eviction proceedings.

The Court anticipates a smooth judicial transition and expects to dispense the same quick and equitable services to the Citizens of Fairfield as well as all others who come before the Court.

Sincerely yours,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Liza A. Kotlarsic".

Liza A. Kotlarsic, JD, CCM
Court Administrator/Clerk of Court

2024 ANNUAL REPORT

Fairfield Municipal Court

Felony Charges

Felony charges are extremely serious offenses in which the Defendant can be sentenced to a state prison. Examples include: Murder, Kidnapping, Rape, Domestic Violence, Burglary, Robbery, Breaking and Entering, Trafficking, Fleeing and Eluding, certain Sex Offenses, certain Drug Possessions, Fraud, Theft, Receiving Stolen Property and Operating a Motor Vehicle under the Influence.

Felony cases arise by either direct indictment from the Grand Jury or the filing of a Complaint in Municipal Court. Judge Campbell presides over the felony Complaints only by setting bond and holding a Preliminary Hearing. The latter is an evidentiary hearing to determine whether there is enough evidence to require a trial. If the Judge makes this finding, or if the accused waives the Preliminary Hearing, the case is transferred to the Common Pleas Court for a hearing before the Grand Jury. If the Judge determines that the Prosecutor has not established enough facts to support the Complaint, then the felony Complaint is dismissed.

In 2024, Fairfield Municipal Court processed 178 complaints for felony offenses. This number is down 17.2% from 2023 wherein 215 complaints were processed.

Felony Charges:	2022	2023	2024
Murder	1	0	0
Assault	8	2	7
Robbery	3	1	0
Burglary/Vandalism	14	11	9
Theft	27	28	39
Forgery/Fraud	9	13	13
Domestic Violence	21	17	11
Weapon Offenses	32	20	20
Drug Offenses	108	104	55
OWI	0	1	6
Strangulation	0	8	7
Other felony offenses	11	10	11
TOTAL	234	215	178

Misdemeanor Charges

Misdemeanor offenses are categorized into five classes: first degree, second degree, third degree, fourth degree, and minor misdemeanors. First-degree misdemeanors are considered the most serious class, while minor misdemeanors are the least serious. Each degree of misdemeanor offense has a maximum penalty associated with it that can range up to 180 days in the county jail and/or up to \$1,000 fine. A minor misdemeanor has a maximum penalty of \$150 plus Court Costs. Misdemeanor charges can be criminal or traffic offenses.

Examples of misdemeanor offenses include: Domestic Violence, Violation of Protective Order, Theft, Drug Possession, Resisting Arrest, Menacing, Disorderly Conduct, Trespassing, Operating a Motor Vehicle Under the Influence (OWI), Operating a Motor Vehicle without a valid Driver's License and Traffic Control violations.

In 2024, Fairfield Municipal Court processed 5999 complaints for misdemeanor offenses. This number is down 14.16% from 2023 wherein 6989 complaints were processed.

Misdemeanor Criminal Charges:	2022	2023	2024
Failure to Appear/Contempt	1,296	1182	938
Domestic Violence	163	243	208
Assault	38	55	61
Child Endangering	10	33	13
Menacing/Harassment	27	39	43
Criminal Trespass/Damaging	92	84	109
Theft	143	346	372
Falsification	37	58	62
Weapon Offenses	40	37	13
Drug Offenses	374	349	97
Alcohol Offenses	82	50	38
Disorderly Conduct	142	226	171
Resisting Arrest/Obstruction	46	104	51
Animal Abuse / Neglect	2	1	0
Other misdemeanor criminal offenses	18	22	22
TOTAL	2,510	2,829	2,198

City Department Code Violations:	2022	2023	2024
Zoning	9	26	27
Building	79	55	32
Fire Prevention	0	0	0
Tax	14	1	0
TOTAL	80	82	59

Misdemeanor Traffic Charges:	2022	2023	2024
Operation under the influence (OVI)	408	578	496
Suspended/Invalid Driver's License	1,195	1,141	965
Speed Limit	1,177	855	893
Seatbelt	42	64	71
License Plate Violations	588	383	233
Assured Cleared Distance	273	230	275
Failing to Stop After an Accident	39	96	88
Fleeing / Eluding police	13	21	6
Parking Violations	48	44	22
Driving while texting*	0	0	21
Other misdemeanor traffic violations	799	666	672
TOTAL	4,582	4,078	3,742

*Ohio's new distracted driving laws went into effect in April, 2023, though drivers had a six month grace period before enforcement began in October, 2023.

Probation

As an alternative to incarceration the Court can order a Defendant to a term of community control (probation). After the initial meeting with the Probation Officer, community control will be either reporting or non-reporting. The Probation Officers assist the Defendants with employment, substance abuse treatment, mental health counseling and other needed services to aid the individual in becoming a law abiding, productive member of our community. If the Defendant is unable to pay his/her financial obligation, the Probation Officer will give the Defendant the opportunity to work off the fines and costs through Community Service. If the Defendant fails to report to probation and/or fails to comply with the terms of probation, a violation will be filed requiring the Defendant to appear in Court.

Probation:	2022	2023	2024
New Cases Opened	959	890	729
Probation Violations	876	854	1277

Community Service Program

Offenders who are unable to pay assessed fines and/or costs are able to perform community work on Mondays and receive credit of \$15 per hour against their debt. The program alleviates the need for the City of Fairfield to incur additional expense in clearing litter on the side of the roadways and other community enhancement projects.

Community Service:	2022	2023	2024
Days Completed	92.5	67	99.625
x 8 hours per day	—8	—8	—8
TOTAL HOURS	740	536	797

Civil Hearings

Fairfield Municipal Court hears many different types of civil actions with a monetary jurisdiction up to \$15,000. A case filed for the Small Claims docket can only be awarded up to \$6,000 in damages.

In 2024, the Court processed 1,826 civil complaints. This number is up 12.3% from 2023 wherein 1,625 complaints were processed.

Civil Complaints:	2022	2023	2024
Personal Injury/Property Claim	12	5	4
Contracts/Notes/Credit Accounts	582	650	829
Forcible Entry and Detainer (Eviction)	832	842	872
Rent Escrow	7	3	3
Small Claim	85	106	93
Other civil actions	11	19	25
Trusteeship	0	0	0
TOTAL	1,529	1,625	1,826

Three-Year Comparison for Court Activity

Criminal/Traffic:	2022	2023	2024
Cases Filed	7,408	6,012	5,182
Jury Trials held	0	1	0
Bench Trials*	649	502	404
Motion to Suppress*	149	49	36
Other Criminal/Traffic Motions*	46	33	39
Motion to Seal the Record*	38	64	51
Motion for Driving Privileges*	93	73	63
Competency to Stand Trial*	25	3	9
Not Guilty by Reason of Insanity	1	1	0

Civil:	2022	2023	2024
Cases Filed	1,529	1,625	1,826
Jury Trials held	0	0	0
Bench Trials* excluding Small Claims	39	30	28
Motions*	161	248	1
Garnishments	485	482	510
Bank Attachments	42	89	53
Certificate for Judgment Lien	93	87	133
Judgement Debtor Exam	2	5	7

*Represents the number of filings

2024 RECEIPTS & DISBURSEMENTS

RECEIPTS:

Courtbook Balance, January 1, 2024		\$66,110.22
+ Fines, Costs & Fees	\$2,102,021.60	
+ Holding Accounts:	0	
• Jury Demand	\$ 0.00	
• Grand Jury – Btlr Cnty Clerk	\$ 0.00	
• Restitution	\$ 47,591.83	
• On Deposit/Overage	\$ 4,211.94	
• Appearance Bonds	\$ 234,099.98	
• Rent Escrow	\$ 11,790.38	
• Garnishments	\$ 780,405.90	
• Civil Witness Fees	\$ 0.00	
• BMV License Forfeiture	\$ 0.00	
		<u>\$3,180,121.63</u>
	TOTAL	<u>\$3,246,231.85</u>

DISBURSEMENTS:

- City of Fairfield*	\$1,709,608.58
- County of Butler**	\$ 36,222.62
- State of Ohio***	\$ 192,812.98
- Holding Accounts:	
• Jury Demand	\$ 0.00
• Grand Jury – Btlr Cnty Clerk	\$ 0.00
• Restitution	\$ 44,929.37
• On Deposit/Overage	\$ 4,210.94
• Appearance Bonds	\$ 222,509.98
• Rent Escrow	\$ 19,858.88
• Garnishments	\$ 807,833.20
• Civil Witness Fees	\$ 0.00
• BMV License Forfeiture	\$ 0.00
	<u>\$3,037,986.55</u>

Courtbook balance, December 31, 2024		<u>\$208,245.30</u>
	TOTAL	<u>\$3,246,231.85</u>

* Breakdown on Page 6

** Breakdown on Page 7

*** Breakdown on Page 7

2024– CITY OF FAIRFIELD ACCOUNTS

ACCOUNT NUMBER	ACCOUNT DESCRIPTION	AMOUNT DISBURSED
201	Patrol Fines	\$36,477.26
202	Traffic & Criminal Fines	\$700,484.00
203	Traffic & Criminal Court Costs	\$196,350.23
204	Civil & Small Claims Costs & Fees	\$186,534.08
205	Expungement Fees	\$2,330.00
206	Witness Fees – City Ordinance Violations	\$869.00
207	Juror Fees	\$159.00
208	Civil Legal Aid 1% Administration Fees	\$419.00
209	City DUI Arrest Agency Fees	\$3,744.00
210	City Indigent DUI Alcohol Treatment Fees	\$25,443.39
211	City DUI Jail Housing Fees	\$7,020.00
212	Special Projects Fund	\$44,509.06
213	Computer Equipment Fees	\$82,449.75
215	Wedding Ceremony Fees	\$0.00
216	Record Check/Copying Fees	\$1,867.27
217	Drug Fines – City Arrest	\$738.00
218	Probation Fees Fund	\$287,904.84
219	House Arrest Fees	\$9,405.19
220	Mediation Fees	\$55,160.00
221	IDIAMF	\$6,533.00
222	Scram Fee	\$28,791.36
223	Credit Card Processing Fee	\$30.00
224	Judgment Poundage Fee	\$14,779.52
225	Restitution Poundage Fee	\$1,515.63
225	10% Bond Fee	\$14,295.00
226	GPS Fee	\$1,800.00
TOTAL - CITY		\$1,709,608.58

2024 – BUTLER COUNTY ACCOUNTS

ACCOUNT NUMBER	ACCOUNT DESCRIPTION	AMOUNT DISBURSED
301	Ohio State Patrol Fines (10%)	\$2,510.80
302	Traffic & Criminal Fines-ORC Viol.	\$14,265.88
304	Dog Warden Fines-ORC Violations	\$0.00
305	County DUI Jail Hsg.Fees-ORC Viol.	\$1,230.00
306	Expungement Fees – ORC Cases	\$60.00
307	Witness Fees – ORC Cases	\$54.00
308	County Indig.DUI Alco.Treatmt. Fees	\$375.00
309	County DUI Arrest Agency Fees	\$0.00
310	Liquor Violation Fees (50%)	\$25.00
312	Drug Fines – County Arrest	\$0.00
516	Indigent Application Fee	\$12,052.93
514	Law Library (OSP Fines)	\$5,649.01
TOTAL - COUNTY		\$36,222.62

2024 - STATE OF OHIO ACCOUNTS

ACCOUNT NUMBER	ACCOUNT DESCRIPTION	AMOUNT DISBURSED
101	Ohio State Patrol Fines (45%)	\$12,704.00
102	Victims of Crime Fund	\$32,346.37
103	Public Defenders Fund	\$684.00
104	Seat Belt Fines	\$3,930.00
105	Drug Violation Fines (Bd of Pharm.)	\$414.00
106	Liquor Violation Fines (50%)	\$25.00
107	Dept. Of Natural Resources Fines	\$400.00
108	Expungement Fees	\$960.00
109	Civil Legal Aid Fees	\$41,511.00
110	Ohio State Patrol DUI Arrest Agy.Fees	\$403.00
111	Child Safety Restraint	\$830.00
112	Drug Fines – ODPS Arrest	\$0.00
113	Drug Fines – OSP Arrest	\$175.00
517	Drug Law Enforcement Fund	\$9,923.53
519	Indigent Defense Support Fund	\$88,185.00
520	Justice Program Services Fund	\$322.08
TOTAL - STATE		\$192,812.98

BOOK TO CASH RECONCILIATION

Courtbook Fund Balance, December 31, 2024	\$44,867.88
- Prior Years Adjusting Entries	<u>\$ 3,700.75</u>
	<u>(\$3,700.75)</u>
	<u>\$41,167.13</u>
 Cash Account Balance, December 31, 2024	 \$293,418.21
+ Deposits in Transit	<u>\$ 3,772.00</u>
- Outstanding Checks	<u>(\$256,023.08)</u>
	<u>(\$252,251.08)</u>
	<u>\$41,167.13</u>