

SEATAC MUNICIPAL COURT

Your City.  Your Court.

Did you know.....?

“Your Municipal Court”

- There are over 200 District and Municipal Court Judges in Washington. Each serve a four year term.
- A municipality may appoint their judge if it is to fill a part-time judicial position. A judge is considered part-time if the judge works 32 hours per week or less.
- If the judge exceeds 32 hours per week, then the judge must be elected by the community in which he or she serves.
- Judge hours at SeaTac have averaged approximately 24 hours per week until this year, when we streamlined the court to just hear cases in the morning, as we can accommodate the court’s caseload within that time frame. This saves judge and pro tem judge costs, and gives clerks ample time to complete their workload. This change has reduced judge hours to about 15 per week.

I have had the pleasure of serving the citizens of SeaTac as a Pro Tem Judge/Magistrate beginning in 2003, and then as the appointed Municipal Court Judge since 2008. I have opted to not reapply for the position of Judge, and will be separating from the City on October 31st of this year. I want to take this opportunity to thank the community and all of the Council members I have served for their tremendous support of the Court, and to give a final report on the current State of the Court.

When I began, court hearings occurred every day of the week. After I began, I realized that we were utilizing interpreters at multiple hearings, multiple times each week, which was costly. I changed our system of calendaring cases so that we....(Continued on page 2)

Photo of Rachel Fink; Tattoo Artist: Nikki Lugo, courtesy of National Judicial College



Tattoo of Supreme Court Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg

Who is the favorite Supreme Court Justice among judges? “The Notorious R.B.G.,” a moniker assigned to her by other judges, Ruth Bader Ginsburg was the runaway favorite in a poll conducted by the National Judicial College. Some cited her advocacy for equality and women’s rights, while others pointed to her keen intellect, strong sense of fairness and compassion, and a commitment to seeing justice prevail. A biopic on this outspoken Supreme Court Justice will begin filming this fall.

Come in and view Court in session! Court is in session every morning from approximately 9 am to approximately 11:30 am. Court sessions are open to the public. Go to the Court's webpage before you come to court to see what items are prohibited in the court room. If you are unable to join us in the court room, but you are still interested in learning what happened in Court, you can listen to Court sessions on-line each day using a link on the Court's webpage. We placed our recordings on-line to increase transparency and accessibility to Court sessions. Recordings are usually posted once the hearings are complete at the end of each Court session. If you have any questions, contact Court Administrator Gail Cannon at 206-973-4610.

“Your Municipal Court”
(.....*Continued from page 1*)

....limited interpreter cases to one day each month. This reduced a significant cost for the court. We also changed our procedures for handling infraction cases, to allow people to respond to their tickets with a sworn, written statement submitted by mail or email. This increased the rate of response, as it is more convenient for the public. We added convenient payment options that allow people to pay their court fines on-line or by telephone 24 hours each day to increase likelihood of timely payment and decrease clerk processing time.

We partnered with Renton Municipal Court and Tukwila Municipal Court to combine resources in the development of an electronic case scheduling program and forms program to save costs and increase work load capabilities of staff. At the time of development there were no “off the shelf” programs for courts. Now at least 10 other courts are using some form of the system we use today. The user friendly system has allowed our courts to compensate for reduced staff and higher case loads while also increasing accuracy and efficiency. *Continued on page 3....*

Interested in getting the latest court opinions from the Courts of Appeal and Supreme Court of Washington? Then sign up for email notification and subscription services! Within 30 minutes of an opinion being filed, you will receive an e-mail with the date, court, and case title of the new opinion, and the link for viewing the opinion. All opinions are provided in PDF format. Go to <https://www.courts.wa.gov/notifications/>.

I appointed the Judges of neighboring jurisdictions as Pro Tem Judges for SeaTac Municipal Court to be able to hear cases on the jail calendar when I am unavailable. This cooperative agreement is at no cost to the city. The in-custody hearing is expedited by one to three days, depending on when the defendant is arrested, which results in costs savings to the City. This eliminates the need to search for a Pro Tem Judge to hear the case and eliminates the cost associated with Pro Tem services. This meets the due process requirement of providing a timely hearing and reduces the cost of incarceration by reducing the number of days the defendant spends in jail awaiting a hearing. We also now contract with the Department of Corrections (DOC) to utilize their Work Crew program at no cost to the City. DOC monitors the defendants while they perform work and the City saves costs of incarceration in appropriate cases.

I developed an Outreach program, including a Law Week centered around National Law Day, which celebrates the rule of law and our constitutional rights. Your Law Week Program was even recognized nationally by the American Bar Association. I have hosted programs for the Senior Center, the local high school, middle schools, trade schools and Highline Community College. I initiated the annual presentation of a State of the Court Address, began writing this Quarterly Newsletter and added content to the court's webpage to improve accessibility and provide pertinent information for the public. We added a link on our webpage which allows the public to hear audio recordings of daily court hearings in order to increase accessibility and transparency of the court. When I learned Highline Botanical Garden had a need for volunteers, I allowed folks who were unable to pay their fines to fulfill their obligations to the court by performing community service in lieu of payment. Through that provision, Highline Botanical Garden has benefitted from many hours of court authorized community service.

In short, the Court is an efficient operation that provides a valuable service to the SeaTac community. Throughout the years, I have heard from many attorneys, pro tem judges, officers, and jurors how they regard SeaTac Municipal Court as the most efficient, well run court they have experienced. As I have said, this is your City and it is your Court. I am very proud of your Court, and I hope you are too. I have really enjoyed serving as your judge. I am quite confident your new judge will excel in their service to you, and enjoy their time spent in SeaTac, as I have enjoyed my time spent with all of you. Sincerely, E. Bejarano

Final Message to the Community:

Thank you again for allowing me the opportunity to serve in this position. Because of your support and the support of Council, the court has grown in efficiency and has significantly streamlined its processes. Without your support the court would not be in the enviable position it is today. We have set aside resource heavy, time consuming processes in favor of web based and electronic processes. Your support truly revolutionized court operations, and I cannot emphasize that enough. My wish for the citizens of SeaTac, the Council, and SeaTac employees is that you all have peace and good health, and that you continue to grow and prosper as a vibrant and diverse community. With gratitude, Elizabeth M. Cordi-Bejarano



CONSTITUTION DAY

Constitution Day is September 17, 2017. Constitution Day commemorates the formation and signing of the US Constitution on September 17, 1787. This is a day to reflect on our good fortune as citizens and beneficiaries of the rights guaranteed in this remarkable document. The Constitution is timeless and comprehensive in its application. Even though the founding fathers could not have foreseen the issues we would face today, the Constitution remains as effective, relevant, and applicable to current issues as it was to issues that existed at the time it was drafted.

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The SeaTac Municipal Court Newsletter is written by Judge Elizabeth Cordi-Bejarano. Any copying, reproduction or distribution of this document, in whole or in part, without her permission is prohibited.

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