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**THORNTON, COLORADO
MUNICIPAL COURT
MANAGEMENT REVIEW**

FINAL REPORT
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I. INTRODUCTION

At the request of the court manager of the Thornton Municipal Court, the National Center for State Courts (NCSC) conducted a management review of operations in this court. This report is based on research, interviews, and observations conducted by the NCSC project team members during a site visit the week of June 22, 1998. The purpose of this project is to help the court adjudicate cases in the most effective and efficient manner possible by identifying operational functions that are done well and to recommend changes to those functions where the court has an opportunity to improve its delivery of services.

Located in Adams County, Colorado, the Thornton Municipal Court is a court of limited jurisdiction serving the approximately 71,000 residents who populate the City of Thornton. The court is located adjacent to the Thornton Police Department at 9500 Civic Center Drive, in Thornton. The court is a qualified municipal court of record, established to hear and determine all cases arising under the Thornton City Charter or the ordinances of the City of Thornton, subject to appeal in the manner provided by law.

Limited jurisdiction courts, like Thornton Municipal Court, remain the basis for much of the public's impression of the administration of justice. With public trust and confidence as a fundamental goal of courts nation-wide, the judge, court manager, and the lawmakers in the City of Thornton must be concerned with the service provided by its municipal court. Many elements are necessary for the effective administration of justice. These are discussed in detail below. The recommendations in this report constitute those areas where the NCSC project staff believes that the Thornton Municipal Court should direct both thought and resources toward improving the quality and administration of justice in the processing of the matters within its jurisdiction. This report thus focuses on the primary institutional issues confronting every court: caseload management and court operations.

II. METHODOLOGY

To complete the court assessment, the NCSC project team visited the Thornton Municipal Court to collect information about case processing and calendaring. During the site visit, project staff interviewed the judge, court manager, court staff, and other stakeholders to document the current caseflow management practices and the overall office operations. During each interview, the NCSC project team sought input regarding current issues facing the court. Please see Appendix A for a summary of some of the interview responses.

NCSC staff members also distributed to each employee a questionnaire to document staffing, duties, responsibilities, work activity, management, and supervisory patterns. A completed questionnaire was received from each employee and evaluated by the NCSC project team.

Additionally, project team members observed clerk's office operations and attended court sessions during the site visit. The project team also reviewed the numerous documents that the Thornton Municipal Court provided. These included written procedures, daily calendars, forms, job descriptions, annual budget information, the Thornton Municipal Code, organization charts, and employee handbooks.

The project team then analyzed the information collected to identify the current operational practices of the court. More specifically, the project team analyzed the various issues that have implications on efficiency and effectiveness of personnel and staffing, caseflow management, workflow, records management, financial management, and automation and technology. In its evaluation of the Thornton Municipal Court, the project team referenced national standards and practices for limited jurisdiction court operations. Specifically, the collected data was compared to the characteristics of national standards such as the *Trial Court Performance Standards*¹ and the *Standards Relating to Trial Courts*.² National research and trial court experience have proven that achievement of these standards is a vital component of effective court operations.

Upon review of the material provided to the project staff and an analysis of the observations made during the site visits, the project staff believes that it obtained an

¹ National Center for State Courts, *Trial Court Performance Standards*, Williamsburg, VA, 1990.

² American Bar Association, *Standards Relating to Trial Courts*, Chicago, IL, 1992.

accurate appreciation for the nature of the Thornton Municipal Court operations and of the difficult tasks confronted by the court. Therefore, the project staff feels a high level of assurance in assessing the strengths and weaknesses of certain Thornton Municipal Court practices, and in making recommendations about certain operations of the court.

III. SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on its observations and findings, the NCSC project team makes the following recommendations for improving the operations of the Thornton Municipal Court. All recommendations will be described in detail in the report sections that follow.

Personnel and Staffing

Recommendation 1: At least once per annum, the presiding judge and court manager should meet with the Thornton City Council and mayor to discuss issues regarding separation of powers and any other areas of concern.

Recommendation 2: The Thornton Municipal Court should establish a weighted caseload system to determine the need for additional FTE. The court should consider contacting the Colorado State Court Administrator's office to explore ways in which the weighted caseload system used in Colorado State courts might fit the needs of the Thornton Municipal Court.

Calendaring and Caseflow Management

Recommendation 3: The court should work with the prosecutor to initiate a policy whereby prior to the court date, the prosecutors review and complete paperwork for cases worthy of deferred process.

Recommendation 4: The court should incorporate trial scheduling capabilities into any future case management software that the court may use.

Recommendation 5: The court should extend its hours of service to minimize unnecessary costs for traffic litigants.

Recommendation 6: The court should adopt the ABA case processing goals as described in Section V-B-2 of this report.

Recommendation 7: The court should develop caseflow management, as opposed to caseload volume, reports to support the efficient and effective disposition of cases.

Recommendation 8: The Thornton Municipal Court should adopt a court policy requiring written requests for continuances that are heard on the record and granted only upon a showing of good cause.

Workflow

Recommendation 9: The court should automate all forms that the clerk's office currently completes manually.

Recommendation 10: Thornton Municipal Court should connect its case management system to the Colorado Crime Information Computer (CCIC) to avoid duplication of effort in its management of warrants.

Recommendation 11: The court should implement a juror orientation.

Records Management

Recommendation 12: The court should begin to explore technologies such as bar coding, which could help the court with its future records management needs.

Recommendation 13: The court should review and revise all forms used to make them understandable and well organized. When the court is ready to re-order a form, it should review that form for stylistic elements.

Recommendation 14: The court should set a goal to reduce the overall number of forms used and then begin to review and revise forms to meet the goal.

Recommendation 15: The court should assign a descriptive name and unique number to each form. The name of the form should be printed clearly at the top center of the page of each form, including all computer-generated letters.

Recommendation 16: The court should clearly identify and index each form.

Recommendation 17: Court staff should participate on a forms review task force. This task force should consist of the judge, the court manager, and a deputy clerk.

Financial Management, Accounting, and Collections

Recommendation 18: The Thornton Municipal Court should have a full-scale financial audit performed by an outside professional auditor with appropriate experience.

Recommendation 19: The court should review its collection policies and procedures periodically and in writing make clear the collection policy of the court. Fine and assessment collection should be a regular topic for discussion at court staff meetings.

Automation and Technology

Recommendation 20: If the Thornton Municipal Court has not done so already they should have the Local Area Network (LAN) manager limit access to the Thornton Municipal Court's directories to only Thornton Municipal Court staff.

Recommendation 21: The new case management system should be built using modern development tools to allow for easier code and system maintenance.

IV. PERSONNEL AND STAFFING

A. Organizational Structure

Chapter VI of the Thornton City Charter pertaining to Personnel and Career Service establishes the Thornton Municipal Court governed by the city council. Presently, a presiding judge and seven other attorneys, who periodically serve as associate judges in the presiding judge's absence, adjudicate violations of city ordinances in the court. Judges are appointed by the city council to serve at the pleasure of council. The presiding judge, also designated by the council, determines the forms of complaint and all other rules, procedures and proceedings in the Thornton Municipal Court. The presiding judge of the municipal court is responsible for the timely and legal processing of cases in the court; while the court manager is responsible for overall court administration.

Court staff members are employees of the City of Thornton and are governed by the policies and procedures for all city employees. The court manager position is equivalent in pay range and stature to that of a city division manager. The court manager reports to the director of the city finance department. Operational responsibility of the clerk's office falls directly under the court manager. The court employs six deputy court clerks, one bailiff/hearing officer, one temporary part-time bailiff and one part-time, high school intern, all who report directly to the court manager. A detailed breakdown of the duties and responsibilities of each employee is illustrated in Figure 1.

At first blush, the structure of the Thornton Municipal Court seems inconsistent with American constitutional principles to have a judicial branch agency placed under both the executive (finance manager) and legislative (city council) branch authorities. Separation of legislative, executive, and judicial branches is a fundamental principle of American government. Upon close examination, however, the situation in Thornton Municipal Court makes good sense, despite its apparent violation of the separation of power principle.

First, the rigorous separation of power does not work at every level of American government. While it is extremely important at the federal and state level, it becomes less and less significant with smaller and local governmental bodies. For example, the council-city manager model, employed in many American cities, largely merges the

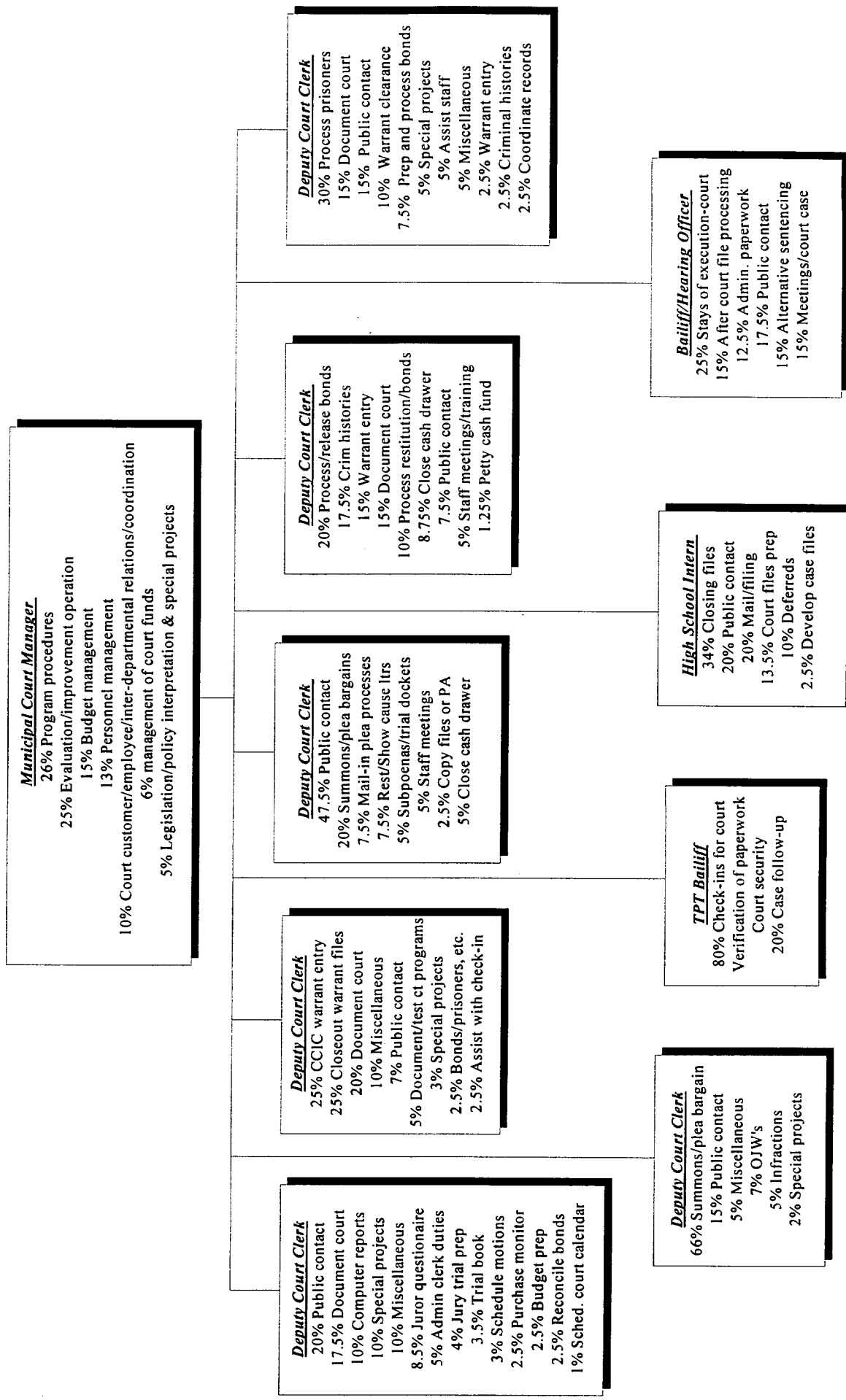
legislative and executive functions. Second, given the fact that the municipal court in Thornton has one part-time judge, a court manager, and only seven full-time staff in the clerk's office, it would be extremely inefficient to try to operate it as a separate, free-standing branch of government.

The most important point is the independence of the *judicial function*, as opposed to *administrative functions*. Although the judge is appointed by city council, he or she retains the authority and responsibility to dispose of cases that come before the court. That independence is at the heart of separation of powers. The NCSC project team understood that occasionally, the Thornton City Council receives complaints regarding the decisions made on the bench and asks the judge to answer to those decisions. This is less than fully appropriate. An appellate process must be followed, with a judge sitting in a higher court hearing the merits of the complaint and making a decision to reverse or uphold the Thornton judge's decision. The judge must remain independent of legislative (council) or executive influence in the administration of justice and disposition of cases so that the basic constitutional principle may be honored.

The judge and court manager must protect the independence of the judicial function while working under executive and legislative branches for administrative purposes. This should be accomplished through education of the city council and the mayor. It is therefore recommended that at least once per year the presiding judge and court manager meet with the city council and mayor to discuss issues regarding separation of powers and any other areas of concern.

Recommendation 1: Once per annum the presiding judge and court manager meet with the city council and mayor to discuss issues regarding separation of powers and any other areas of concern.

Figure 1
Thornton Municipal Court Organization Chart & Employee Duties



B. Staffing Levels

1. Comparison to Similar Municipal Courts

The following section discusses the present staffing level of the Thornton Municipal Court and compares it to similar Colorado municipal courts with relative caseloads. To prepare this section of the report, the NCSC project team compiled data from surveys generated by the Colorado Association for Municipal Court Administration (CAMCA). In addition, the project team directly contacted selected courts to obtain information not provided in the CAMCA surveys. To select comparable courts, the NCSC project team sought similarities in population, number of case filings, dispositions, and number of court staff. As a result, the municipal courts in Englewood, Greeley, Northglenn, and Westminster were selected.

Table 1 and the following analysis compares the reported filings in each selected court for the year 1997. To establish a more analogous foundation on which to compare the selected courts, case filings are reported without non-moving violations (parking).

The Thornton Municipal Court processed 8,662 filings during the 1997 calendar year. As previously described, Thornton Municipal Court employs six deputy clerks and one part-time, high school intern, or 6.5 full time equivalents (FTE) to perform daily case processing duties.³ This results in a ratio of one FTE per 1,332.62 case filings.

The Englewood Municipal Court received 7,475 municipal, misdemeanor, and traffic case filings during the 1997 calendar year. The court employs eleven staff members, 7.5 FTE of whom are deputy clerks who perform routine case processing functions. The filing ratio for Englewood is therefore calculated to be one FTE per 996.67 case filings.

³ The Thornton Municipal Court also employs one full time bailiff/hearing officer, one part-time bailiff and a court manager. However, these staff members perform necessary functions that fall outside of the routine processing of cases. Because this section of the report examines staffing needs for the purpose of routine case processing, these FTE were excluded from this analysis. Likewise, bailiffs, probation officers, and court administrators employed in the comparable jurisdictions examined were excluded. Depending on the variety and level of services a court chooses to extent to its users, additional FTE, such as bailiffs, probation officers, and administrative staff may be necessary.

The Greeley Municipal Court processed 14,367 misdemeanor, traffic and municipal case filings in 1997. The court employs a staff to perform case processing functions consisting of 4 full-time clerks and 3 part time clerks, or 5.5 FTE. Greeley, therefore, has a ratio of one FTE per 2,612.18 case filings.

Table 1 Colorado Municipal Court Staffing – 1997				
Court	Population	Filings*	Deputy Clerks (FTE)**	Filings per FTE
Thornton	70,913	8,662	6.5	1,332.62
Englewood	32,000	7,475	7.5	996.67
Greeley	64,000	14,367	5.5	2,612.18
Northglenn	29,100	6,613	2.5	2,645.20
Westminster	89,447	11,119	11.8	942.29

* Excluding parking tickets

**Excludes positions such as bailiff, probation officer, and court administrator who are responsible for duties other than the routine, daily processing of citations.

Northglenn received 6,613 non-parking case filings. Two full time clerks and one part time clerk, equating to 2.5 FTE processed these filings. This establishes a case file ratio of one FTE to 2,645.20 cases filed.

The Westminster Municipal Court reported 11,119 cases filed in 1997. To process these filings the court employs 11.8 deputy clerks. The case-filing ratio in Westminster is one FTE per 942.29 cases filed.

If we take the mean FTE/filing ratio for all municipal courts examined, we find the average ratio is one FTE to 1,706 cases. This would indicate that in comparison to similar Colorado courts, Thornton Municipal Court is operating at an adequate staffing level of one FTE/1,332.62 filings. Based on this line of reasoning, the court could probably handle another 300 filings per year per FTE (i.e. 1,950 additional filings per year) before it should consider hiring an additional FTE. *This, of course, is true only if the Thornton Municipal Court does not add special programs or increase its level of service.* This calculation provides only the number of clerks necessary to handle the routine processing of citations. Additional programs and services may require additional staffing.

This is one approach to determining the adequacy of staffing levels. However, these numbers should be used only as a loose guide because the ratio is dependent on many qualitative and quantitative factors that must be considered. Some of these include the relationship of the court to the police department, level of technology, funding, operational efficiency, and caseload management. For example, in Greeley and Northglenn the courts do not make individual case file jackets for each citation, as is the practice in Thornton. The process is time-consuming (thus requiring additional FTE) but is worthwhile to the court because it helps ensure a more organized records management system. A second time-consuming, albeit beneficial, process performed in Thornton is entry of warrants onto the Colorado Crime Information Computer (CCIC) and obtaining criminal and drivers' histories from CCIC. In all but two or three Colorado municipalities, either the police or prosecutor handles all CCIC operations. The direct access to CCIC allows the court to obtain information more quickly and helps to ensure data accuracy; however, the court uses about one-half of an FTE just to perform the necessary CCIC functions. Another qualitative difference to consider is that Thornton Municipal Court performs accounting functions such as writing checks for restitution payments and witness fees that Greeley and Northglenn do not perform.

2. Weighted Caseload

A second approach to determine the need for personnel is a weighted caseload model. There are few courts nationally that have developed staffing standards for their clerk's or court support offices. Those that have developed standards base their staffing needs on the number of judges in the court or the number of case filings. Only a few states have weighted caseload systems to determine staff needs. Colorado is one such state that uses a weighted caseload system for clerical staff based on the number of case filings. As with all weighted caseload systems, the average amount of time it takes for clerks to process cases was determined and the amount of time clerks have to process cases during a normal work year was calculated. Annual case filings were then multiplied by the case processing time and then divided by the amount of clerk time available in a year to determine the number of clerks needed.

Under the scope and timeframe of this project, the National Center project team could not conduct a weighted caseload study for the Thornton Municipal Court. For comparative and informational purposes, the project team took the Colorado case weights and clerk time available and applied the Thornton case filings to attain comparative staffing needs in the Thornton Municipal Court. The results are presented in Table 2 below.

Table 2 Colorado Case Weights Applied to Thornton Municipal Court Filings					
Casetype	Number Filings in Thornton	Case Weight (in hours)	Total Time (in hours)	Available Hours	FTE needed in Thornton
Traffic Offenses	2700	1.50	4050.00	1575	2.57
Traffic Infractions	2897	1.32	3824.04	1575	2.43
Parking	619	1.32	817.08	1575	.52
Citations (<i>animal</i>)	208	1.50	312.00	1575	.20
Misdemeanors					
Adult	1214	1.57	1905.98	1575	1.21
Juvenile	1444	1.57	2267.08	1575	1.44
Ordinance	199	1.50	298.50	1575	.19

Projected number of FTE to handle caseload = 8.56

In Table 2, the second column indicates the Thornton Municipal Court case filings for calendar year 1997. The column titled "Case Weight" is the weights utilized from the Colorado Weighted Caseload System for county courts.⁴ The fourth column reflects the total clerk time in hours required to process the indicated number of case filings for one clerk (filings multiplied by case weights). The fifth column is the annual available time a clerk has for case processing. This reflects the total available time (2080 hours) minus all non-case processing activities in addition to annual leave, holidays, meeting, conferences, etc. Finally, the last column is the percentage of clerk's office staff to the calculated need or simply put, the number of FTE necessary to process each case type. The total calculated need for Thornton Municipal Court using the Colorado County

⁴ It is important to note that casetypes in Thornton differ slightly from those heard by Colorado County Courts. For example, the Colorado weights do not include specific categories for parking, animal, and ordinance violations. Therefore, the weight designated in Colorado for traffic infractions was applied to Thornton parking cases, and the Colorado traffic offense weight was applied to the animal and ordinance violations.

Court weights is 8.56 employees. This is slightly inconsistent with the NCSC project team's findings when it compared the Thornton Municipal Court filings/FTE ratio with similar Colorado Municipal Courts. Using the Colorado weighted caseload numbers, the Thornton Municipal Court seems to need **2.06** additional FTE be operating at an optimum staffing level, given the current level of service provided. Again, this 2.06 staff would complement the 6.5 staff members employed to handle the routine case processing within the court.

The Colorado County Court weights should not be used to attempt to determine the exact number of clerks needed. However, they do suggest some questions that could be asked when determining staffing needs. Again, statistically based estimates provide a good baseline for determining staffing needs, but the numbers must be tempered by a qualitative assessment.⁵ Further, although these numbers give the Thornton court an idea of how the staffing compares to other jurisdictions, it is strongly recommended that the court develop its own mechanism to determine the need for staff.

If the Thornton Municipal Court were to have a weighted caseload system in place, it could more easily make adjustments to staffing when necessary, such as with the implementation of photo enforcement or with the addition of police officers in the City of Thornton.

Recommendation 2: The Thornton Municipal Court should establish a weighted caseload system to determine the need for additional FTE. The court should consider contacting the Colorado State Court Administrator's office and explore ways in which the weighted caseload system used in Colorado might fit the needs of the Thornton Municipal Court.

⁵ Flango, Victor E., and Ostrom, Brian, J., *Assessing the Need for Judges and Court Support Staff*, National Center for State Courts, Williamsburg, VA, 1996.

V. CALENDARING AND CASEFLOW MANAGEMENT

A. Calendaring

The calendar structure of any court is critical to the ability of that court to give firm trial date commitments. A well-run and efficient court calendar ensures that an event will take place when scheduled. An efficient, well-run calendar also helps ensure that the court, and not the lawyers or litigants will control the pace of litigation.

Currently, the Thornton Municipal court calendars cases on Tuesdays and Thursdays. On Tuesdays, the court hears sessions at 8:30, 9:30, 10:30, 1:30 and 3:00. The judge handles traffic, misdemeanor, and prisoner arraignments during the Tuesday morning sessions, and misdemeanor and other miscellaneous hearings during the 1:30 session. The court then hears juvenile matters at the 3:00 session. On Thursdays, the court schedules up to four trials for each of the following sessions: 8:30, 9:30, 10:30, 1:00, 2:00, and 3:00. In addition to trials, the court may set other miscellaneous matters on Thursdays such as restitution or motions hearings. The project team's analysis of the calendar revealed three areas of concern:

- congestion during the juvenile sessions;
- manual trial scheduling; and
- calendar times that are not customer service focused.

1. Congestion During Juvenile Session

During the juvenile session, defendants form a line at the counter to pay fines or receive necessary paperwork regarding their cases. The line can become rather long and the area outside of the clerk's office becomes congested. Although, the congestion does not seem chaotic, it places undue stress on the defendants and court staff, and increases the potential for security problems.

A large contributor to the congestion, as reported by clerical staff, is the necessity for the counter clerks to produce alternative and deferred sentencing paperwork manually. An automated system to produce this necessary paperwork could greatly reduce counter time (see Recommendation 9).

The court is currently implementing a new scheduling practice that may go a long way toward alleviating this congestion. The court plans to begin the juvenile sessions at 2:30 p.m., scheduling one-third of the school officers for that time. The remaining two-thirds of the juvenile officers' cases will be scheduled for 3:30 p.m.

Another alternative, which is sometimes used by the court, is to have the prosecutor complete all necessary paperwork for deferred sentencing. The NCSC project team observed a juvenile session where defendants with deferred sentences were not required to wait in line at the front counter after court because the prosecutor had completed the appropriate paperwork before court. This was done because the clerk's office was short-staffed that day. The procedure was efficient and expedited the process for the juvenile defendants and the family members who were with them.

Recommendation 3: Work with the prosecutor to consider a procedure whereby prosecutors review and complete paperwork for cases worthy of deferred process.

2. Manual Trial Scheduling

A deputy clerk schedules cases for trial by verifying an available time in a trial book and recording the trial date manually. Additionally, twice per year a deputy clerk must record in the trial book the shift changes of the Thornton police officers and the times that those officers are available for trial. To automate this process would reduce clerk time considerably, improve efficiency, and eliminate any potential redundancies. Please see section IX of this report, *Automation and Technology*, for further discussion of this issue.

Recommendation 4: Incorporate trial scheduling capabilities into any future case management software that the court may use.

3. Calendar Times not Customer Service Focused

When considering the court's calendar, it is important to consider how it affects the litigants, attorneys, witnesses, and other court users. Standard 1.3 of the *Trial Court Performance Standards* requires that all who appear before the court are given the

opportunity to participate effectively without undue hardship or inconvenience.⁶ Limited jurisdiction trial courts, especially those that process traffic matters, should have hours of operation that are convenient to the public. The Thornton Municipal Court should extend its hours of service to minimize unnecessary costs for traffic litigants such as lost wages due to time taken off work or daycare costs that could be avoided if longer hours of service were provided. The Thornton Municipal Court should consider holding at least one arraignment session each week in the evening. In addition, the court should consider extending its clerk's office hours until 7 p.m. This should not require additional staff, but will require adjusting the work schedules of some of the current staff members. There are several clear advantages to extended hours of operation:

- better access to the court by the public;
- less job-time loss and therefore reduced costs to the employers of defendants and witnesses;
- less job-time loss and therefore reduced costs to the defendants;
- reduction of the congestion in the courtrooms; and
- extended usefulness of the court facilities.

Although extended hours of operation undeniably provide a higher level of public service and access; the court does need to weigh the following:

- court staffing issues;
- impact on related justice agencies and their staff, such as prosecutor and police;
- cost of overhead such as heat, light, and maintenance; and
- building, staff, and public safety/security.

Recommendation 5: The court should extend its hours of service to minimize unnecessary costs for traffic litigants.

⁶ *Trial Court Performance Standards*, National Center for State Courts, Bureau of Justice Assistance, 1990, page 8.

B. Caseflow Management

A useful structure for assessing caseflow management in the courts was first suggested in the book, *Changing Times in Trial Courts*, published by the National Center for State Courts under a State Justice Institute grant.⁷ The caseflow management systems of eighteen urban courts were examined, and the work extrapolates from their successes and failures the key factors contributing to timely and just resolution of civil and criminal cases. Although the courts in the study were not limited jurisdiction courts, the successful application of caseflow management principles to limited jurisdiction courts nationally have proven their effectiveness and appropriateness to the work of the Thornton Municipal Court. The ten dimensions identified as important to successful caseflow management include:

- ☐ Leadership
- ☐ Goals
- ☐ Information
- ☐ Communications
- ☐ Caseflow Management Procedures
- ☐ Judicial Responsibility and Commitment
- ☐ Administrative Staff Involvement
- ☐ Education and Training
- ☐ Mechanisms for Accountability
- ☐ Backlog Reduction/Inventory Control

The discussion that follows examines these ten factors in the Thornton Municipal Court.

1. Leadership

Studies conducted over the past twenty years have demonstrated that continuity of leadership is a very important contributing factor in effective caseflow management. The most effective caseflow systems are led by a chief or presiding judge whose tenure is at least two years or longer.

Thornton Municipal Court has had excellent constancy of leadership, and it appears it will continue. The judgeship in Thornton is not a rotating office and the judges who serve seem to stay for quite some time. However, with the presiding judge serving

⁷ Mahoney, Barry, et al, *Changing Times in Trial Courts, Caseflow Management and Delay Reduction in Urban Trial Courts*, National Center for State Courts, Williamsburg, VA, 1988.

only part-time in Thornton and devoting his remaining time to other municipalities, it could be difficult for him to lead the court in its efforts to enforce or institutionalize a comprehensive caseload management system. With the judge's part-time status, which is appropriate given the caseload, he simply cannot fulfill the leadership role to its fullest potential. Therefore, some mechanism must be found to institutionalize policy and provide for mechanisms for monitoring policy application. As explained in *Changing Times*, "[m]ore than anyone else, the administrator or clerk must convey the goals of a program to members of the court staff, obtain their input, allay their concerns, and organize the resources necessary to implement (programs) on a day-to-day basis."⁸

The Thornton Municipal Court has a court manager whose role is clearly defined. The court manager is delegated the responsibility and authority to implement and maintain caseload policies, procedures, and report monitoring. In addition, the court manager has a full and effective support staff. The leadership involvement and commitment of the court manager has largely contributed to the success of this court's caseload management system.

2. Goals

The type of goal most commonly associated with caseload management systems is the use of a time standard for case disposition. Until recently, the use of time standards for disposition of traffic and other criminal cases was rare. Now, the American Bar Association (ABA) has promulgated traffic and criminal case disposition time standards (see Table 3). Many courts nationally have adopted time standards and the Thornton Municipal Court should as well. Since courts do not have the bottom line profit margin of private enterprise by which to measure performance, some other mechanism must be found to give the court and its support staff direction and success measurements. Case processing time goals do just that. Although, the Thornton Municipal Court does a commendable job in processing its caseload, it is recommended that case processing goals be incorporated into the existing procedure manuals as a step to *prevent* future delay.

⁸ *ibid.*

Recommendation 6: The court should adopt the ABA case processing goals.

Table 3 ABA Time Standards Compared to Thornton Disposition Times				
	Percentile			
Casetype	Standard	50 th	75 th	90 th
Traffic, misdemeanor, and city ordinance violations	90 days	35 days	47 days	89 days

The disposition times for Thornton Municipal Court are reported in the table above in percentiles to give the court a broader picture of the disposition times. Just as the rule recognizes that not all cases will have the same disposition times and some cases may require more time to dispose of than the standard, the percentile reporting of the disposition times allows the court to see what percentage of their cases meet or exceed the time standards. The percentiles are based on a sample of 128 Thornton Municipal Court cases that were closed in 1995 and 1996. The Thornton Municipal Court consistently meets the ABA time standards for case disposition. In only ten percent of the cases sampled did it take the court more than 90 days to disposition. Often the delay in these cases was due to the number of continuances granted. This will be discussed in detail below in the subsection titled *Caseflow Management Procedures*.

It is important to note that time standards are not the only type of goals appropriate to caseflow management. Other courts have adopted goals or guidelines such as the ratio of dispositions to filings, the ratio of continuances to cases set, the length of continuances, and the number of dispositions per FTE judicial position. The NCSC recommends that the Thornton Municipal Court consider a wide range of performance goals.

3. Information

Adoption of disposition and performance goals must be supported by an information system that allows determination of whether the goals are being met and the

detection of individual cases in danger of exceeding the goals. Automated retrieval of information at regular intervals through management reports enables the court to monitor case processing times and identify problems.

Thornton Municipal Court produces monthly Statistical Data Reports showing the current month's activity, the cumulative years total and the comparative data from the same month of the previous year. Although it is good that the court manager receives some information, these statistics provide caseload rather than caseflow data. The numbers only answer the question of how many (not how long) cases the court has processed.

Unfortunately, the case management system currently in place does not produce the type of reports necessary to monitor the appropriate and most useful information. Although the system could be modified to capture the needed information, it is understood that the needed changes may be too expensive in light of the new case management system currently under design.

It is recommended that any case management system designed in the future be able to produce, on demand, information on the age of cases at disposition by case category; the age of pending caseload by case category; the percentage of cases that are disposed of at each stage in the caseflow; a "calendar accounting" system which summarizes the outcome of scheduled calendars; and other caseflow related information. Until a new automated system can be installed, the court, through its court manager, should attempt to obtain this information through manual methods. If necessary, case sampling should be used to obtain the information.

Recommendation 7: The court should develop caseflow management, as well as caseload volume, reports to support the efficient and effective disposition of cases.

4. Communications

It has been well documented in studies of caseflow management over the past twenty years that open, reciprocal communication among the court, the bar, and other justice system participants is an essential element of an effective caseflow management system. Strong communication between the court (including both judges and staff), the

city-level leaders, and with the private bar and key institutional actors such as the prosecutor and public defender are essential if a program is to succeed.

Court staff members indicated during interviews with the NCSC project team that they believe internal court communication is good. However, most court employees thought that the communication between the court and outside agencies “needed work.” The NCSC project team believes, given the efficiency with which the court operates that the openness, regularity and structure of both internal and external court communications for the court as an institution is admirable. It is important, however, that the presiding judge and court manager recognize opportunities to work with other agencies and the private bar to ensure that communication lines are kept open, or even improved.

5. Caseflow Management Procedures

Caseflow management procedures are the critical operational core of any case management system. The basic components of a sound caseflow management system are: court control of case progress; court monitoring of the progress of all cases to assure timely disposition; a scheduling system that assures that hearings will be held as scheduled; monitoring and control of continuances; early exchange of discovery and required documents; and use of every appearance as a meaningful opportunity for disposition. As has been repeated throughout this report, the Thornton Municipal Court is currently doing an excellent job in meeting these criteria, which is demonstrated by the fact that cases move through the system without delay. However, the court must continue to explore ways in which it could better manage the caseload, especially with the potential for an influx of filings due to additional police officers in the city and the implementation of photo radar.

One area the court must carefully monitor and try to improve is continuances. A fundamental principle of effective caseflow management is that continuances should not occur unless granted by a judge based upon a showing of exceptional cause by a party. Stipulated continuances without good cause are not acceptable because they leave control of case progress in the hands of the defendants or counsel rather than the court. The American Bar Association states in its *Standards Relating to Trial Courts* that,

“Continuance of a hearing or trial should be granted only by a judge for good cause shown.”

The Thornton Municipal Court judge allows the clerk’s office to grant one continuance for arraignment in each case. After one continuance or if the case is set for trial, the defendant must appear before the judge. Over time, and with growing caseloads, the practice of granting one “free” continuance through the clerk’s office may cause problems for the court. The atmosphere in the court may become chaotic and inefficient and the appearance of justice may begin to suffer. Further, there are significant costs associated with continuances. Every time a case is rescheduled, clerical procedures are repeated, the equal of the effort expended to schedule the case initially. Costs are compounded. Every continuance affects the caseload as if another filing had been added to the system.

Beyond the cost factors and the impact on the public’s perceptions of readiness requirements, repeated continuances inflate calendars and complicate processing for all concerned, including the judge. In well managed limited jurisdiction courts the majority of cases are disposed on the first scheduled hearing date. Based on a sample of cases reviewed during the NCSC site visit, the project team found that on average, a defendant appearing in Thornton Municipal Court has 1.5 scheduled appearances. Although this proves that continuances are not an overwhelming problem for the court, it does give the bench a goal for which to aim.

Recommendation 8: The Thornton Municipal Court should adopt a court policy requiring written requests for continuances that are heard on the record and granted only upon a showing of good cause.

There are many techniques for managing cases and caseflow, and this is clearly much more an art than a science. There is ample room for experimentation, and judges and non-judicial staff in successful courts have not been afraid to experiment in the search for more effective ways of ensuring fair and speedy resolution of cases.

6. Judicial Responsibility and Commitment

Judicial commitment to the proposition that the court must assume active responsibility for controlling the pace of litigation is the keystone of an orderly, effective caseload management system. According to *Changing Times*:

“...[C]ommitment manifests itself in several ways. First, there is a commonly...shared belief on the part of judges that the court has to take responsibility for ensuring an expeditious pace of litigation. Second, [the court has] procedures and techniques that focus the judges’ attention on the age and status of cases, through dissemination of information, attention to docket status and details of case management at judges’ meetings, and in a variety of other ways. Third, the commitment is translated into action when the judges hold lawyers to schedules previously set and decline to grant continuances routinely, even when none of the parties object.”⁹

Commitment to the system and to service is very high in this court. The judge is willing to explore new mechanisms for processing the docket fairly and efficiently and clearly understands the court’s responsibility in managing the pace of litigation.

7. Administrative Staff Involvement

As noted in *Changing Times*:

“While the commitment of judges is critical...[t]he involvement of court staff members at all levels—from the court administrator through the [clerk’s office] and courtroom clerks who handle day-to-day administrative duties for the judge—is essential. One of the striking aspects of the operations of several...successful courts...is the extent to which the non-judicial staff members are aware of the court’s case processing goals and are actively involved in helping achieve them.”¹⁰

The clerical and administrative staff members of the Thornton Municipal Court are extremely involved in the court and show a high level of identification with the court system. In developing improvement strategies, the judge and court manager should continue to seek input from the staff and keep them informed of proposed policy and procedural changes. Staff members often are experts in the details of case processing; it would be a mistake not to take advantage of the contributions they can offer.

⁹ *ibid.*, p. 202

¹⁰ *ibid.*

8. Education and Training

Acceptance of the principle that the court is responsible for and must actively control the progress of litigation is relatively recent. Accordingly, judges and staff in many courts have not had an opportunity to examine concepts and techniques of effective caseflow management in an educational setting. As noted in *Changing Times*, “[i]f courts are to manage their caseflow successfully, both judges and the court staff need to know why and how to do it.”¹¹ In addition to formal caseflow management training, it is essential that the judge, court manager, and staff know the missions, goals, and objectives of the court.

Interviews and observations revealed a large amount of motivation in the area of education and training. All clerical staff members participate in the Colorado Association for Municipal Court Administration (CAMCA). From CAMCA meetings, court staff members are able to return to the court with suggestions for improvement, which in turn keeps the court on the pinnacle of court innovation. Further, through regular staff meetings, the clerks have developed an understanding of the goals of the court and other big picture issues.

9. Mechanisms for Accountability

This concept is closely related to several discussed earlier: responsibility, commitment, goals, and monitoring case progress. If a court has system wide objectives (for example, to dispose of all cases within 90 days), then there must be someone responsible for monitoring whether the objectives are being met, and for seeking reasons and remedies when they are not. This requires case-management-oriented information. Currently, information is not routinely available to establish whether the court meets disposition time standards consistently. This should be a priority concern of the court to ensure that as the number and types of filings change, the court can maintain its current disposition times.

¹¹ *ibid.*, p. 203

10. Inventory Control

Knowledge of the pending caseload is a hallmark of a court that manages its caseload in a businesslike manner. Currently, the Thornton Municipal Court knows how many cases are pending but does not know the age of pending cases. Based on the NCSC research, cases move swiftly through the system and it is unlikely that a case will languish on the shelves. However, without information about the number, types, and ages of cases awaiting disposition, this remains only an assumption. Again, it is important that the case management system currently under development include options that will give the court manager this critical information.

VI. WORKFLOW ANALYSIS

As we have stressed, for the vast majority of citizens doing business with the courts, municipal court is their sole encounter with the judicial community. As a court of first resort, the Thornton Municipal Court plays a vital role in creating respect for the law within the City of Thornton and the State of Colorado. It is important, therefore, that case processing be conducted in a competent, efficient manner and reflect authority and dignity.

The NCSC project team found the workflow of this court to be streamlined and quite efficient. Procedures are thoroughly documented and are logical and easy to understand. Further, workload is distributed evenly among court staff and in a manner that is conducive to the smooth flow of paper. Although some duplication of effort exists, it is due to multiple computer systems that need the same information. If this problem is remedied, as described in subsequent sections of this report, then unnecessary duplication of work will be nonexistent. It was difficult, at best, to recommend any changes to the workflow for fear of trying to repair something that is not broken. Therefore, in the description of workflow that follows (also flowcharted in Appendix B), the NCSC project team makes only a few suggestions that may save some time for the clerk's office.

A. Case Preparation

In 1997, 9,281 new cases were filed with the Thornton Municipal Court (an average of about 37 cases each working day).¹² These cases are initiated when a police officer serves a copy of a complaint on a defendant and files the complaint with the court. The face of the citation indicates the defendant's name, address, driver's license number, other identifying information, and the location, time and type of violation. Three to five working days after the citation is issued, police department personnel enter the citation onto their computer system. A deputy court clerk picks-up the entered citations from the police department about two or three times each week. That clerk then runs a discrepancy report from the police department's computer system and checks to make

¹² This number was calculated by taking the estimated number of working days available in a year (252) and dividing it into the number of case filings. Available days was calculated by taking 365 days in a year and subtracting weekends (104 days) and holidays (9 days).

sure that all of the citations she retrieved from the police match the computer. If there are errors, the clerk corrects them both on the computer and manually on the discrepancy report. She then returns the corrected discrepancy report to the police department.

Cases are then electronically transferred from the police computer to the court's case management system and a Master Name Index (MNI) is attached. A defendant will always have the same MNI. Therefore, the computer searches to find whether the defendant has ever been issued a citation in Thornton and if so, will assign that defendant the MNI that was previously assigned. If the defendant has never received a citation in Thornton, the computer assigns a new MNI.

Next, a deputy clerk runs a driver history on the Colorado Crime Information Computer (CCIC) for each traffic citation and a criminal history for each misdemeanor citation. The clerk then uses the case management software to print a face sheet and file label for each citation. The labels are attached to a file folder and all paperwork pertaining to an individual citation is placed inside.

B. Early Payment

If the citation can be paid without a court appearance (i.e., no mandatory appearance is required) a deputy clerk uses Microsoft Word® to prepare a fine letter. The letter outlines the fine amount and offers a plea bargain (point reduction) for early payment. The point reduction is given based on the driver's history. This same plea bargain would be offered by the city attorney if the defendant came to court. The defendant is not required to pay court costs if he or she chooses to pay the fine without a court appearance. After the letters are prepared, all file folders are placed in a filing cabinet in alphabetical order by court date.

If the defendant mails payment to the court, or comes to the clerk's office to pay the fine, a deputy clerk pulls the file, rings the payment into the cash register, and updates the case management system. The file folder is then filed with the closed cases.

C. Arraignment, Fine Payment, and Alternative Sentencing

If a mandatory appearance is required or if the defendant does not pay the ticket before the assigned court date, that defendant must appear in Thornton Municipal Court

to take care of the ticket. On the arraignment date, each defendant attends a video advisement of his or her rights. Then, each defendant speaks with the city attorney to discuss the case. The city attorney notes the expected plea and any sentencing suggestions in the file. The plea bargain is usually the same as the one offered by mail. The defendants cannot come to court expecting a “better” offer. The defendant then takes a seat in the courtroom and the bailiff delivers the case file to the judge’s bench. The judge calls each case and adjudicates it while a deputy clerk updates the case management system in court. This is an extremely efficient practice. After court, the defendant goes to the clerk’s office window to obtain the appropriate paperwork and pay fines, if necessary.

Many of the forms used by the clerk’s office must be completed manually. This is a slow and inefficient practice that often causes long lines and delays for the defendants. The NCSC project team recommends that forms be automated for quicker service to defendants. Automated forms also provide a neater and more professional appearance. Please see section IX, *Automation and Technology*, for further discussion of automated forms.

Recommendation 9: All forms that the clerk’s office currently completes manually should be automated.

If a defendant is sentenced and is given an alternative sentence or is requesting additional time to pay a fine, he or she receives forms to complete from the clerk’s office and then will wait to see the hearing officer. The hearing officer interviews each defendant and sets-up alternative sentencing, a payment plan, or other arrangements so that the defendant may successfully complete the sentence. The hearing officer also monitors the progress of each of those defendants who have been assigned alternative sentencing.

D. Failure to Pay or Appear

If a defendant fails to attend court or pay the fine, one of two things may happen. If the citation was a traffic infraction, a default judgment will issue and an Outstanding Judgment Warrant (OJ/W) is attached to the person’s driver’s license. The OJ/W is a lien placed on the driver’s license that disallows a person to renew the license until all court

matters are clear. If the citation is a traffic offense, misdemeanor, or ordinance violation, a warrant is issued for the defendant's arrest and, in the case of a minor, an OJ/W is attached to the driver's license. A deputy clerk mails a letter to the defendant in either case, indicating that a default judgment was entered, or that the court issued a warrant. At the time of the NCSC site visit, the court was collecting data to determine the effectiveness of mailing the warrant letters. It looked as though the practice was not effective. The court indicated that they plan to stop the practice of mailing the letters if it is found that the majority of defendants do not respond as a direct result of the correspondence. The NCSC project team agreed with this approach.

When issuing a warrant, a deputy clerk must enter the warrant information onto the court's case management system as well as onto CCIC. This is a duplication of efforts that is quite time consuming. It is therefore recommended that the court's case management system be connected to CCIC so that information can be shared between the two systems. This would save a significant amount of time in the area of warrant management. Denver County Court has successfully completed this task. Although Denver operates on a much larger scale than Thornton does, the Thornton court manager might consider visiting Denver to observe how this system works. Please see Section IX of this report, *Automation and Technology*, for further information on this topic.

Recommendation 10: Thornton Municipal Court should connect its case management system to the CCIC to avoid duplication of effort in its management of warrants.

To clear the lien from the driver's license, the defendant must pay the fine plus a \$30 surcharge. To clear the warrant, the defendant must appear before the judge or post a bond to guarantee appearance and agree to take care of the case at hand. In some cases, if the defendant fails to take care of the fine or fails to appear on the bond when scheduled, the bond will be forfeited and a new bond issued.

E. Trials

If a defendant pleads not guilty, he or she is given a trial date about four to six weeks from the arraignment date. As in most courts, the majority of cases tend to settle before the trial is held.

If the defendant requests and is entitled to a jury trial, a deputy clerk mails 150 questionnaires to potential jurors. Thornton uses both the motor vehicle registration and voter registration from Adams County as the source lists. These two lists combined typically cover close to 100 percent of the population.¹³

About 75 of the potential jurors return the questionnaire to the court. A deputy clerk reviews each questionnaire to determine eligibility and then randomly selects 23 of the citizens to summon for the trial.

Approximately ten days before the jury trial, the court holds a mandatory status conference. Nearly all of the cases settle before or on the day of the conference. Jurors must report for service only in the rare instance that the jury trial is to proceed. On the night before the date of the set trial, jurors telephone the court and listen to a recording that informs them whether to report for jury duty. Continuances on the jury trial date are rare in the Thornton Municipal Court.

The court's jury trial procedures, like its other procedures, are efficient. The court seems to summon only the number of jurors needed and then makes every effort to have them report only if the trial will proceed. However, the court does not provide an orientation for jurors who must report for duty. The juror orientation is a critical step in making sure that the jurors understand the process and are comfortable with the duties that they are required to perform.

Recommendation 11: The court should implement a juror orientation.

The orientation should take an hour or less and should be done on the morning that the jurors report for service. It is important that the orientation be complete, professional, and efficient.¹⁴ Ideally, the judge would welcome jurors and begin the orientation although it is also reasonable for the court manager, a clerk, or a volunteer to perform the function. An audiovisual presentation should then be given informing the jurors of their duties and responsibilities, describing the activities in the courtroom, and attempting to relieve any anxiety.

¹³ Munsterman, Thomas G. et al, *Jury Trial Innovations*, National Center for State Courts, Williamsburg, VA, 1997, p. 35.

¹⁴ Munsterman, Thomas G. *Jury System Management*, National Center for State Courts, Williamsburg, VA, 1996, p. 55.

Another approach that a number of courts use is orientation via cable television. These programs provide the usual orientation information described above as well as information such as court location and where to park. It is important to note that if a cable presentation is used, the court must also arrange to provide orientation to those jurors who do not have cable television. Copies of video orientations for jurors can be borrowed from the NCSC library.¹⁵

Again, the NCSC project team approached this project with the intention of developing alternative practices that could help the Thornton Municipal Court improve overall effectiveness and efficiency. It was pleasant for the project team to learn that the practices in place at the Thornton Municipal Court, with respect to workflow, are for the most part, model practices.

¹⁵ For more information, contact the NCSC librarian at 757-253-2000.

VII. RECORDS MANAGEMENT

A primary purpose of courts is to recognize the legal status of the citizens within its jurisdiction. This status is recorded and memorialized through the records of the courts. The needs for and benefits to government in maintaining accurate records of legal status can be seen clearly in the areas of adoption, divorce, marriage, the title to property, and the probate of wills. It is just as valid a purpose of the court in less clearly seen but equally essential areas of criminal histories, driving violation histories and defendant probation status. Court records are a large part of the formal governmental records that define the legal status of its citizens. They are, in effect, the institutional memory of government, and therefore fundamental to our constitutional form of government.

Because of the importance of these records, the records management program of the Thornton Municipal Court was included in this review. A comprehensive records management system of any court should:

- encourage the recording and maintenance of accurate, complete, usable information in the most cost efficient manner;
- reduce the workload of court support staff by minimizing redundant records and ensuring that the records that are created are filed, maintained, and retrieved quickly and easily when requested; and
- ensure the timely, periodic, systematic, and legal destruction of records that have no further legal, administrative, fiscal, historical, or research value.

A. Overall Records Management Assessment

As a result of interviews and the project staff's observations of the facilities, processes, and procedures used to manage court records, the NCSC project team concluded that the records management system in the Thornton Municipal Court meets the criteria listed above. The general organizational structure of records is in line with national court management standards for court clerk's offices. The records of the court are stored neatly, in logical order, and in areas that do not subject them to environmental dangers such as leaky pipes, dirt, etc. It was indicated during the site visit that the clerks do *not* have to spend a lot of time looking for lost files. This is an indication that the records are filed in a timely and accurate manner. Further, one clerk is charged with the task of records management. This designation is important and should be maintained.

Lastly, the court is aware of the importance of a records retention policy and works to ensure records are retained only the appropriate amount of time. At the end of each year, one of the deputy clerks works with the city records coordinator to archive and destroy appropriate records. The current retention policy, which calls for the court to keep cases for three years after the case closes, is reasonable.

The court should consider extending the use of technology to update current records management practices. It is understood that the City of Thornton has implemented a pilot program for imaging in the City Clerk's Office. If successful, the City plans to expand imaging capabilities to other agencies. The imaging system could allow all court records to be managed electronically rather than maintaining paper copies of all citations.

The court also should consider the benefits of bar-code technology to control file inventory and monitor file circulation. Using bar-code technology that could be included on employee identification cards and the case file, files could be "checked in and checked-out" and the location of the files that are due for return could be monitored. Many times, the use of this technology helps to eliminate lost files and reduce the costs associated with lost file searches.

Recommendation 12: The court should begin to explore technologies such as bar coding that could help the court with its future records management needs.

B. Forms Analysis

Forms are one element of the court communication system, making form management one very important aspect of judicial administration. Careful analysis of forms can reduce the overall cost of forms, reduce obsolescence, ensure adherence to the law, improve paperflow, and improve the party's understanding of what the court is trying to communicate through the forms.

The court uses many forms that must be manually completed as well as some computer-generated forms and letters. The court uses more than 40 different forms that serve as written communication to various parties. It is important that the court manage its written communication by paying close attention to style, number of forms used, and overall organization and coordination of the forms.

1. Style

Several stylistic matters must be carefully considered when designing any form. Cluttered forms that use complicated language will not be as effective as simple, standardized forms that are easy to read. Forms should use simple, plain English whenever possible because the audience with whom the forms communicate probably does not understand Latin terms and legal terminology. In addition, all forms should follow a similar format or template with standard information such as the defendant's name and case number appearing in the same place on every form (for example, the upper right hand corner). This makes filing and data retrieval much more efficient. In addition, when possible the forms should have a check-box format as opposed to a fill-in-the-sentence format, as the check-box format is much easier to read, complete, and understand.

Recommendation 13: The court should review and revise all forms used to make them understandable and well organized. When the court is ready to re-order a form, it should review that form for the stylistic elements discussed above.

2. Number of Forms

It is not unusual for a court to use many forms, however, to save costs and space and to increase efficiency the court should always have a goal to reduce the number of forms used. Disposing of forms that are not used and combining forms of similar type into one form are two ways to accomplish the goal.

Recommendation 14: The court should set a goal to reduce the overall number of forms used and then begin to review and revise forms to meet the goal.

3. Overall Organization and Coordination

Two important elements of form management are having a name, number and revision date on each form, and keeping an index of all forms. The form number and revision date should appear in the same location on all forms (for example, the lower left corner). Nearly none of the municipal court forms have a unique numeric identifier. In addition, the names of most forms used in the municipal court were not evident.

Recommendation 15: The court should assign a descriptive name and unique number to each form. The name of the form should be printed clearly at the top center of the page of each form, including all computer-generated letters.

4. Forms Management

To better organize and track forms, the court should use an index. The forms index should include the name and number of every form and other information such as, (1) the case type for which the form is used, (2) the estimated quantity used annually, (3) the distribution (who gets copies of the completed form), (4) comments on the size, color, and construction of the form, and (5) the estimated annual cost of the form. The form index that appears in Appendix C of this report could be a starting point from which to build the index.

Recommendation 16: The court should clearly identify and index each form.

The court should continually review whether the forms used are compatible with the current court environment. To ensure this happens, it is important that management of forms be assigned to a single person as one of the duties on which he or she is evaluated. This person then may lead a group in the task of keeping forms current and well organized. This group's task is to develop a forms management program for the court. A forms review committee is very effective if it has definite goals and objectives such as reducing the number of forms the court uses; simplifying language of forms; and facilitating uniformity and standardization.

Recommendation 17: Court staff should participate on a forms review task force. This task force should consist of the judge, the court manager, and a deputy clerk.

VIII. FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT, ACCOUNTING AND COLLECTIONS

The responsibility of a court for non-appropriated, court-collected funds are defined by the following objectives:

- To ensure that the money intake process provides no opportunity for defalcation;
- To separate vital money-handling functions so that accountability is clear and aberrational behavior can be identified;
- To ensure proper and secure deposit of all funds received;
- To maximize the services and interest provided by depositories;
- To ensure that the case accounting system meets professional standards and legal requirements;
- To ensure timely and accurate distribution of funds;
- To ensure that funds for internal court use are administered with the same accountability and safeguards as the public funds; and
- To protect the court against losses through negligence or misappropriation.¹⁶

A. Financial Audit

Due to the timeframe and scope of this project, the National Center for State Courts did not “audit” the financial management practices of the Thornton Municipal Court. The project team did examine the budget of the court, the funds from which the court is financed, and observed the procedures for money intake, receipts and reconciliation, deposit, bookkeeping, cash flow, and distribution of funds. Through its observations of processes and its interviews with court staff, it appears that the Thornton Municipal Court has strong internal controls in place and manages its funds in compliance with the criteria listed above. However, it is always advisable that any entity regularly has a full-scale financial audit performed by an outside professional auditor. When possible, the selected auditor should have experience auditing limited jurisdiction courts or similar organizations. The benefits of a well-conducted audit include:

¹⁶ Tobin, Robert W., *Internal Control of Court-Collected Funds*, National Center for State Courts, Williamsburg, VA, 1995, p. 5.

- Ascertaining conformity to legal norms;
- Checking conformity to accounting principles and internal control procedures;
- Confirming the validity of financial reports;
- Maintenance of quality and prevention of irregularity;
- Checking on specific financial subsystems or automated procedures; and
- Public accountability.¹⁷

Recommendation 18: The Thornton Municipal Court should have a full-scale financial audit performed by an outside professional auditor with appropriate experience.

B. Fine Collection

Unlike in many courts throughout the country, fine and assessment collections are not a big problem for the Thornton Municipal Court. However, even when a small number of defendants fail to pay within a reasonable time, it can be destructive to the judicial process. If an offender does not comply with a court order for any reason, the impact of the sentence is lessened, the integrity and credibility of the court are called into question, and the process has failed. A successful collections program incorporates the following elements.

- Assessing fines at realistic amounts;
- Setting short time periods for payment;
- Making sure offenders are aware of what is expected of them;
- Using incentives to encourage prompt payment;
- Establishing collection procedures and adhering to them;
- Setting collection goals and monitoring performance;
- Responding immediately to non-payment;

¹⁷ *ibid.*

- Establishing a range of effective sanctions for non-compliance and using them similarly in all cases;
- Maintaining strong financial controls; and
- Making certain procedures are understood by everyone, including judges and courts staff.¹⁸

The Thornton Municipal Court uses most of these elements effectively. Many courts across the country do not have a collections program in place and have no specialized procedures for fine collections. The Thornton Municipal Court has taken many positive steps toward implementing a collection program. One step that the court could take to improve collections is clearly defining its collection goals and setting procedures to measure performance.

Using the following guidelines and recommendations, the court manager, in cooperation with the judge should prepare a written collection policy. The court should also define, in writing, specific short-term and long-term goals that will improve collection rates.

A realistic collection philosophy should take into consideration several factors. First, parameters must be determined that define the levels of how strict, as well as how flexible, the court wishes to be in collecting fines. If those involved in the imposition and collection of fines are not comfortable with the philosophy of the court, collection efforts may be less than enthusiastic, resulting in no gains in collections.

Another factor to consider is the economic circumstance of the typical offender who appears in court, and what their ability is for making payments on imposed fines. Although the court should be firm in the imposition and collection of fines and assessments, it should balance this firmness with the realization that many offenders are able to pay only a certain amount in any given month. This variable may differ tremendously over time, depending on the economic conditions of the jurisdiction. Although this currently is not an issue at Thornton Municipal Court, the court should reassess this area periodically.

¹⁸ Matthias, John T., et al, *Current practices in Collecting Fines and Fees in State Courts: A Handbook of Collection Issues and Solution*, National Center for State Courts, Williamsburg, VA, 1995.

The final factor to consider when determining a collection philosophy for the court is the amount of resources the court has available to carry out a fine and assessment collection program. Heavier enforcement of collections would require staff time, automation support, and perhaps the use of outside resources to maintain an efficient program. Without dedication of resources, a collection policy may become merely a dubious theory with no meaning to those whom it is suppose to guide.

After the court articulates its policies and goals, the court manager should write a collection procedure manual within the parameters of the new policies and goals. Once the procedures are in place, the court manager should review monthly collection reports to determine the level of achievement of the program goals. If the court is not meeting its goals, the judge and court manager should determine the reasons and develop strategies to help meet their stated goals.

The project team recommends that the following elements be included in the collection plan of the court. The court should strive to collect as much as possible at sentencing. The court should expect payment in full immediately and time payments should continue to be more of the exception than the rule. Further, defendants should be advised before and in court that if found guilty they are expected to pay on the day of sentencing. Currently in the Thornton Municipal Court, defendants are advised in writing that payment is due immediately upon sentencing in two places: 1) on the citation; and 2) on the door to the waiting room in the courthouse. The NCSC also suggests that during each court session, the judge orally indicate the collection policy. The judge might consider using the language noted in Appendix D of this report. This language could also be handed in written form to each defendant as he or she arrives at court or in the courtroom after sentencing.

Finally, due to the importance of fine and assessment collection and since the judge and court personnel need to understand the collection policies and procedures, the manager should, during regular meetings with the staff and the judge, identify problems that may be occurring with collections and verify the staff's understanding of the collection procedures.

Recommendation 19: The court should review its collection policies and procedures periodically and in writing make clear the collection policy

of the court. Fine and assessment collection should be a regular topic for discussion at court staff meetings.

For additional information on the collection of fines and costs, please refer to Matthias, John T., et al, *Current Practices in Collecting Fines and Fees in State Courts: A Handbook of Collection Issues and Solutions*, National Center for State Courts, Williamsburg, VA, 1995. A complementary copy of this handbook was provided by the NCSC to the Thornton Municipal Court manager with this report.

IX. AUTOMATION AND TECHNOLOGY

As part of the management assessment of the Thornton Municipal Court, the NCSC project team conducted a technology assessment. The technology assessment examined issues such as the court's current office technology, the ability of the court's current technology to meet current and anticipated needs, additional uses for technology, and issues in upgrading the court's technology.

A. Inventory

The NCSC conducted a computer inventory survey to ascertain the status of computer hardware and software in the Thornton Municipal Court as of June 24, 1998. This survey gives the Thornton Municipal Court, the Thornton City MIS department, and NCSC staff a clear view of where the court stands with office automation. The information in the survey is used in this report and is provided to the court for internal use. (Please see Appendix E).

At present, although the case management system of the court is inadequate and new technologies such as video arraignment could greatly benefit the court's services to the citizens of Thornton, overall the level of technology in the Thornton Municipal Court is relatively current. The court's office hardware and software have been upgraded within the last three years. All Thornton Municipal Court staff members have desktop computers using the same operating system and version of office automation software. This consistency enhances the ability of staff to share their work among computers and eases MIS support duties. Additionally, the City of Thornton has established a Local/Wide Area Network (LAN/WAN) that connects all city agencies.

1. Thornton City MIS

The Thornton City MIS department has established standards for the upgrade and replacement of office hardware and software citywide. Currently the city replaces hardware on a three-year cycle. This cycle keeps the hardware in use current and helps to phase in new technology. The upgrade cycle for office automation software is not as formal but occurs roughly every four years. The combined effect of these replacement schedules keeps all of the Thornton City agencies, including the Thornton Municipal

Court, technologically current. The exception to this rule is the case management system, which has not been upgraded in eight years and is not only outdated, but does not allow the court to perform at the most effective and efficient level possible.

The city has established LAN access to all Thornton City agencies. Currently the city's LAN consists of two Novell file servers connecting all Thornton city agencies using Ethernet and some with remote access. With the city maintaining the LAN centrally, the Thornton Municipal Court can be assured that its LAN capabilities will remain compatible with other Thornton city agencies. However, the central location may cause some security concerns. If the Thornton Municipal Court has not done so already it should have the LAN manager limit access to the Thornton Municipal Court's directories to only Thornton Municipal Court staff.

Recommendation 20: If the Thornton Municipal Court has not done so already it should have the LAN manager limit access to the Thornton Municipal Court's directories to only Thornton Municipal Court staff.

2. Clerk of Court's Office

All staff members in the clerk of court's office have virtually the same desktop computers. The desktop computers in the clerk's office are Pentium 166 MHz with 32 megabytes (MB) of Random Access Memory (RAM), Windows 95®, and 17-inch monitors. All of the clerk's office computers are connected to the city LAN allowing them to print to the various printers in the clerk's office and the MIS department. The clerk's office has a networked laser printer that most of the staff members use for printing. There also are several specialized printers in the clerk's office for tasks such as printing receipts at the counter and mailing labels. Additionally the clerk's office computers connect to the Thornton Municipal Court's case management system. Some of the computers in the clerk's office connect to Colorado Crime Information Center (CCIC) to obtain criminal history and driving reports for defendants and are therefore connected to additional laser printers that are located adjacent to these computers.

3. Courtroom

The courtroom is equipped with a single Windows 95® desktop computer, Pentium 75 MHz with 32 MB of RAM. The courtroom desktop computer is connected to

the Thornton City LAN and the Thornton Municipal Court's case management system. The system is configured to allow the courtroom clerk to perform data entry during court proceedings, such as entering orders including fines, fees, classes, or restitution. The courtroom clerk's entries to the case management system are immediately available for the clerk's office counter staff to serve individuals as they leave the courtroom. Additionally, the courtroom clerk can perform queries to retrieve information from the automated case management system and display the results on a monitor positioned for the judge to view.

4. Judicial Chambers and Hearing Office

Currently the judge and the hearing officer each have a Pentium 166 MHz with 32 MB of RAM, Windows 95®, and a 17-inch monitor. The computers in the judge's chambers and hearing office are connected to the Thornton City LAN and the court's case management system. The hearing officer has a laser printer connected directly to the desktop computer. The judge's printing is routed through the LAN.

5. Automated Case Management System

The court's case management system is approximately eight years old. Presently the Thornton Municipal Court and the city plan to update both the case management system software and hardware. While the case management system does meet the court's most urgent operating requirements, there are several liabilities. Code developed using older tools becomes burdensome to maintain and modify due to the difficulty of locating programmers with the necessary skills. Additionally, the current database management system is not as powerful and flexible as more modern relational database management systems. Part of the flexibility of relational database management systems is the ease of developing new and ad hoc reports. Providing ad hoc reports from the current database requires significant programming, which will not be accomplished with the possibility of a new case management package on the horizon.

The new case management system should be built using modern development tools to allow for easier code and system maintenance. A case management system designed using modern development tools would ease the Thornton City MIS department

support duties and allow for more outside support resource opportunities. The replacement case management system should provide the following capabilities:

- integration with standard office automation software, such as merging case management system data in word-processing documents;
- automated letter and form generation, using the case management system to directly print letters or forms, or merge case management system data into word-processing documents to print from the word-processor;
- the user interface should provide for both Graphical User Interface (GUI) and text based terminals. The GUI should allow screen navigation with only keyboard commands;
- use of modern relational database that supports the standard Structured Query Language (SQL) calls from other products. A case management system using a modern relational database supporting SQL would provide enhanced reporting capabilities for users and management;
- interface with the Department of Motor Vehicles for electronic transfer of dispositions;
- interface with the City's accounts payable application to facilitate disbursement of refunds, restitution, and bond and jury payments;
- interface with CCIC to allow single entry of warrants; and
- automate OJ/W and extended payment accounting that is currently done manually.

Recommendation 21: The new case management system should be built using modern development tools to allow for easier code and system maintenance.

B. Capability of Current Technology

Currently the office automation in the clerk's office meets the case processing needs of the staff. However, the court should consider automating the various forms the staff members currently complete by hand. Automated forms could be implemented using either an automated case management system or desktop computers and standard office automation. Once implemented automated forms would reduce the time required to prepare the forms and increase the quality of the work product.

Further, the current automated case management system provides a very limited selection of management reports. Additional management reports that would promote the ability to monitor case processing times, identify problems, and track caseload rather than caseload data require the Thornton City MIS department to reprogram portions of the case management system. This is a rather expensive and time consuming proposition. The new case management system should be designed to allow for easy generation of ad hoc reports.

C. Additional Potential Applications and Uses of Technology

The following suggested technologies provide the court with further options that can be employed to provide court service to the residents of Thornton more effectively. The court should look at each suggested technology carefully to determine which technologies would most effectively meet the goals of the court.

- Integrate with police information system to receive officers' schedules electronically for case scheduling.
- New case management system should generate a Juvenile Offenders List report. Additionally, if the juvenile is on the Juvenile Offenders List the case management system should not allow the entry of the case. The Juvenile Offenders List identifies juveniles with four or more violations in an 18-month period. If a juvenile is on the list, they go to Adams County Court for any new violations.
- Integration between the Thornton Municipal Court case management system and the city accounting system to ease bookkeeping demands. Once integrated the case management system could produce the checks for restitution, jury service, bond refunds, and witnesses quickly at the clerk's office.
- Video arraignment technology is becoming widely used in the courts. In large part, this is due to recent advances in technology and falling communications costs. Beyond these general forces driving video arraignment, the Thornton Municipal Court has an additional factor that positions it to take advantage of this technology. Currently the Adams County Detention Center is conducting video arraignments with the district court. Thornton Municipal Court will need to contact the Adams County Detention Center to learn what system requirements exist. Using the system requirements, the Thornton Municipal Court will need to evaluate the costs and benefits of using video arraignment as compared to bringing inmates to the court from the Adams County Detention Center.

- Records management could be enhanced using a file tracking system for file checkout. This system could be based on the case number entered as the file is taken out or returned, or by using a bar code type system.
- Imaging could be employed in several ways by the court. The police citations could be scanned when the officer submits them and the image could be provided to the Thornton Municipal Court with the transfer of other electronic data. The case file could be stored in electronic image form to provide quick access in the courtroom and at the public service counter. Storing the case file electronically would decrease retrieval time of the information while protecting the originals from loss or damage. The small size of most case files and the limited retention schedule would make imaging a potentially useful technology for the Thornton Municipal Court.
- Public access technologies, such as kiosks, web presence, or integrated voice response, could be employed to give the public expanded access to the court. With such technologies the public could:
 - access general court information, such as location, counter hours, and court procedures;
 - access court dates;
 - pay fines electronically; and
 - locate information about and register for court ordered classes.

D. Issues in Upgrading the Clerk's Office Technology

The current level of technology in the clerk's office is more than sufficient to handle the basic office automation needs (word-processing, e-mail, etc.) of the court. The existing office hardware and software (word-processor, spreadsheet, e-mail, etc.) is current and adequate for the court's present and near term demands. As the court's needs increase, the city's replacement cycle should provide the necessary equipment to meet the challenge. Additionally, the clerk's office hardware should be sufficient to handle any new automated case management system implemented in the future. However, it must be stressed that the automated case management system, which is used to perform the majority of work in the Thornton Municipal Court, is outdated and does not meet the court's present and growing needs.

The Thornton Municipal Court and Thornton City MIS department have determined that the existing automated case management system needs to be replaced.

The process of instituting a new automated case management system can be broken down into two phases, selection and implementation. The selection process requires the Thornton Municipal Court to define case management system requirements and evaluate solutions offered by vendors. The first step is to define the court's functional requirements. Related agencies such as the police department and finance department should be included in this planning process. The Thornton Municipal Court will need to prepare a request for proposals to send to vendors based on the definition of court's functional requirements.

The evaluation of RFP responses and proposed systems must be thorough. The Thornton Municipal Court should use the functional requirements initially developed as a guide in reviewing RFP responses to ensure that the chosen system will meet all the court's case management needs. In particular the Thornton City MIS director expressed concern that none of the currently available case management systems provide the Plea by Mail functionality that was developed by the Thornton City MIS department. The Thornton Municipal Court should select a case management system that would allow Thornton City MIS staff to quickly and easily incorporate the Plea by Mail functionality. If a case management system that would allow Thornton City MIS staff to incorporate the Plea by Mail functionality does not exist, the Thornton Municipal Court should work with the vendor and provide city developed logic to the vendor to incorporate, possibly in exchange for a preferential price on the case management system.

Once a case management system has been selected, an evaluation of the hardware necessary to operate the selected system must be performed. While some thought should be given to the preferred hardware platform during the functional requirements definition the selection of the case management system software should not be driven by this hardware preference.

Implementation of a new case management system has several steps. The vendor will need to make any modifications specified in the Thornton Municipal Court's functional requirements. During this period the Thornton City MIS department can install and test the hardware and connectivity. Once the hardware is operating the case management system software will be installed and testing can begin. When the new case management system is installed, the Thornton Municipal Court and Thornton City MIS

will need to work together to migrate existing data from the current case management system to the new case management system and verify the accuracy. Prior to switching to the new case management system exclusively, the Thornton Municipal Court will need to test the new case management system in parallel with the existing case management system to identify and correct problems.

E. Alternatives for Modification or Replacement of Existing Automated Systems

Presently the major automated system the clerk's office uses is the case management system. The issues facing the existing case management system would require as much or more resources, funds, and time to update as would be required to replace the system. In particular the pace of technology for a system of this scale moves at such a rate that the existing system is well behind the technological curve. The cost of replacing the case management system will likely compare favorably to modifications to meet the clerk's office needs. In looking at replacement case management systems, the Thornton Municipal Court should work with other Thornton city departments that they share significant amounts of data with, such as police and finance. Integration with other agencies can provide opportunities to enhance operational efficiency, potentially better prices from vendors, and cost sharing between the entities.

The city should continue with the established replacement and upgrade schedule of standard office automation hardware and software. The schedule that the city is currently using is very appropriate given the pace of technological change. Further, the Thornton City MIS department should keep current on developments in office automation to keep the Thornton Municipal Court and the rest of Thornton city government technologically current.

X. CONCLUSIONS

The Thornton Municipal court has successfully streamlined processes, using personnel and other resources at the optimum level. The NCSC project team found few redundancies in the system and was impressed by the overall competency of this operation. The court processes are rational and predictable, and there is little delay.

It was a pleasure for the NCSC project team to work in a court that was organized and efficient, as well as work with an administrator, judge, and court staff who are open to ideas and ready for change.

Appendix A

Thornton Municipal Court

Responses from Questionnaires

Regarding Organizational Issues

Thornton Municipal Court Interview Questions

Responses to Organizational Issues

- 1. What do you feel is the major problem facing your court and why? What do you believe would help solve the problem?**

- *1 lack of manpower & guidance*
- *1 lack of communication*
- *1 administration has no court background*
- *1 repeat offenders*
- *1 growing caseload*
- *3 no response/problems*

- 2. What suggestions have you made to improve the court? Do you feel your suggestions for court improvement were taken into consideration?**

Have you made suggestions?

- *4 yes*
- *4 no*
- *1 no response*

Were they considered?

- *3 yes*
- *4 no*
- *2 no response*

- 3. How do you feel your court could better serve the public?**

- *More general knowledge*
- *Better customer service*
- *Early education of juveniles*
- *Night court*
- *It's already operating at its optimum*

- 4. What is your courts strongest area?**

- *3 teamwork*
- *3 customer service*
- *2 good office staff*
- *1 no response*

- 5. Do you think your court is understaffed, overstaffed, or at the optimum level?**

- *3 understaffed*
- *6 optimum level*

- 6. Do you feel your court handles each case in a fast and efficient manner?**

- *All interviewed responded yes*

7. Is your court's records management adequate for the number of cases it processes?

- 6 yes
- 1 no
- 2 no response

8. Is there one area of records management you feel that needs work?

- 1 CJIS closes files without the close command
- 1 space
- 1 things flow well
- 1 recording sheet
- 3 no response

9. What automation and technology changes does the court need to make?

- 1 fix CJIS from closing files
- 1 automatic addition of "warrant" fees
- 1 automate finance information
- 3 automated forms for community service and classes
- 1 telephonic case access for the public
- 2 none

10. On a scale from 1-10 (10 being the hardest), how hard is your computer program to use?

- 1 rated it a 1
- 6 rated it a 3
- 1 rated it a 7

11. Do you feel that the automation and technology in your court help you to perform your daily tasks?

- 7 yes
- 2 no response

12. Is your workload heavy, light, or sufficient?

- 7 Sufficient
- 2 Heavy

13. Are there any bottlenecks in your caseflow? Does work pile up on any one desk?

- 1 warrant process / PD clearing warrants
- 1 receipt of show cause letters timely
- 1 locating files
- 1 the counter
- 1 3:00 juvenile session at the counter
- 1 DA interns
- 1 rights arraignment room
- 1 no bottlenecks

14. Are there any policies within your office that you feel hinder your ability to work?

- *1 yes (records release policy)*
- *6 No*
- *1 no response*

15. Do you have any ideas on improving the collections of fees and fines within your court?

- *4 have bailiff verify addresses*
- *1 pay or serve fines*
- *1 assign police to work warrants*
- *1 let one person handle payment of pleas*
- *3 no ideas*

16. Do you feel that there is good communication within your court?

- *6 feel there is good communication*
- *2 feel communication needs work*
- *2 individuals feel communication between clerks and the judge needs improvement*

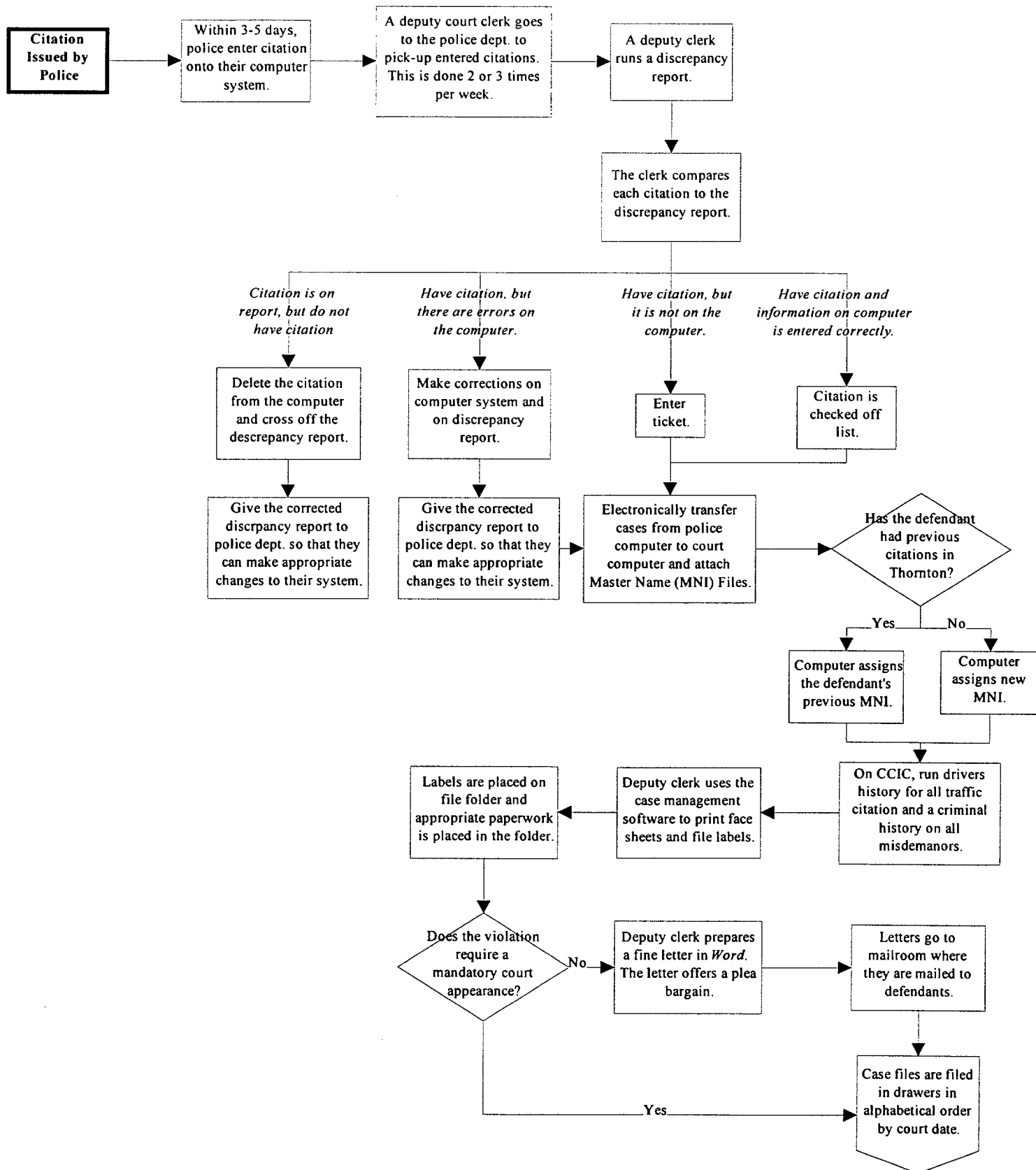
17. Do you feel that there is good communication between the court and other agencies (law enforcement, public defender, etc.)?

- *6 feel communication needs improvement*
- *3 feel communication is good*

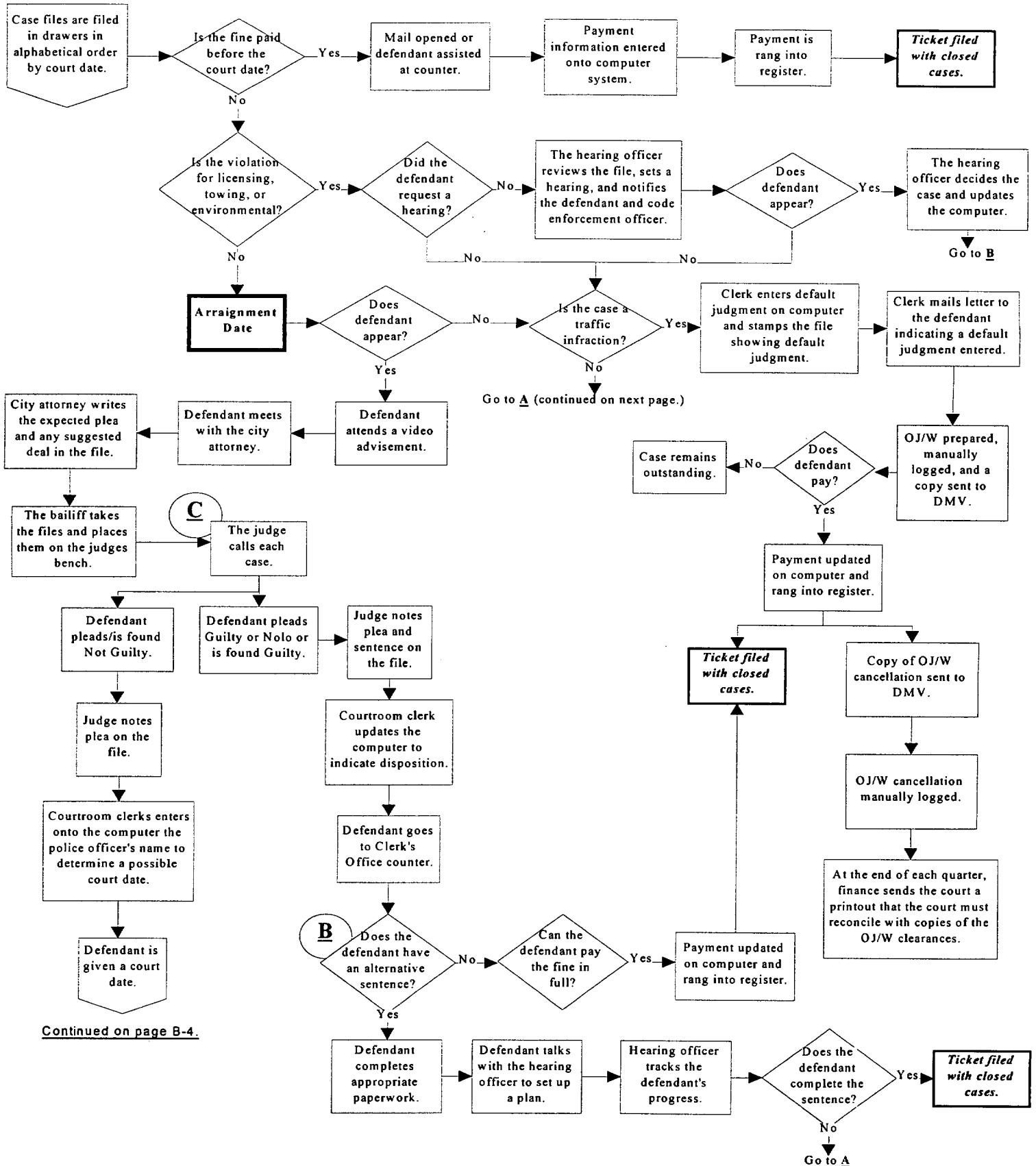
Appendix B

Thornton Municipal Court

Workflow

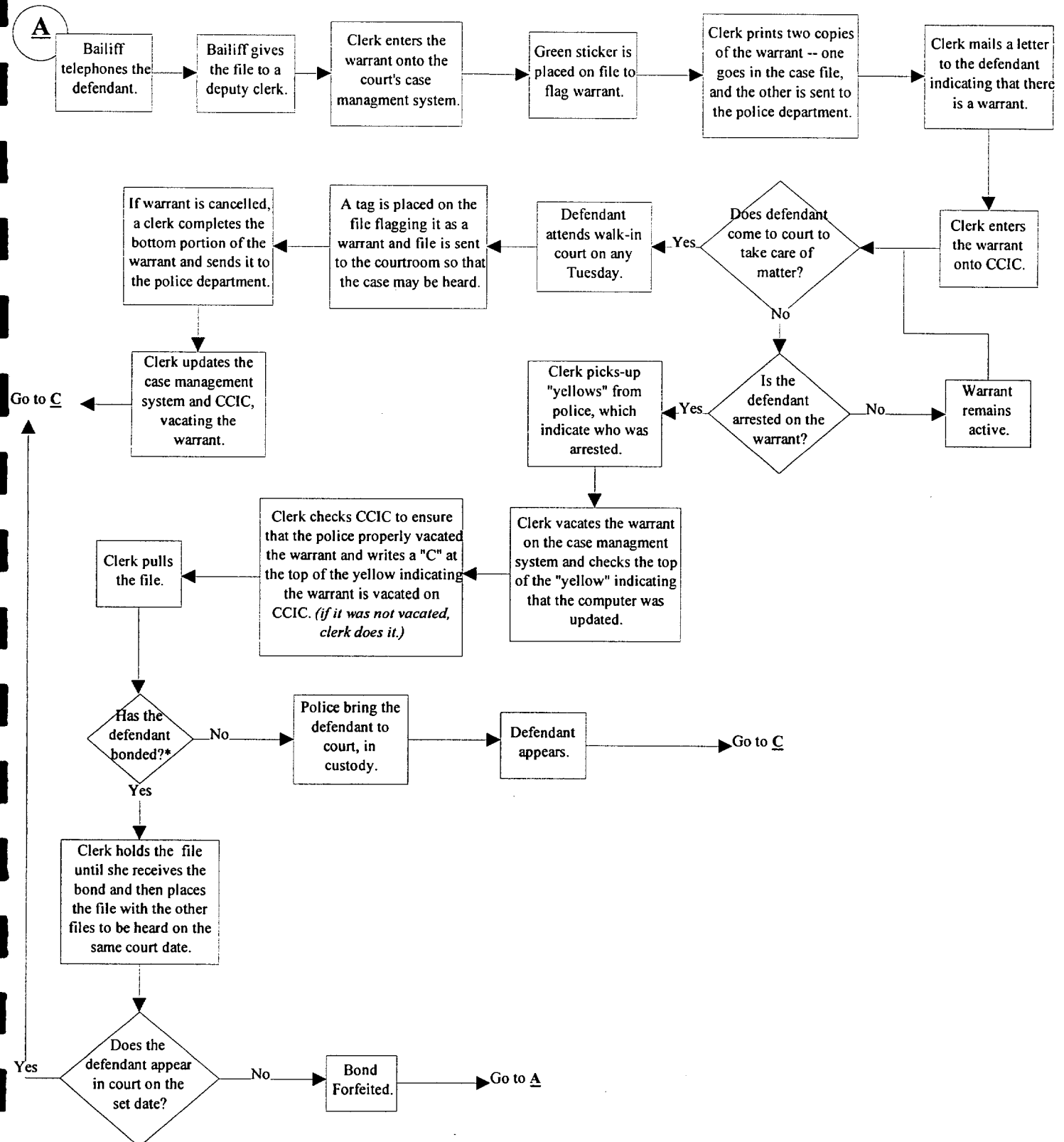


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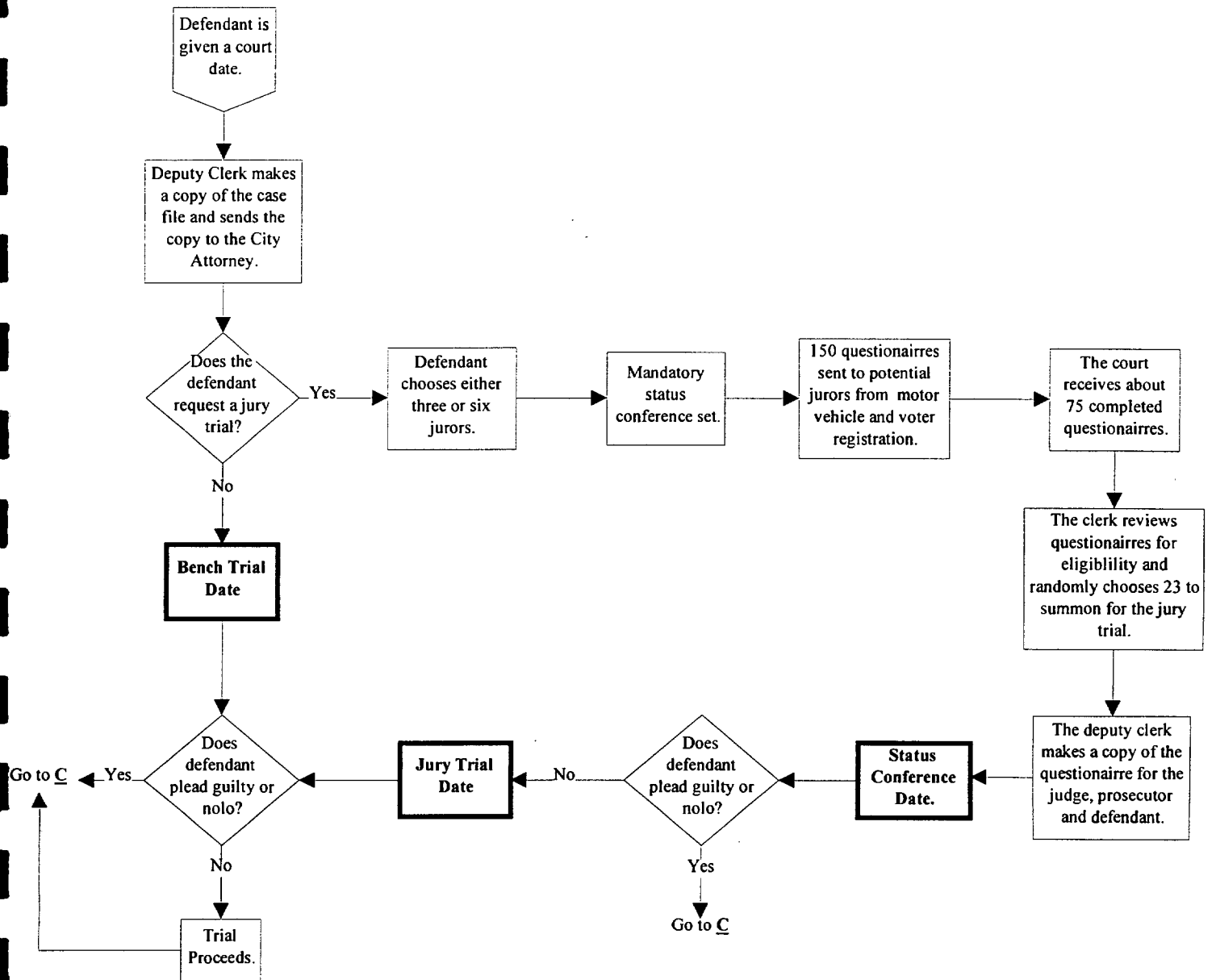
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*Note: During regular business hours, the clerk's office prepares cash and surety bonds. After hours, the police write the bonds.

Continued from page B-2.



Appendix C

Forms Inventory

**Thornton Municipal Court
Forms Inventory**

Name of Form	Paper Size	Form #	Date Revised	Form Title	Plain English	Case Number	Vertical Spacing	Multi-part Copies
Administration Processing Fee	X			X	X		X	N/A
Any Court Files Closed			X		X	N/A	X	N/A
Appearance Bond	X				X	X	X	
Application for Court Appointed Attorney	X			X	X	X	X	N/A
Bench Warrant	X			X	X		X	X
Citation To Show Cause	X			X	X		X	
Colorado Nonresident Violator	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Corrective Driving Clinic	X			X	X	X	X	X
Fax Cover Letter	X			X	X	N/A	X	N/A
I.S.A.E.(Institute for Substance Abuse Education)	N/A			X	X	X	X	X
Insufficient Funds &/or Account Closed	X			X	X		X	N/A
Intervention	X			X	X	X	X	X
Juror's Summons	X			X	X	N/A	X	N/A
Juvenile Firesetters Program Contact Sheet	X			X	X		X	
Life Management Program	X			X	X	X	X	X
National Corrective Training Institute	N/A			X	X	X	X	X
Notice of Forfeiture and Citation to Show Cause	X		X	X	X	X	X	N/A
OOC Classification	X				X	N/A	X	N/A
Order	X			X	X		X	
Order for Judgement on Bond Forfeiture	X			X	X	X	X	N/A
Order Form (supplies)	X				N/A	N/A	X	N/A
ORDER RE: Jury Trial Status Conference	X			X	X	X	X	N/A
ORDER RE: Jury Trial Status Conference								
Plea Bargain Offer	X				X		X	N/A

Thornton Municipal Court
Forms Inventory – Page 2

Name of Form	Paper Size	Form #	Date Revised	Form Title	Plain English	Case Number	Vertical Spacing	Multi-part Copies
Release of Liability and Indemnification	X			X	X		X	X
Request for Discovery	X			X	X		X	N/A
Restraining Order/Contact Order	X			X	X	X	X	
S.U.P.E.R. Program	X			X	X		X	
State of Colorado Court Transcript Report	X	X	X	X	X		X	N/A
Stay of Execution	X			X	X		X	
Subpoena to Testify	X			X	X		X	N/A
Subpoena to Testify	X			X	X		X	
Summons/Defendant/Amount					N/A		X	N/A
The Court clerks are authorized to grant you a short stay					X		X	N/A
This is to inform you that Thornton has scheduled:	X				X		X	X
Volume Projections	X			X	X	N/A	X	N/A
Your Rights Regarding a Petition to Revoke	X			X	X		X	

Appendix D

Sample Notice of

Fine Due on Day of Sentencing

Thornton Municipal Court Policy on Payment of Fines

*Fines are due in full by 4:30 p.m. on the day of sentencing
unless the judge orders otherwise.*

Pay with cash, check, money order, or credit card at the Clerk's office.

Be sure to consider possible sources of money: your bank account, "rainy day" funds, credit company, friend, relative, or sale of personal property.

If you do not pay your fine when ordered, the court may:

- ✓ Suspend your driver's license.
- ✓ Make information on suspension of your driver's license available to your auto insurance company, which may cause your rates to increase.
- ✓ Issue a warrant for your arrest and your warrant will go into the regional law enforcement warrant system. Any law enforcement officer may arrest you based on that warrant.
- ✓ Notify a credit bureau about your bad debt and place your future credit at risk.
- ✓ Seize your wages, bank accounts, or personal property, including your car if non-exempt.

Appendix E

Technology Inventory

THORNTON MUNICIPAL COURT
TECHNOLOGY INVENTORY

City ID	Court ID	Processor	RAM - MB	Harddrive	Floppy 1.44	CD	OS	Mfg.	Monitor
103945	MWCT0059	P-166	32	1.51 GB	X	12X	Win95/4.00.950 B	Touch	ADI MicroScan, LM-1764
103949	MWCT0063	P-166	32	1.51 GB	X	12X	Win95/4.00.950 B	Touch	ADI MicroScan, LM-1764
103048		P-75	32	812 MB	X	2X - Sony CDU55E	Win95/4.00.950 a	CompuAdd	2 - CompuAdd TE1564M
103939	MWCT0053	P-166	32	1.51 GB	X	12X	Win95/4.00.950 B	Touch	ADI MicroScan, LM-1764
103781	MWCT0005	P-166	32	1.51 GB	X	12X	Win95/4.00.950 a	MicroWorld	ADI MicroScan, LM-1764
103948	MWCT0062	P-166	32	1.51 GB	X	12X	Win95/4.00.950 B	MicroWorld	ADI MicroScan, LM-1764
103946	MWCT0060	P-166	32	1.51 GB	X	12X	Win95/4.00.950 B	MicroWorld	ADI MicroScan, LM-1764
103940	MWCT0054	P-166	32	1.51 GB	X	12X	Win95/4.00.950 B	MicroWorld	ADI MicroScan, LM-1764
103782	MWCT0007	P-166	32	1.51 GB	X	12X	Win95/4.00.950 B	MicroWorld	ADI MicroScan, LM-1764
103947	MWCT0061	P-166	32	1.51 GB	X	12X	Win95/4.00.950 B	MicroWorld	ADI MicroScan, LM-1764
103941		P-166	32	1.51 GB	X	12X	Win95/4.00.950 a	MicroWorld	ADI MicroScan, LM-1764
103943	MWCT0057	P-166	32	1.51 GB	X	12X	Win95/4.00.950 B	MicroWorld/ Touch	ADI MicroScan, LM-1764
103942	MWCT0056	P-166	32	1.51 GB	X	12X	Win95/4.00.950 B	MicroWorld	ADI MicroScan, LM-1764
							IE 4.0 4.72.2106.8		
103884	MWCT0044	P-166	32	1.96 GB	X	12X	Win95/4.00.950 B	MicroWorld	ADI MicroScan, LM-1764
104866	MWCT0105	P-166	32	1.51 GB	X	1X - Sony CDU510	Win95/4.00.950 B	Generic	ADI MicroScan, 5AP

PRINTERS

City ID	Other ID	Model	RAM - MB	Mfg.	Connection	Accessories
103484		LaserJet 4+	6	HP	PC-104866	
103101		LaserJet 4+	6	HP	PC-103782	
102568		LaserJet 4+	6	HP	Network IP	Lower Paper Tray and Base Unit
	ct.oki2.env	Microline 320		Okidata	129.42.0.45 Network IP	JetDirect EX+
		Pinwriter P5300		NEC	129.42.0.44 Network IP	JetDirect EX+
102891		LaserJet 4+	2	HP	129.42.0.42 PC-103941	
	ct.oki0	Microline 320		Okidata	PC-103940	
	ct.oki1	Microline 320		Okidata	PC-103781	