

Carla L. Sikes
Municipal Judge

Lisa Coughlin
Court Administrator



200 South Main Street
Pueblo, Colorado 81003

Phone (719) 562-3810
Fax (719) 562-3811

Pueblo Municipal Court

PUEBLO MUNICIPAL COURT 2018 ANNUAL REPORT



MISSION

The City of Pueblo Municipal Court's mission is to provide an efficient, equitable, and impartial forum to hear and resolve alleged violations of the City of Pueblo Municipal Code, to impose appropriate consequences, and to effectively and efficiently collect fines, costs, and penalties due the City of Pueblo.

OBJECTIVES

- ❖ To continue to provide excellent customer service and to make the Municipal Court experience a user-friendly, expeditious, and efficient process, whether the contact is personal, by phone, mail, e-mail, electronic, or otherwise
- ❖ To continue the expansion of creative alternatives for adults and juveniles, including Juvenile Diversion Programming, Adult Diversion Programming, Graffiti Removal, Community Garden, Restorative Justice, and otherwise
- ❖ To expand utilization of on-line tools, technology, and other automated solutions that impact the efficiency of the Court or access to the Court
- ❖ To help develop statewide best practices standards for municipal courts and to model those standards
- ❖ To improve office-wide proficiency with the office and case management software in order to reliably query and retrieve data
- ❖ To maintain the transparency of the Court, whereby every defendant and customer can expect to be treated the same as any other defendant and customer
- ❖ Establish and maintain collaborative working relationships with law enforcement, outside jurisdictions and social service agencies
- ❖ To significantly reduce or eliminate the number of old, dormant pending cases

2017 ACCOMPLISHMENTS

Municipal Court experienced a great deal of change in 2017 due to new legislation passed by the State. Court appointed defense counsel now appear and represent all in-custody defendants being arraigned on the jail docket. Defendants can now seal or expunge their municipal court records by filing a petition directly with Municipal Court. The Court worked with the City Attorney's Office to modify the pre-trial process to provide Defendants easier access to the Court, more information, and a better understanding of the judicial process.

This past year, Municipal Court has worked diligently to close or otherwise resolve pending old cases. The Court performed audits of different categories of cases, including unpaid parking tickets, failure to pay warrants, expired payment plans, and deferred sentences.

- In June 2017, the Court sent out approximately 5,000 notices to defendants with unpaid parking tickets dating back to 2010. Between June 1, 2017 and December 31, 2017, the Court closed 5,526 parking tickets and collected \$153,527.24 in parking fines owed to the City.
- In the fall of 2017, the Court audited all outstanding failure to pay warrants. The Court cleared 1,104 failure to pay warrants and sent the outstanding balances to collections.

- The Court also performed an audit of all open deferred sentences and was able to close or otherwise resolve 2,823 old, dormant cases.

As part of the audit process, the Court improved its case management and tracking. Notices of past due payment plans are now sent out monthly to defendants with payment plans 30 days past due. This provides defendants timely notice and allows them an opportunity to resolve it before it goes to collections. If the payment plan is not satisfied within 30 days after the date of the notice, the account is sent to collections.

In addition, every defendant placed on probation or deferred sentence is now scheduled for a mandatory review hearing at the time they enter their plea. This allows the Court to track and manage the case more efficiently. This also provides more accountability to the defendant, and in a timely fashion.

These new policies insure cases do not linger unresolved. The improvements made have resulted in increased revenues to the Court without increased fines to individual defendants.

Municipal Court staff often had to learn and implement new policies and procedures in a short period of time. The improvements and achievements made over the last year would not be possible without a truly dedicated staff. Processing the intricate details of criminal cases while hustling to assist long lines of unhappy customers with patience and accuracy is commonplace week after week. The staff at Municipal Court works very hard to achieve success and to help the department reach its goals.



CASE FILINGS

In 2017, the number of cases filed at the Court increased in several areas, including traffic, juvenile, animal offenses and parking violations. There were a total of 20,770 cases filed at the Court in 2017 compared to 18,964 in 2016. In 2017, the total amount of revenue collected through fines and costs was \$1,507,546.37 compared to \$1,318,120.49 in 2016. Court staff continues to be pressed to manage and process a high volume of cases. A significant amount of overtime was

required to maintain the existing caseload. Despite the increased workload, many customer service improvements have been made or maintained.

CUSTOMER SERVICE

- ❑ Customers can pay fines and fees over the telephone and on-line with a credit card, enabling customers to make payments without appearing in person at the Court.
- ❑ Informational pamphlets are available on 15 court-related topics, such as the arraignment process, deferred sentencing, trials, appeals, code enforcement, animal control, graffiti and a variety of others. Six of the more significant pamphlets are available in Spanish and more are forthcoming.
- ❑ The Court improved its pre-trial forms and procedures to allow *pro se* defendants to more easily prepare for trial, subpoena witnesses and request discovery.
- ❑ The Probation Department continues to provide meaningful oversight of juvenile cases, increased juvenile programming, and expanded community service alternative programs where parents can participate to assist their child in paying off fines, fees, and community service requirements.
- ❑ Case filings and revenues increased in 2017. This meant a significant amount of cash, checks, credit cards, and money orders processed on a daily basis by the staff.



SENTENCING ALTERNATIVES

Municipal Court continues to offer a variety of services, including community service, deferred payment plans, monthly payment plans, deferred sentencing, and a variety of juvenile sentencing options. Sentencing alternatives may also include counseling for substance abuse, mental health, and anger management; and classes on making better choices, anti-tobacco, anti-shoplifting, anti-weapons, and gang intervention; Restorative Justice Programming, GED programming, and a variety of extracurricular events.

COMMUNITY SERVICE PROGRAM. Every person assessed a fine in Municipal Court has the option to work community service to work off their fine. In 2017, juvenile defendants received an \$8 credit and adult defendants received a \$10 credit against their fine for every hour of

community service they worked. Defendants worked over 25,000 hours of community service and received \$233,733.12 of credit against their fines. The cumulative effect of this service helps restore public and personal property and give defendants a sense of pride in their community.

Graffiti removal remains the Court's primary community service program. Both juveniles and adults can participate in the graffiti removal program. The City suffered increased graffiti this year because of the graffiti moniker "MOP" which was painted throughout the City. Community Service worked diligently to remove this graffiti as soon as possible after it was sighted and cleaned over 325 sites tagged with "MOP" from June through December 2017.

Community service crews also pick up trash, tires and other items illegally dumped throughout the City. Community service crews participated in the Bessemer and Eastside clean ups and regularly assist Code Enforcement with weed and litter abatements. Overall, Community Service cleaned 7443 sites in 2017, primarily in the East, South and Bessemer areas.

This year Municipal Court partnered with the Pueblo Greater Chamber of Commerce and its 2017 Leadership Pueblo Class to expand its community service program with the addition of a community garden. The community garden is located at 205 East B Street and officially opened in September 2017. The community garden will be maintained by Municipal Court's community service crews with all produce grown to be donated to local soup kitchens and food banks. The community garden is handicap accessible and will allow greater opportunities for adults and juveniles to perform community service with the Court.



TECHNOLOGY

Pueblo Municipal Court continues to be one of few municipal courts in the State that are "paperless," meaning the Court uses electronic scanning (OptiView) software for document imaging, scanning, electronic filing, and paperless processing of cases. The result of this technology is overwhelmingly positive - all aspects of cases, including photos, letters, remarks, dispositions, etc., are available to the Judge and the staff at the click of a mouse. All case

information can be easily accessed both in the Court Clerk's Office and in the Courtroom. The office appears less cluttered, more organized, and electronic files are located quickly.

Representatives from municipal courts throughout the state have visited Pueblo Municipal Court over the last year to learn about our system. Others look to Pueblo Municipal Court as a model to follow when transitioning to a paperless system. Increased training has been provided to staff to allow them to fully utilize the technology available to the Court. The Court continually looks for ways to improve the Court through technology. One by one, we are finding new and easier ways to electronically process the various components of case management. We continue to look for ways to improve services, assist customers quickly, and reduce the likelihood of errors.

SAFETY AND SECURITY

The growing security related needs of court facilities across the nation continue to force courts to take a look at their security plans and has led Municipal Court to implement a number of security related measures to help maintain the safety of the public, Court staff, and the Court itself. Court staff received increased training this year in security and safety procedures. The Court worked with the Police Department and IT Department to improve emergency protocols and electronic security throughout the Court.



In October, the Court hired a part-time temporary Court Marshal to provide security during high risk arraignment dockets. The Court Marshal also acts as a liaison between the Court and the jail to coordinate transport of inmates and track timed served. Finally, the Court Marshal helps to track down and contact defendants with outstanding warrants.

WHAT LIES IN THE IMMEDIATE FUTURE

Goals for the future are mainly defendant related and geared toward improving outcomes while making the Court a more user-friendly operation. Change is necessary in a court environment in order to stay on top of legislation and to manage the ever-changing flow of court cases. Coexisting with constant change is a requirement for success. Several projects that have been recently implemented or are on the horizon for the Court include:

- **ADDITION OF AN ADULT PROBATION PROGRAM.** Pueblo Municipal Court has a strong juvenile program but to date, does not have an adult probation program. The Court does not currently have sufficient staff to track alternative sentencing for adults. As a result, the Court does not utilize alternative sentencing for adults such as in-home detention, work release, alcohol and drug treatment or mental health treatment. The Court is missing opportunities to intervene in a meaningful way and potentially reduce recidivism.

In late 2017, the City Manager approved the hiring of two part-time temporary probation case managers. Because of the budgetary process, the Court just recently submitted an ordinance requesting City Council to appropriate the necessary funds.

- **BOOT CAMP.** Pueblo Municipal Court is partnering with the Police Department to start a boot camp for juvenile defendants. Higher risk juvenile defendants between the ages of 12 and 15 with more than two cases pending in Municipal Court may be sentenced boot camp. The camp will be held at Central High School and will run Tuesday through Friday from 8:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. Participants will learn discipline, self-control, basic nutrition and hygiene, conflict resolution, communication skills and self-confidence through a combination of physical training and classroom sessions. Parents will also have to participate in the camp by attending parenting and communication classes for at least 8-10 hours spread over the three week program. Local agencies, companies and individuals including Catholic Charities, Crossroads and Parkview Hospital have agreed to teach the classroom sessions.
- **ELECTRONIC SIGNATURE PADS.** One of our challenges is making sure defendants have a meaningful opportunity to review all forms and information before signing them. The Court is currently working with the IT Department to research and then purchase tablets to be installed at the front counter. The clerks will be able to send copies of all forms to the tablet for the Defendant to review fully before signing.



MUNICIPAL COURT PERSONNEL

Municipal Court is a challenging but rewarding work environment. Staff interact with the public on a daily basis and is challenged daily with the volume of information and data they must accurately process. In addition, policies and procedures change often as a result of new laws. As a result, consistent application of the policies and procedures is always a challenge. Monthly staff meetings and trainings are held to help insure staff is aware of the changes and how to apply any new policies and procedure.

Turnover in court staff is low over the last year. This has allowed staff to build a more cohesive team environment. The Court encourages staff to participate in team building opportunities on and off the job. This past year, every court staff member participated in the YMCA Corporate Cup. In a year-end personnel survey, seventy-five percent of Court staff ranked their overall job satisfaction as “Very High.” The remaining twenty-five percent ranked their overall job satisfaction as “High.”



COLLABORATIVE EFFORTS

Municipal Court receives donations and grants from throughout the community. In 2017, a CDBG grant was used to purchase a 4-wheel drive Ford Excursion for the community service program. Local service clubs and other organizations continue to donate funds for T-shirts for special events and parades, graffiti removal equipment, and paint.

Municipal Court relies in part on other agencies and departments to accomplish its mission. The Pueblo County Sheriff’s Office has historically assisted the Court and the citizens of Pueblo by housing defendants sentenced to jail on municipal offenses. Due to severe overcrowding in the Pueblo County Jail, the Pueblo County Sheriff began restricting the City’s use of the jail. The Pueblo County Sheriff currently refuses to hold any defendants sentenced on municipal only violations for any duration of time regardless of the crime or history of the defendant.

As a result, the City and Municipal Court have had to develop new relationships with out-of-county detention centers. The City currently has contracts in place to house defendants in the Douglas County and Park County jails. The imposition of jail continues to be limited to serious offenses, serious repeat offenders, repeat offenders with outstanding warrants, and offenders who have defiantly refused to comply with court orders. The Municipal Court Marshal coordinates with the Pueblo Police Department and Park County to transport defendants to these out-of-county facilities.

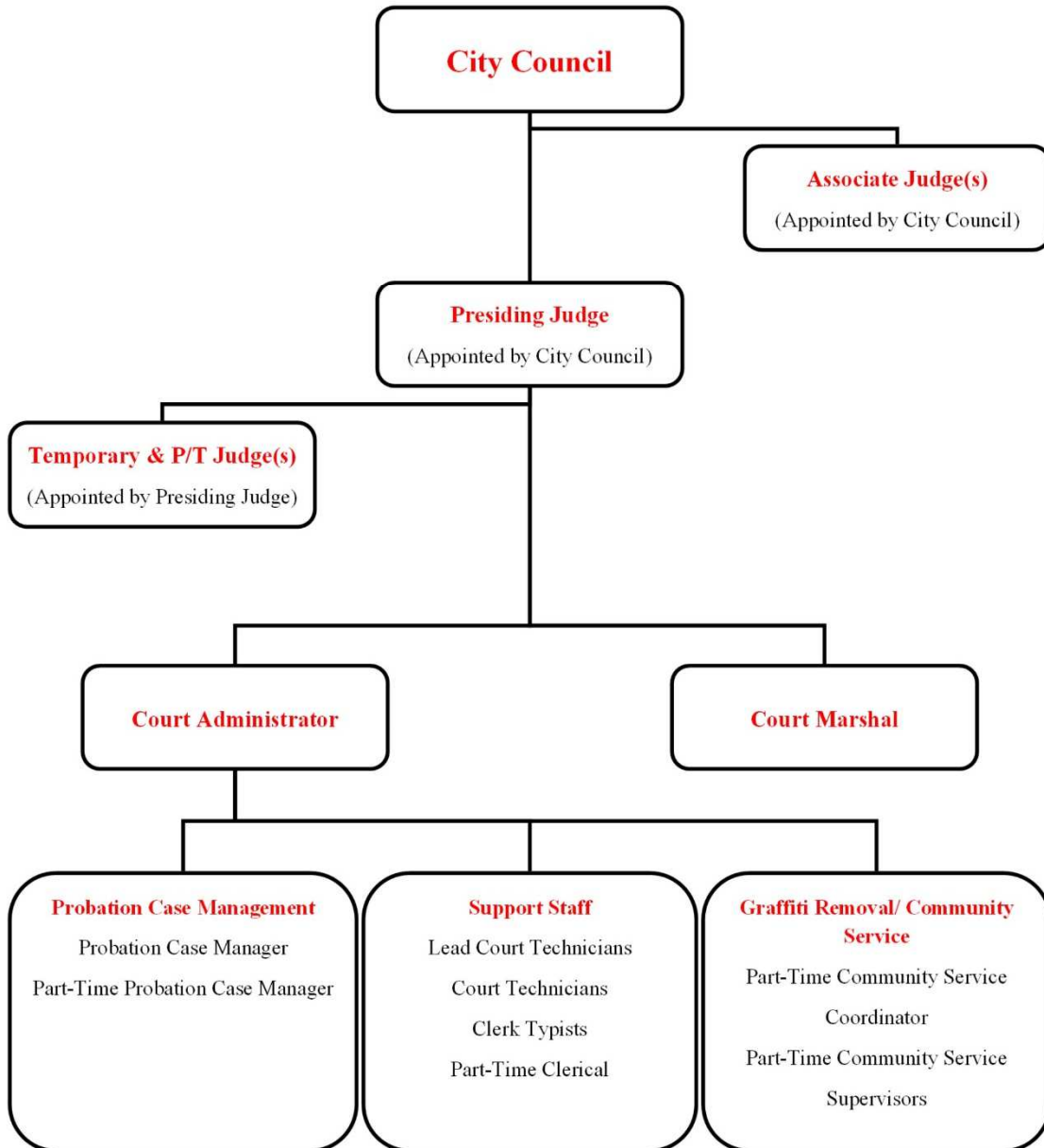
COST CONTAINMENT

The nature of the Court environment is unique to nearly every other City department in that our caseloads can fluctuate drastically from week to week. Fluctuations make it difficult to estimate certain departmental expenses, such as overtime, work release insurance, printing, etc. The Court relies heavily on computers and technology, both of which can be costly to maintain. Municipal Court makes every effort to manage expenses and reduce costs whenever possible while continuing to provide excellent customer service.

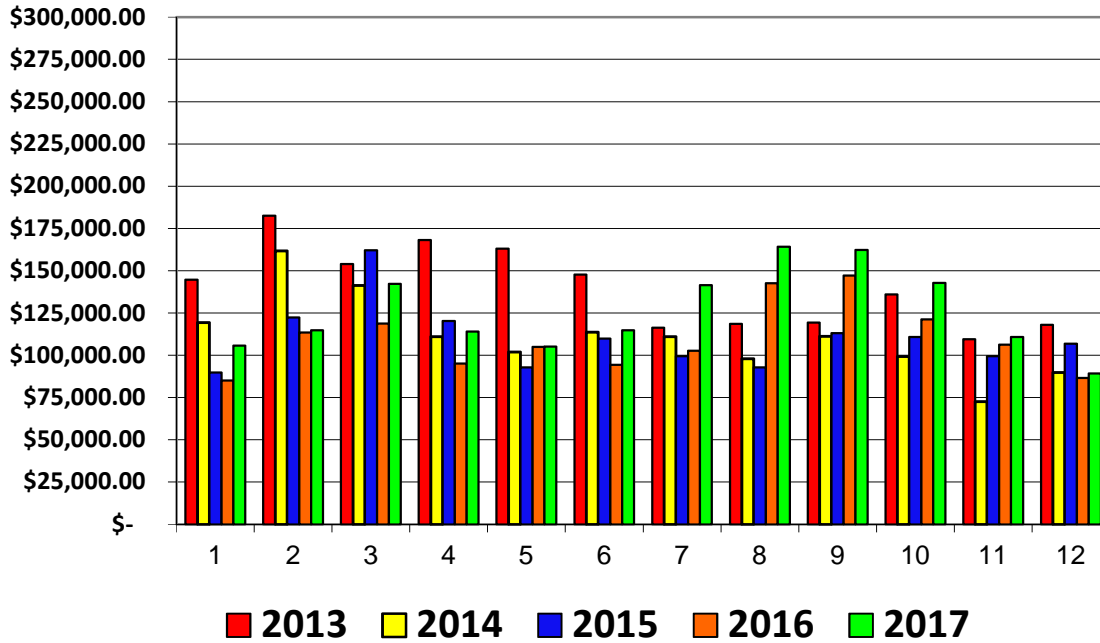
Close scrutiny of municipal courts statewide by advocacy groups has led to increased expectations for municipal courts to provide more thorough processes and additional programs. Over the past year, the Court has brought in a temporary judge and operated both courtrooms on several occasions in order to meet the demands and time constraints caused by the increased expectations. In addition, these increased expectations have led to a significant increase in cost to the Court for court appointed defense counsel.



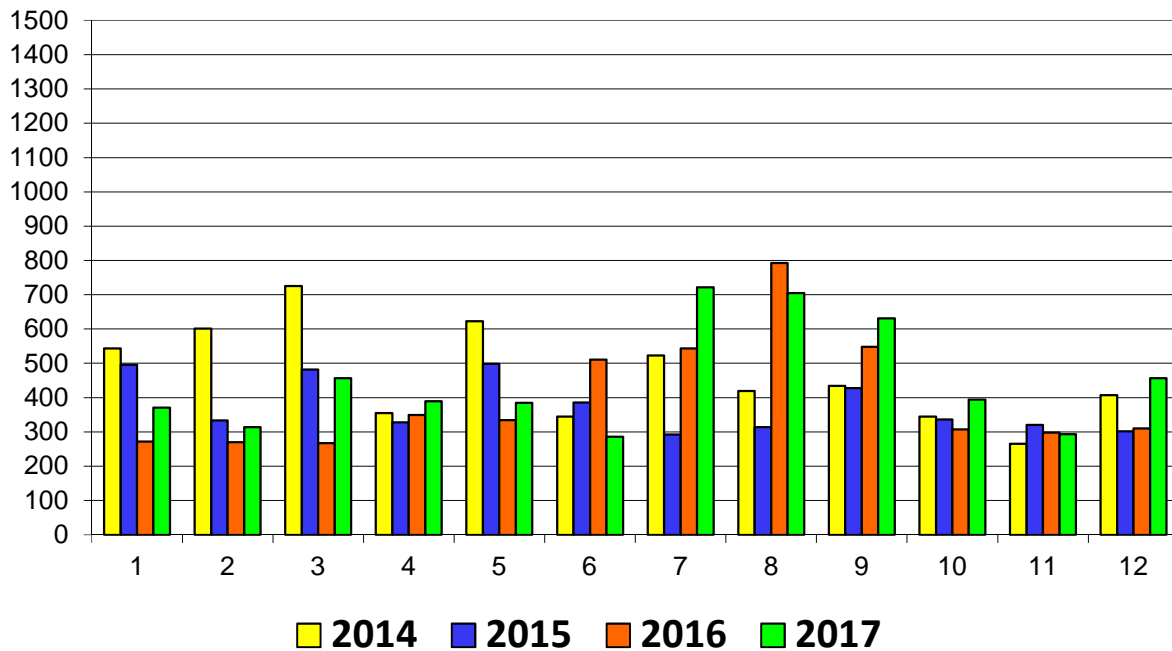
**City of Pueblo Municipal Court
Organizational Chart: February 8, 2018**



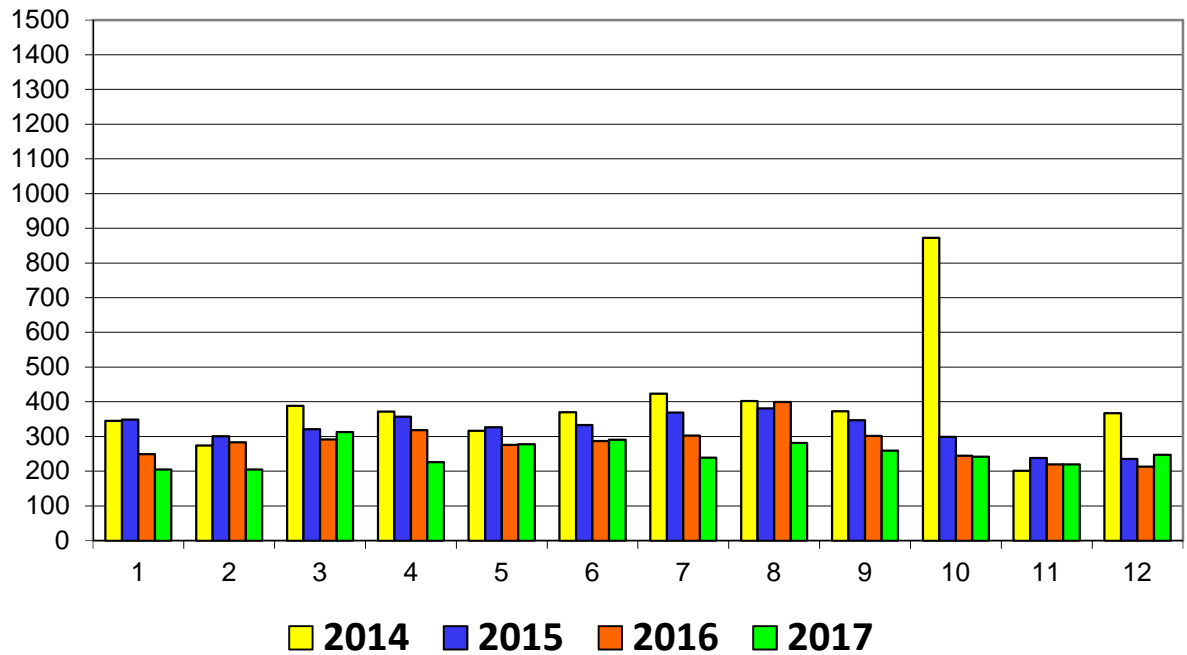
COURT REVENUE



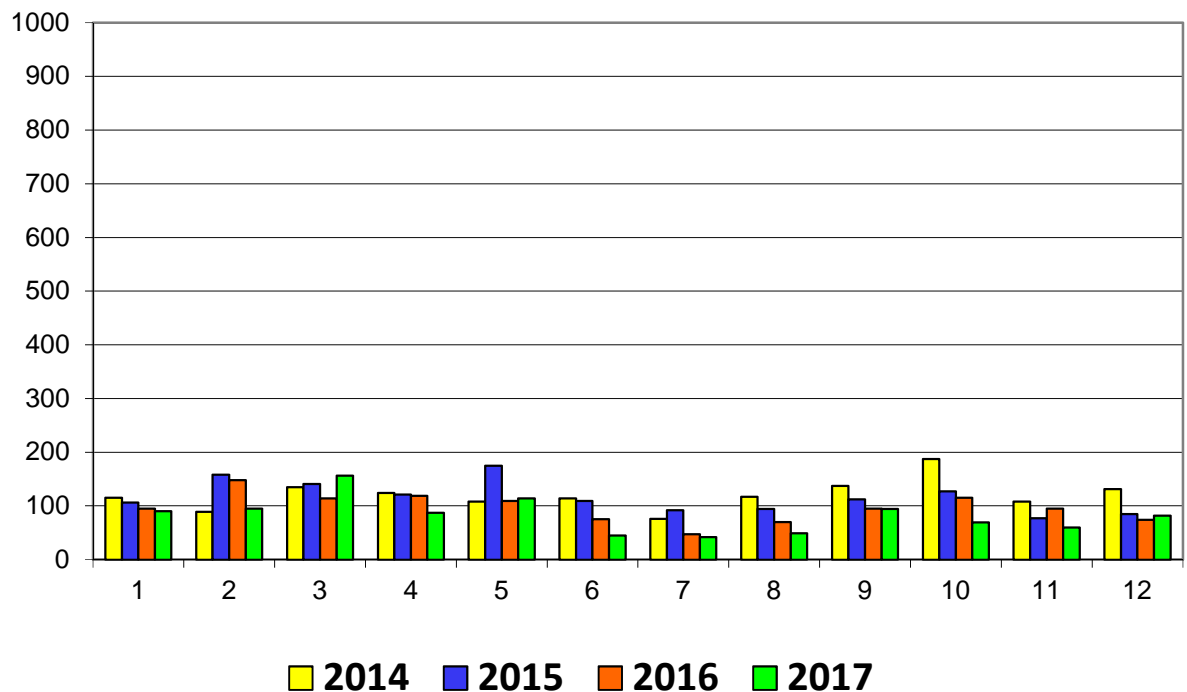
TRAFFIC CHARGES FILED



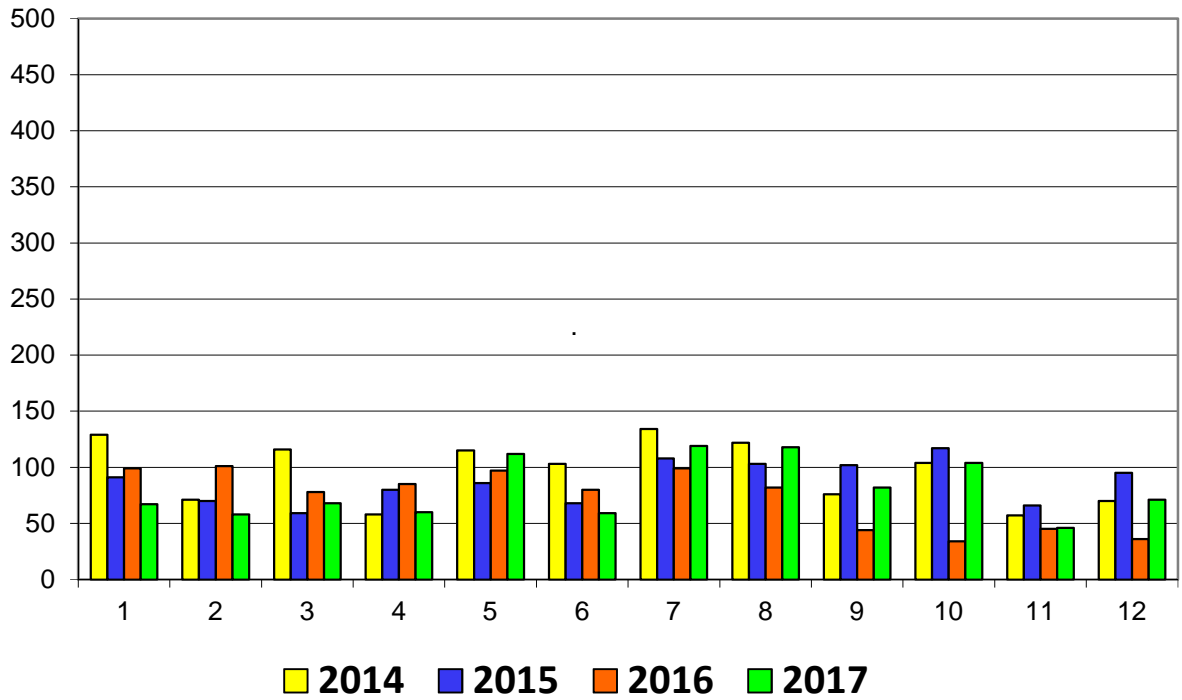
ADULT GENERAL OFFENSE CHARGES FILED



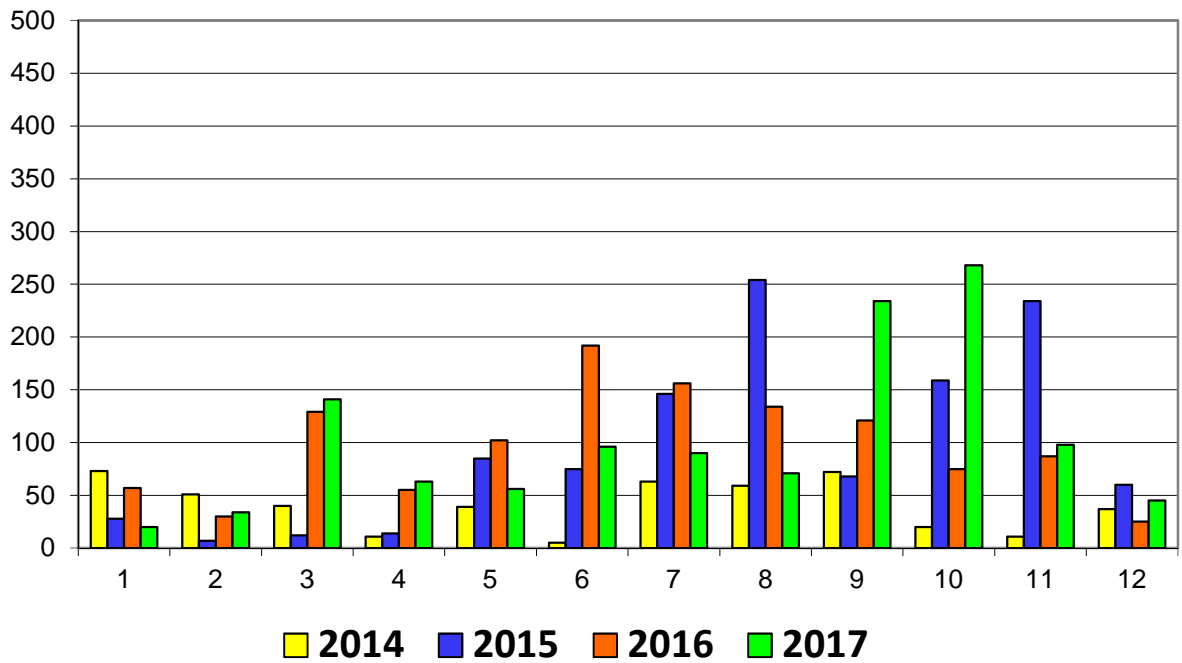
JUVENILE GENERAL OFFENSE CHARGES FILED



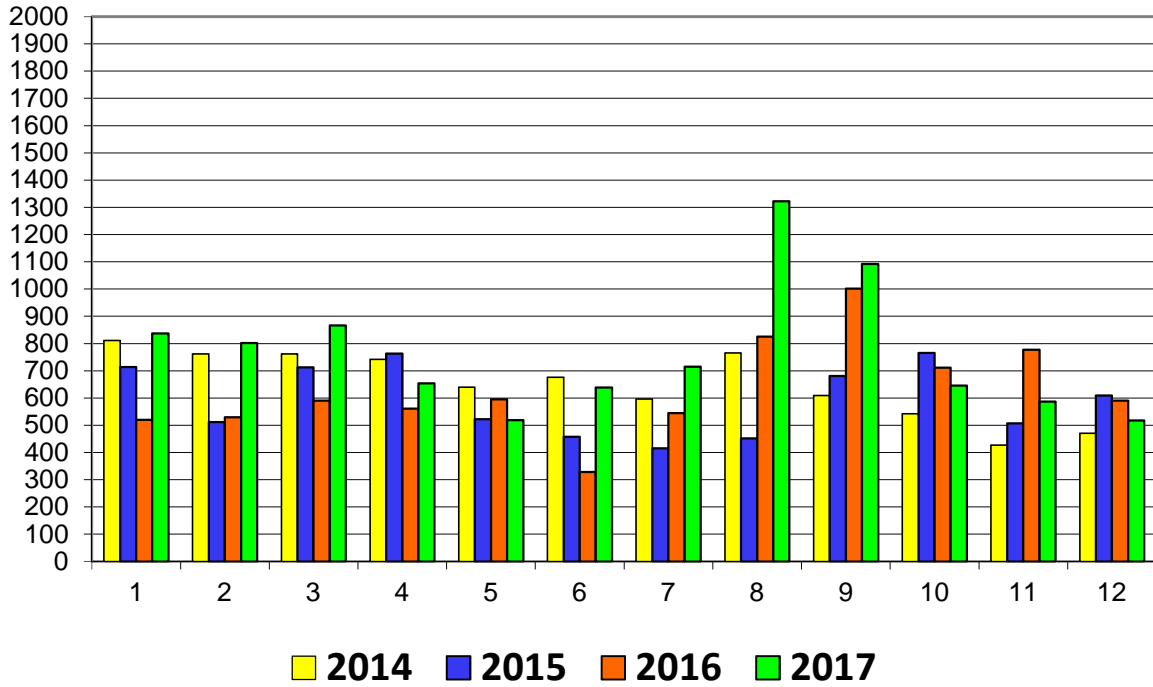
ANIMAL OFFENSE CHARGES FILED



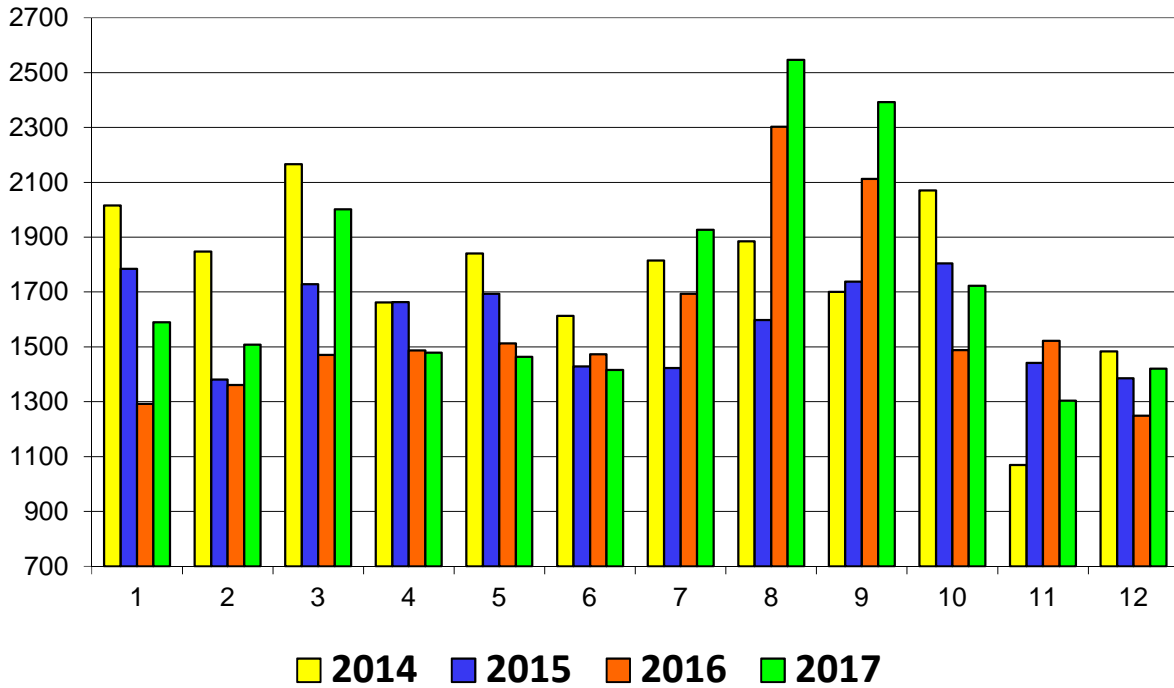
CITY COMPLAINT CHARGES FILED POLICE SUPPORT-SALES TAX-HEALTH-REG'L BLDG



PARKING TICKETS FILED



TOTAL CHARGES FILED



Collections Revenue by Month

