

TCC Minutes

Title: Public Safety & Criminal Justice Reform Committee Budget Hearing

Date + Time: Tuesday, January 6, 2026; 3:00 pm

Location: Council Chambers

Attendees: John Hobbs III, Vanice Williams, Erin Kramer, Theresa Morris, George Sarantou, Theresa Gadus, Cerssandra McPherson

Also Attending:

Absentees:

Overview

The City of Toledo's 2026 proposed budgets for the Law Department, Municipal Court, Fire and Rescue, and Police Department emphasize staff retention, service continuity, public safety outcomes, and operational efficiency amid fiscal constraints and anticipated workforce challenges. While several departments report improved performance metrics, staffing stability and long-term capacity remain core concerns for Council consideration.

Law Department

- 2026 Budget: \$9.2 million (\$180,000 decrease from 2025).
- Staffing: 36 FTEs, including 29 attorneys (12 prosecutors, 17 civil).
- Key Focus: Attorney retention and market competitiveness through salary and equity adjustments.
- Domestic Violence (DV) Unit: Three-person unit and dedicated clerk maintained.

Outcomes & Issues

- Overall DV convictions have risen since the unit was created in 2023.
- Slight increase in misdemeanor DV cases in 2025.
- Council expressed strong support for the DV unit and requested deeper analysis of case outcomes, recidivism, and system effectiveness.

Toledo Municipal Judges/Court

- Staffing Increase: +4.69 FTEs due to a revised courtroom security model.
- Security Savings: Use of part-time Port Authority officers as bailiffs reduced reliance on sheriff contracts and generated General Fund savings.
- Fully Staffed: First time in approximately five years due to approved wage increases.
- Case Volume: Continues to increase annually.

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Key Initiatives

- Launch of the Court Help Center to support self-represented litigants.
- ADA-compliant, mobile-optimized website.
- Contract mediator pilot and grant-funded probation fellow.
- Collections program has recovered \$34M+ since 2005 at no cost to the General Fund.
- Planned AI chatbot to assist court users.

Council Feedback

- Positive response to Help Center and technology improvements.
- Questions regarding usage, efficiency, and avoidance of service duplication.
- Declining fine revenue attributed to removal of vehicle registration holds.

Fire and Rescue Department

- 2026 Budget: Over \$106 million; 92% wages and benefits.
- Hiring: New class of 20 firefighters planned to maintain staffing.
- Vacancies: Three fire inspector positions (one actively being filled).
- Capital Investments: Fire/EMS vehicle replacement, facilities, analytics software.
 - 4 fire engines arriving in 2026
 - 3 ambulances scheduled for 2028

Council Concerns

- Impact of fire inspector vacancies on community safety.
- Reduced Capital Improvement Fund support.
- Need for creative strategies to fund stations, equipment, and inspections.

Police Department

2025 Public Safety Outcomes

- Robberies down 26%
- Burglaries down 10%
- Auto theft down 2%
- Shootings down 16%
- Calls for service down 3%
- Current staffing: 611 sworn officers

2026 Budget Challenges

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- Academy class reduced to 25 recruits.
- 35–40 retirements anticipated, creating significant staffing risk.
- Personnel costs ≈ 90% of the budget.
- Vehicle replacement funded with \$1M from CIP.
- Drone program successful but unfunded for 2026; alternative funding being explored.

Operational Shifts

- Transition to monthly, district-focused initiatives.
- Community Service Officers realigned with council districts.

Council & Public Concerns

- Staffing reductions due to retirements.
- Continued demand for a police presence on Sylvania Avenue.
- No funding included for a new police facility despite ongoing site exploration.
