



SUWANEЕ'S APPROACH TO MUNICIPAL COURT

City of
Suwanee
georgia

BY THE NUMBERS:

14,000

Average number of cases processed each year

\$16.25

Average cost of processing a single case

106

Arrestment sessions held in 2016

98%

Average percentage of cases disposed monthly

WHAT'S ON THE DOCKET:

Suwanee's Municipal Court hears and adjudicates traffic offenses, some misdemeanors, and City ordinance violations written by Suwanee police officers. The Court also processes tickets from Gwinnett County Animal Control and Georgia State Patrol that are written in the City limits of Suwanee.

BACKGROUND: Suwanee's Municipal Court adjudicates traffic offenses, some misdemeanor cases, and local ordinance violations that have occurred within the city limits of Suwanee. Our judges and prosecuting attorneys are appointed by the City Council and serve Suwanee on a part-time basis. A full-time Court Administrator oversees the daily operations, with the assistance of four Deputy Clerks. Suwanee police officers provide security for our court building and civilian bailiffs assist in the courtroom.

APPROACH: Many assume that "winning" or "losing" is what matters most to citizens in their interactions with the judicial system. Research consistently demonstrates that one's opinion of court is shaped more by the court users' perception of how they were treated in court and whether the decision making process seems fair. We also recognize that a municipal court may be the first and only experience our customers have with the judicial system.

Our guiding philosophy is that Suwanee's municipal court provides the highest quality of customer service in an efficient, professional, and fair manner. We provide a customer-friendly environment where we treat our customers like the neighbors and community members that they are. While law mandates some of the decisions we can make, the overall goal is to educate customers and encourage future decisions that keep our community safe and reduce instances of recidivism. By employing knowledgeable and professionally trained personnel, we treat each customer fairly and with integrity while seeking to maintain the public's respect, confidence, and satisfaction.

We conduct an annual customer satisfaction survey. Our customers consistently rank Suwanee's court very highly with regard to being treated fairly and with courtesy and respect.

CUSTOMER FRIENDLY CONVENIENCE: We employ several strategies in an effort to minimize our court users' time away from family and work and make the adjudication process convenient and efficient. We offer both morning and afternoon court sessions. Court staff continually monitors the docket in an effort to contain it to a manageable size and minimize the session length. Court customers may submit payments 24/7/365 either online or by phone or in person during traditional business hours at either Municipal Court or the self-service kiosk in City Hall.

For those who require probation, the City contracts with a private probation company that operates a location within Suwanee. In addition to traditional probation services, our provider offers a GED preparation course, resume reviews, interview skills and job placement assistance, access to a kiosk for job searches, and other classes.

YOUTH COURT - A SECOND CHANCE: Beginning in October 2015 and the first of its kind in Gwinnett County, Suwanee's Hope Court provides a second chance for offenders under the age of 21 who have committed lesser crimes such as speeding, texting while driving, open container, shoplifting, and drug uses. These first time offenders can plead guilty and receive a modified sentence - usually a small fine and community service, maybe completion of a class or visit to the Teen Victim Impact Panel - and have the incident cleared from their records. Hope Court is held twice each month with both teenagers and their parents in attendance. During the court session, participants watch a video detailing the negative effects of impaired driving and drug and alcohol use and then meet with a prosecutor to develop a plan of action.

WELCOME. BIENVENIDO. 환영: Many customers in our court speak languages other than English. We work with the police officers to identify those who may benefit from interpretation assistance during their court session. These customers are scheduled for our bimonthly Language Court, during which we have interpretation services readily available for the customers to easily communicate with prosecutors, judges, and staff. We are also proud to have two bilingual judges fluent in Spanish and Korean. Our Language Court provides a friendly, accessible environment for all and ensures customers are comfortable in our court and can comprehend the proceedings.

A LEADER IN TECHNOLOGY: We are proud that our court is considered a leader in technology and innovation. We were the first court in Georgia to "go paperless," meaning all records are generated, transmitted, and saved electronically from the time a ticket is issued until signatures are recorded digitally to complete the adjudication process. This technology significantly reduces the amount of paper used, in addition to improving efficiency, accuracy, and data security. The Council of Municipal Court Judges has recognized Suwanee for setting the bar in innovation, proficiency, and productivity.