

Budget Hearings #46 - 2025
Fairfield County Commissioners' Office
October 21, 2025

Commissioner Fix called the Budget Hearing Session to order with the following Commissioners present: Jeff Fix, Steve Davis and David Levacy. Also in attendance were Aundrea Cordle, Jeff Porter, Bennett Niceswanger, Bart Hampson, Staci Knisley, and Taylor Forquer. Attendees of specific hearings are listed in their respective section of the minutes.

Each hearing has a corresponding Budget Summary and Excel spreadsheet that are included with the minutes. The Auditor's Office also has a presentation included in the minutes.

Budget Hearing, Auditor, 11:00 a.m.

Auditor Carri Brown was also in attendance for the Auditor's Budget Hearing.

Mr. Hampson summarized items in the proposed budget that have experienced increases.

Auditor Brown reported a net increase of \$19,000 in contract services, that salaries and benefits remain within established parameters, that no new positions would be added to her organizational chart, and referenced her presentation.

Commissioner Fix discussed the potential for local governments to implement a lodging tax, with the Auditor's Office administering collections for a fee.

Auditor Brown confirmed there would be a standard administrative charge should such an approach be taken.

Commissioner Fix requested additional discussion on this topic later.

Commissioner Davis inquired about the effect of interest rate decreases on conveyance fees.

Auditor Brown responded that fewer home sales and limited housing inventory are currently being observed.

Commissioner Fix asked how many counties met the reporting deadline.

Auditor Brown replied that only one other county met the tax abstract deadline.

Budget Hearing, Treasurer, 11:15 a.m.

Treasurer Jim Bahnsen, Jennifer Effinger, and Michael Kaper were in attendance for the Treasurer's Budget Hearing.

Mr. Hampson reported that the proposed Treasurer's Office budget for 2026 reflects a 4.8% increase compared to 2025. The budget is within parameters.

Budget Hearing, Transit, 11:30 a.m.

Rick Szabrak, Aaron Kennedy and Courtney Martin were in attendance for the Transit Budget Hearing.

Mr. Hampson reported that the 2026 budget allocation remains flat from the prior year. Szabrak summarized revenues, expenses, and grants, along with projects such as vehicle replacements, bus stop redesigns, new software, and the Ohio Workforce Mobility Grant. He presented a year-over-year analysis, noting that the major change was the medical transportation contract through JFS, which now qualifies for a state match, and will bring in additional funds.

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Mr. Szabrak explained that federal funds pass through the state, and the state determines the distribution. He does not expect changes to that federal funding process.

Administrator Cordle suggested marketing transit services to Meals on Wheels clients to boost ridership.

Mr. Kennedy noted that unmet service requests are referred to the mobility manager for assistance.

Mr. Szabrak reported lower turnover within the department and said adding full-time staff will further help. The vehicle replacement plan includes replacing three buses with two new buses and one van and will move toward using three vans overall.

Commissioner Davis thanked the management team for their work improving transit operations.

Budget Hearing, Economic & Workforce Development, 11:45 a.m.

Rick Szabrak and Angel Conrad were also in attendance for the Economic & Workforce Development Budget Hearing.

Mr. Hampson reported that the 2026 Economic & Workforce Development budget reflects a 6.6% increase over 2025. Items outside parameters include employee salaries due to a new staff member, Medicare, retirement, workers' compensation, contractual services, and community support.

Mr. Szabrak noted the addition of a Career Navigator position and provided brief explanations for each item outside parameters.

Commissioner Davis shared positive feedback from a recent meeting with Ohio University Lancaster and expressed appreciation for the Workforce Center's strong reputation among local organizations.

Budget Hearing, Job & Family Services (JFS), 12:00 p.m.

Corey Clark, Heather O'Keefe, and Brandi Downhour were also in attendance for the Job and Family Services Budget Hearing.

Mr. Hampson provided an overview of 2026 budget allocations for JFS departments, noting overall increases.

Mr. Clark summarized projected 2025 revenue and demonstrated how funds are distributed across JFS departments. He explained that leveraging county funds allows JFS to obtain \$2 in federal funds for every \$1 spent, and that the General Revenue Fund (GRF) provides flexibility to allocate resources effectively.

Mr. Clark expressed appreciation for the commissioners' continued support. He compared cash balance projections with and without a levy renewal and discussed the rising costs of child placement. He noted progress toward opening a shared placement facility with nine other counties. The facility would be in Gallia County and would reduce placement costs. Mr. Clark emphasized that levels of care vary per child and that some facilities specialize in specific needs.

Commissioner Fix expressed interest in further exploring the possibility of establishing a similar facility in Fairfield County.

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Budget Hearing, Family and Children First Council (FCFC), 12:15 p.m.

Tiffany Wilson, Heather O'Keefe and Brandi Downhour were also in attendance for the Family and Children First Council Budget Hearing.

Bart Hampson reported that the 2026 allocation proposal will remain flat.

Ms. Wilson outlined the funding sources for out-of-home placements.

Administrator Cordle clarified that FCFC placements differ from Child Protective Services cases, as FCFC youth require placement support without issues of neglect or abuse.

Ms. Wilson shared an example illustrating program impact and highlighting a youth who benefited from services through the placement of a therapy dog.

Budget Hearing, Municipal Judges, 1:00 p.m.

Judge James Fields and Jackie Long were also in attendance for the Municipal Judges Budget Hearing.

Judge Fields reported that the Municipal Court's 2026 budget is within parameters and reflects a 0.7% increase, primarily due to higher contractual costs for interpreter services. He noted efforts to secure new grants for the court.

Commissioner Levacy asked about the role of technology in interpretation services.

Judge Fields explained that pre-trial hearings can be conducted by phone, but in-person interpreters are required for trials.

Commissioner Fix inquired about the residency of most defendants.

Judge Fields confirmed that most defendants are county residents and primarily from the Pickerington and Reynoldsburg areas.

Commissioner Davis asked about the court's reporting on immigration status.

Judge Fields stated that specific questions are required if a defendant indicates they are not a U.S. citizen. He added that security remains the court's greatest concern, noting that probation officers are armed and prepared for potential threats.

Budget Hearing, Municipal Clerk, 1:15 p.m.

Municipal Clerk of Courts Valeda Slone was also in attendance for the Municipal Clerk Budget Hearing.

Mr. Hampson reported that the 2026 budget is based on statutory requirements and reflects a 0.4% decrease compared to 2025.

Budget Hearing, Domestic Relations Court, 1:30 p.m.

Judge Laura Smith and Lori Lovas were also in attendance for the Domestic Relations Court Budget Hearing.



Auditor Budget Summary

10.21.2025 Budget Hearing

Budget Hearing Discussion Items

- County Auditor
 - Total Budget 5.6% or \$111,231.00 higher than 2025
 - Budget Items
 - Contract Services
 - Increase of \$39,940.00 or 20.7%
 - Increase in new DocuPet process \$27,840.00.
 - Increase in Auditor of State rate change \$12,100.00.
 - Advertising
 - Decrease of \$5,00.00 or -100%
 - Reduction in advertising is not expected in 2026.
 - Printing and Binding
 - Decrease of \$12,000.00 or -70.6%
 - General Office Supplies
 - Decrease of \$5,000.00 or -31.3%
 - Equipment, Software & Fixtures
 - Increase of \$56,500.00
 - Computer equipment replacements based on replacement schedule for 2026.
- 2026 General fund revenue projections
 - \$67.1 M, above current estimate by \$1M
 - Investment earnings of \$8M
 - Property taxes of \$14 M
 - Sales taxes of \$30.9 M
 - Casino revenues of \$2.3 M
 - Conveyance fees of \$3.25 M
 - Jail rental income c. \$181 K
 - Transfer not reflected
- Budget Commission Department
 - Equipment Maintenance
 - Budget flat at \$6,000.00 for 2026.
 - Budget for hosting services
 - Formerly, the budget was reduced to zero as no court reporting was needed.
 - \$120,500 savings to the general fund.
- Real Estate Assessment Fund
 - Details for Real Estate provided in the County Auditor Budget Presentation 2025 for 2026.



- Presentation items
 - County Auditor Budget Presentation 2025 for 2026
 - REA long term plan
 - Slide show and table of organization

Other

- N/A



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County Auditor

Budget Hearing Presentation

October 21, 2025



Objectives

- *highlight* departmental budgets
- *review* general fund revenue projections
- *report* goals & accomplishments
- *answer* questions



2026 General Fund Department - Auditor

- \$2.148 M - 7.56% increase over prior year
- planned increases in salaries and benefits within parameters, 4% increase in salaries
- 5% increase in health benefits & *coverage change anticipated*
- appropriate variable increases reflected
- reduction in vacation pay out of \$12,500, based on anticipated need being lower in 2026



General
Fund –
Auditor
Highlights
\$2.148 M

- *Up to 5% merit-based increases*
- *4% increase in salary line*
- *Codified salary of elected official*
- 5% increase in health benefit plan
- Coverage selection changes anticipated
- Planned vacation payouts (reduced)
- No new positions added to the table of organization

Contracted Services Related Lines

	2025	2026		
530000	193,143	233,083	39,940	Docu Pet 2027 PPD + AOS rate change 27,840 +12,100
554000	5,000	0	-5,000	Reduction in Adv
555000	17,000	5,000	-12,000	Removing One-Time Dog Licensing from 2025
561000	16,000	11,000	-5,000	Removing One-Time Dog Licensing from 2025
	231,143	249,083	17,940	



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- reduction in contractual services by \$17,000 based on “one-time” expense for dog license process in 2025
- increase in contractual services for Auditor of State fee changes and for grants receivables - \$12,100
- increase in contractual services for DocuPet (new process for 2026) - \$27,840
- additional reduction of \$5,000 in advertising not expected for 2026
- - Additional Change: Computer equipment replacements, based on communicated schedule for 2026 - \$56,500 increase



additional highlights – contractual services

- Contractual services
 - includes Auditor of State services
 - Moved ERP support to its own line in 2022
- *Previously highlighted the AOS changes for 2026*
- *DocuPet covered in 2025 for 2026, planning 2026 for 2027*
- *Reductions are noted in printing, advertising, and supplies*



Fixed Asset Planning

- “One-time” vehicle in 2023 – *none in 2025 or 2026*
 - Computer equipment purchased in 2022 – replacement schedule for 2026



Budget Commission Department

- 2026 budget includes \$6K for hosting services
- Formerly, the budget was reduced to zero as no court reporting was needed
- \$120,500 in savings to the general fund



Budget Commission:

Additional county savings:

*\$26,500 annually in 2022, 2023, and 2024 - & \$20,500
annually in 2025 and thereafter –
ongoing hosting only is budgeted*

That is a savings of \$120,500 through 2026

Structure + Creativity = Innovation

Innovation + Efficient Implementation = ***Public Value***

***Exponential savings
for multiple entities & taxing districts***

Request – Keep the **door open** for justifiable requests
in connection with public safety, transit, & other mapping services –
Lowered general fund costs voluntarily

*And that does not include how the services would otherwise need to be
contracted for public safety, for example*

Since 2022, actual GIS savings alone to the general
fund: \$ 625 K

Looking Ahead

- Continued **process intelligence** to inform technology decisions and approaches
- Examination of **multiple financial structures and organizations** for proper reporting; this could mean minor increases for Auditor of State reporting
- Thinking about ways to **expand lodging tax services**
 - Collect for townships
 - Need updated Commissioners' resolution
 - Might need additional appropriations (minor) for software at some point





Real Estate Assessment Fund

Special Revenue Fund

REA Fund

–

Highlights

\$3.2 M

- **Merit-based** increases (up to 5%)
 - Includes Prosecutor support (10% of Senior Assistant Prosecutor)
 - Includes minor adjustments for settlement activity
- **No allocation from general fund**
- **Long-term fund health** is monitored
- **Reinstated a GIS technician** – still 1.5 *fewer positions* on the table of organization, as compared to 2021
- Basic inter-period equity, cyclical nature

REA, rounded snapshot

- Carryover 2025, estimate \$ 3.00 M
- Estimated Receipts 3.20 M
- Estimated Expenditures 3.20 M
- Carryover 2026, estimate \$ 3.00 M



REA Long-term Plan – through 2030

- Estimating activity based on history; will monitor & adjust
- Carryover ranges from \$1.2 M to \$2.9 M
 - Fluctuations are expected for the fund
 - No major capital outlay over \$161 K through 2030
- Added GIS expenditures fully to REA *in 2022; public safety is a major effort in partnership; will monitor for additional mapping technology and support services to provide*
- .10 of lead Civil Assistant Prosecuting Attorney, ongoing



REA Long-term Plan

- Plan shows ability to meet needs
 - Sexennial reappraisal is in 2025
 - *Planning for the next triennial in 2028 & sexennial in 2031*



2026 general fund revenue projections

- **\$67.1M, above current estimate by \$1M**
- Investment earnings of \$8 M, *will adjust with notice from the Treasurer*
- Property taxes of **\$14 M**, *will monitor legislation*
- Sales taxes of \$30.9 M, *3% increase*
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- Transfer *not* reflected



Highlights of Goals

- Ongoing Strategic Planning
- Excellence in Service, Transparency, & Communications
- BOR-Budget Commission - *structural changes & new technology*
- Financial Systems –*multiple process changes, ERP structure, leveraging DocLink*
- Additional Technology –*GIS & REA*
- Supervisory Support & Training
- Leadership Focus
- Organizational Health & Learning



New Public Value



Innovation + Efficient Execution

- Technology - new services: conveyance, legal descriptions, address changes, lot splits (maturing the processes)
- Customer Service, Governance
- Collaboration (Budget Commission)
- Sustainability
- Knowledge Transfers – Job Shadowing
- Board of Revision – statewide manual
- **Structure + Creativity**
= Innovation



Employee Feedback

- 100% have one-on-one meetings with the appointing authority.
- 100% have individual goals & performance assessments.
- 100% were provided training opportunities in 2025.
- 98% report they feel supported by their supervisor.
- 98% report opportunity to identify strengths at work.
- 96% report opportunity to sharpen their strengths.
- 18% had intention to turnover, below previous 25%.
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Brand of Excellence

- *GFOA Excellence in Government Achievement Award*
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- *AGA National Leadership in Government Award*
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Questions?

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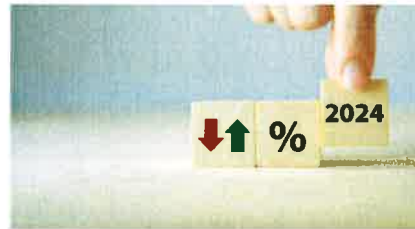


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Questions?

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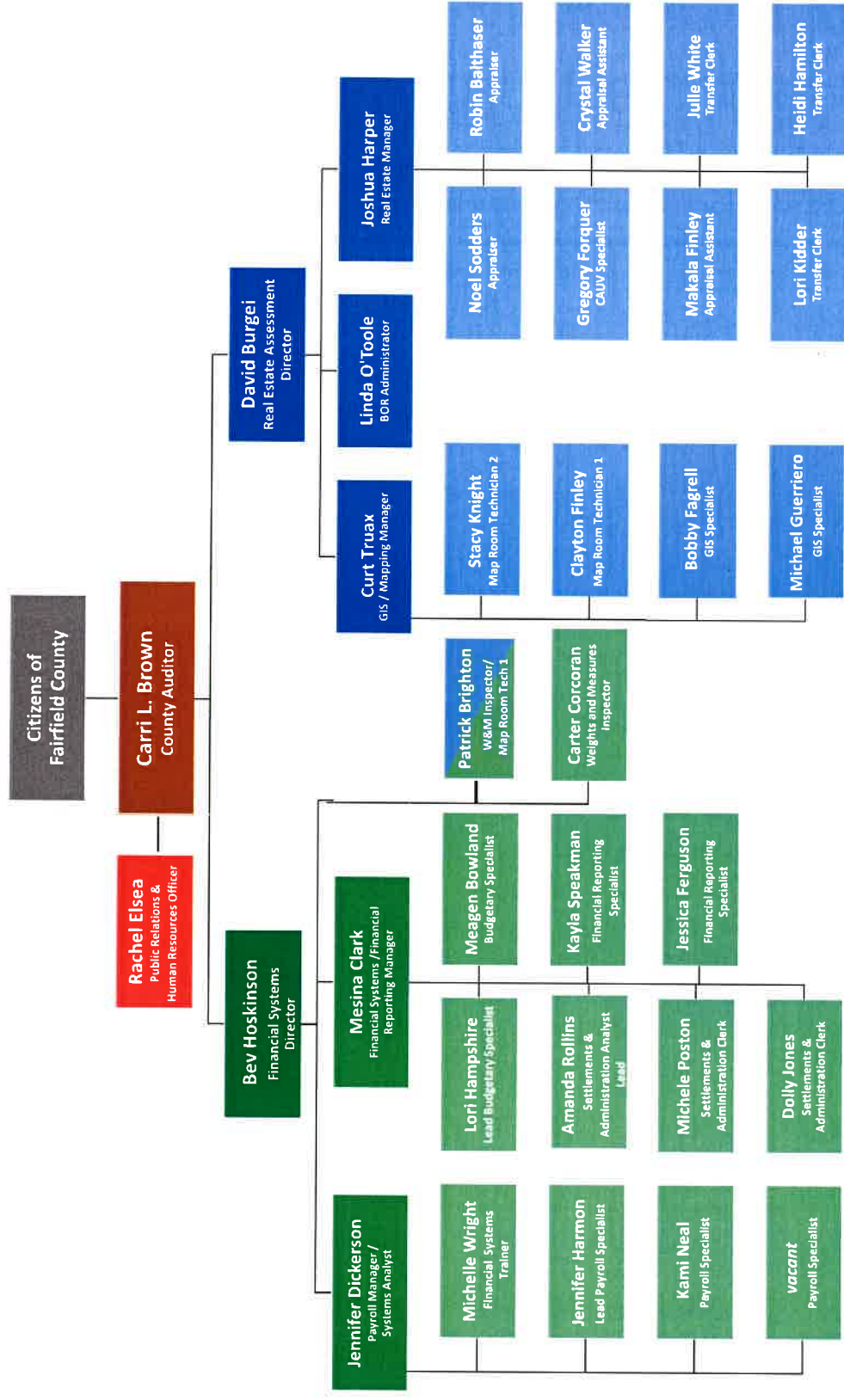


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32.375 FTE on Auditor TO
63% REA
37% General Fund
10 FTE on Prosecutor TO



Transportation Budget Summary

10.21.2025 Budget Hearing

Budget Hearing Discussion Items

- 2013-2022 Allocation \$25,000.00 per year.
- 2023-2025 Allocation \$175,000.00 per year.
- 2026 Allocation flat budget \$175,000.00

Other

- N/A

2025 Budget Review



Year over Year

SFY2025 5311 Grant	SFY2026 5311 Grant	Variance	Additional Resource Allocation Strategy
Operating - Federal: \$1,098,706 - State: \$300,000 - Local: \$1,016,216 Total: \$2,414,922	Operating - Federal: \$2,414,314 - State: \$276,000 - Local: \$2,258,314 Total: \$4,948,628	Operating - Federal: + \$1,315,608 - State: - \$24,000 - Local: + \$1,242,098 Total: + \$2,533,706	- NEMT Expense - Bus Wraps - Bus Stop Infrastructure - Additional FT Bus Operators - Bolster Transit Reserve Fund
Capital Maintenance - Federal: \$155,248 - Local: \$38,812 Total: \$194,060	Capital Maintenance - Federal: \$160,426 - Local: \$40,107 Total: \$200,533	Capital Maintenance - Federal: + \$5,178 - Local: + \$1,295 Total: + \$6,473	

Revenue

Sources of Revenue:

- Federal Transit Assistance – **\$2,574,740**
- State GRF Assistance – **\$276,000**
- General Public Fares – **\$100,000**
- Donations and Contributions from Fairfield County, City of Lancaster, Meals on Wheels, and other Municipalities – **\$395,107**
- Contract Revenue including Non-Emergency Medical Transportation MOU with JFS – **\$1,683,314**
- City of Lancaster In-Kind Match for Facility Rental – **\$60,000**



Expenses

Areas with significant change:

- Increased number of full-time Bus Operators from 9 to 11 - **\$220,981**
- Improving software to enhance efficiency for dispatching, scheduling, and bus operators, and provide a much better end user experience – **\$92,860**
- Implementing uniforms for drivers, to further strengthen Transit's professional image and brand. - **\$30,000**
- Completing wraps for 8 additional buses. - \$56,800
- Replacing three buses with two buses and one van - **\$369,945**



Grants

Name	Information
Federal/State 5311 Rural Transit Operating Grant	Reimburses 50% of operating expenses.
Federal/State 5311 Rural Transit Capital Maintenance Grant	Reimburses at 80% and covers vehicle supplies, maintenance, and the mechanic's salaries and fringes.
State 5339 Ohio Bus and Bus Facilities Grant	Provides funding at 80% for Capital Items including new Transit vehicles.
Meals on Wheels Grant	Provides funding to bolster our ability to provide service for the elderly and disabled.
Ohio Workforce Mobility Partnership Program	A study focused on expanding transportation options to help access jobs and workforce opportunities.
Feasibility Study (Bus Route Audit)	An evaluation of current transit routes to assess performance, identify service gaps, and recommend improvements for efficiency and rider accessibility.
Capital Items (Driver Tablets, Bus Wraps, and Bus Stop Signs)	Investments in equipment and infrastructure to enhance communication, improve service visibility, and create a more consistent and professional public image.

Project Timelines

Replacement Vehicles

- By June 2026

Redesigned Bus Stop Signs

- Receive in November 2025
- Installation to be completed after Route Study (early 2026)

New Software

- Operational January 2026

Ohio Workforce Mobility Partnership Grant

- By June 2026





Economic Development Budget Summary

10.21.2025 Budget Hearing

Budget Hearing Discussion Items

- Total Budget 6.6% or \$104,842.00 higher than 2025.
- Items Out of Parameters
 - Salary, Employees
 - Increase of \$73,000.00 or 15.9%
 - Adding Carrie Stone to the county budget.
 - Medicare, Pers, and Workers Comp
 - Increases based on new position
 - Contractual Services
 - Increase of \$4,000.00 or 1.5%.
 - Auditor Office fees.
 - Community Support
 - Increase of \$9,700.00 or 20.4%
 - Increase is for additional support for organizations impacted by the flood.

Other

- No additional items at this time

Org	Obj	Project	Desc	Dept	Category	2023 (Act)	2024 (Act)	2025 (Org)	2025 (Bud)	2025 (Fcst)	2026 (Org)	2026 Adj	2026 Final	2025 Org vs 2026	2025 Org vs 2026 %	2026 Notes	2025 Notes
12100149	700003	NO PROJ	TRANSFERS, CHILDREN SERVICES	Allocations/Transfers	Transfers	1,718,639.00	1,662,027.05	1,715,133.38	1,715,133.38	1,715,133.41	1,769,832.51		1,769,832.51	54,699.13	3.2%	-	Reduced based on rent and utilities are no longer being paid by JFS.
12100149	700004	NO PROJ	TRANSFERS, HUMAN SERVICES	Allocations/Transfers	Transfers	398,349.00	296,604.87	300,754.23	300,754.23	300,754.24	305,027.80		305,027.80	4,273.57	1.4%	-	Reduced based on rent and utilities are no longer being paid by JFS.
12100149	700005	NO PROJ	TRANSFERS, CSEA	Allocations/Transfers	Transfers	226,150.00	198,598.08	205,585.69	205,585.69	205,585.70	212,783.37		212,783.37	7,197.68	3.5%	-	Reduced based on rent and utilities are no longer being paid by JFS.
12100149	700306	NO PROJ	DR CRT TRANSFER TO CPS	Allocations/Transfers	Transfers	48,055.00	49,496.00	50,981.19	50,981.19	50,981.19	52,510.62		52,510.62	1,529.43	3.0%	-	Increases 3% per year.
					Total	2,391,193.00	2,206,726.00	2,272,454.49	2,272,454.49	2,272,454.54	2,340,154.30	-	2,340,154.30	67,699.81	3.0%		

Org	Obj	Project	Desc	Dept	Category	2023 (Act)	2024 (Act)	2025 (Org)	2025 (Bud)	2025 (Fcst)	2026 (Org)	2026 Adj	2026 Final	2025 Org vs 2026	2025 Org vs 2026 %	2026 Notes	2025 Notes
12100149	700020	NO PROJ	TRANSFER-JFS FOR FACF ADMINST	Allocations/Transfers	Transfers	-	3,344.54	10,000.00	10,000.00	2,500.00	10,000.00		10,000.00	-	0.0%	-	Cost associated with reimbursing JFS for their cost associated with being the fiscal agent of FCFC.



Family and Children First Council Budget Summary

10.21.2025 Budget Hearing

Budget Hearing Discussion Items

- Multi System Youth Allocation holding funding flat at \$125,000.00.
- JFS Funding for FCFC Financial Administration funding flat at \$10,000.00.
 - TRANSFER-JFS FOR FACF ADMINST
 - \$10,000.00 to offset JFS expenses associated with FCFC financials.
 - JFS is the fiscal agent of FCFC and must offset the associated cost with managing the FCFC financials. We are reimbursing JFS for actual cost only.

Other

- 2026 FCFC Budget Hearing presentation included.



Municipal Court Budget Summary

10.21.2025 Budget Hearing

Budget Hearing Discussion Items

- Municipal Court total budget 0.7% or \$10,000.00 higher than 2025
 - Contract Services
 - Increase of \$10,000 or 4%.
 - Municipal Court payroll cost.
- Municipal Court Allocation
 - 2022
 - Allocation was \$162,000.
 - 2023
 - Budget increased by \$50,000 to \$212,000.
 - The \$50,000 increase was a one-time increase to help cover shortfalls in grants.
 - 2024
 - There is a request for \$50,000 from the county to help cover half of the new facilities position. The total request is \$100k with the remaining half being covered by the city.
 - Update: This funding will be for 2024-2027, ending in 2027. The employee will be a city employee.
 - The budget will remain at \$212,000 versus dropping back to the \$162,000 allocation.
 - 2025
 - Holding allocation flat at \$212,000.00
 - 2026
 - Holding allocation flat at \$212,000.00

Other

- No additional items at this time.



Municipal Court Budget Summary

10.21.2025 Budget Hearing

Budget Hearing Discussion Items

- Municipal Court total budget 0.7% or \$10,000.00 higher than 2025
 - Contract Services
 - Increase of \$10,000 or 4%.
 - Municipal Court payroll cost.
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 - Update: This funding will be for 2024-2027, ending in 2027. The employee will be a city employee.
 - The budget will remain at \$212,000 versus dropping back to the \$162,000 allocation.
 - 2025
 - Holding allocation flat at \$212,000.00
 - 2026
 - Holding allocation flat at \$212,000.00

Other

- No additional items at this time.



Municipal Court Clerk Budget Summary

10.21.2025 Budget Hearing

Budget Hearing Discussion Items

- Budget based on statutory requirements.
- Total Budget decreased -0.4% or \$543.87 lower than 2025.
 - Estimates for 2025 were budget high in 2025. 2026 numbers are based on statutory requirements.

Other

- N/A