



Legislation Text

File #: 0684-2021, **Version:** 1

BACKGROUND:

The COVID pandemic has brought technology to the forefront of operations for the Franklin County Municipal Court. Municipal Court began using video arraignment in 2020 to limit the number of jailed defendants transported to the courthouse for arraignment limiting exposure to the novel Coronavirus for defendants, courthouse staff, and Franklin County Sheriff Office staff. The process of using video arraignments has been successful in mitigating transfer of the virus and has also increased the Courts efficiency during the arraignment process. Franklin County Municipal Court will continue to use this process going forward.

While implementing video arraignment, Franklin County Municipal Court coordinated with the Franklin County Sheriff's Department and Franklin County Common Pleas Court to install and deploy a video arraignment process to help reduce the spread of COVID-19. Due to space limitations at Jackson Pike, only one room could be allocated to Video Arraignments for both Municipal Court and Common Pleas Court. This collaboration required many operational changes to take place, most impactful being the reduction of days in which arraignments could be held by Municipal Court to 3 days per week. This limit on arraignments required defendants to remain detained for additional days prior to receiving an arraignment hearing. The need to resume daily arraignments has led to a coordination of efforts to allocate another room solely to Municipal Court Arraignments to alleviate the scheduling conflict with Common Pleas arraignments. In order for the Court to utilize this space provided, renovations are necessary in order to properly facilitate arraignments in an environment that complies with confidentiality, security, and process. This will allow improved management of video arraignment for defendants, and also increase video arraignment scheduling which will ultimately decrease the amount of time a defendant remains in jail prior to initial appearance.

Franklin County Public Facilities Management utilizes Elford Inc. (federal tax ID 31-371060, City of Columbus vendor number 006059) to provide interior renovations to the Corrections Center. Public Facilities provided an estimate from Elford Inc. totaling \$409,678.00 to complete all required renovations of the offered video arraignment space. Franklin County Public Facilities Management has requested that the Franklin County Municipal Court partner with them to facilitate completing the renovations as soon as possible.

This ordinance appropriates \$409,678.00 to the Franklin County Municipal Court from the Franklin County Municipal Court special fund 222604 to provide funds to pay the costs of renovations for the video arraignment area of the Franklin County Corrections Center (Jackson Pike), authorizes the Administrative and Presiding Judge of the Franklin County Municipal Court to enter into contract with Elford Inc. for the renovations of the space offered at the Franklin County Correction Center (Jackson Pike), and expenditure of \$409,678.00 with the same vendor.

Emergency Legislation is requested so that work can begin as soon as possible in order to return the arraignments at the Franklin County Municipal Court to a 6 day per week schedule.

FISCAL IMPACT: There are sufficient funds available within the special revenue fund 222604 to support the requested appropriation.

To authorize and direct the Administrative and Presiding Judge of the Franklin County Municipal Court to enter into contract with Elford, Inc. to complete renovations for the video arraignment area of the Franklin County Corrections Center (Jackson Pike); to authorize the appropriation and expenditure of \$409,678.00 from the special revenue fund for specialty docket programs to the Franklin County Municipal Court; to waive the competitive bidding provisions of Columbus City Code; and to declare an emergency. (\$409,678.00).

WHEREAS, the Franklin County Municipal Court began using video arraignment in 2020 to limit the number of jailed defendants transported to the courthouse for arraignment limiting exposure to the novel Coronavirus for defendants, courthouse staff, and Franklin County Sheriff Office staff.; and

WHEREAS, the Franklin County Municipal Court will continue to utilize video arraignment for public safety and efficiency; and

WHEREAS, the need to resume daily arraignments has led to a coordination of efforts to allocate another room within the Franklin County Correction Center (Jackson Pike) solely to Municipal Court arraignments; and

WHEREAS, the room allocated requires renovations to properly facilitate arraignments in an environment that complies with confidentiality, security, and process; and

WHEREAS, Franklin County Public Facilities Management provided a quote from Elford Inc. for \$409,678.00 to provide the building alterations; and

WHEREAS, a waiver of competitive bidding provisions of Columbus City Code is necessary as Elford Inc has been chosen by Franklin County to provide renovations to the Franklin County Correction Center at Jackson Pike; and

WHEREAS, an emergency exists in the usual daily operation of the Franklin County Municipal Court in that it is immediately necessary to authorize the Administrative and Presiding Judge to enter into contract with Elford, Inc. and to appropriate and expend the aforementioned funds, in order to pay the renovation costs to return to daily video arraignments thereby preserving the public health, peace, property, safety and welfare; Now, Therefore,

BE IT ORDAINED BY THE COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF COLUMBUS:

SECTION 1. That from the unappropriated monies in the special revenue fund for specialty docket programs of the municipal court special projects, fund number 2226, subfund 222604, and from all monies estimated to come into said fund from any and all sources and appropriated for any other purpose during the fiscal year ending December 31, 2021, a sum of \$409,678 is hereby appropriated according to the account codes in the attachment.

SECTION 2. That the expenditure of \$409,678 or as much thereof as may be necessary is hereby authorized from the Franklin County Municipal Court Judges' special project fund, according to the account codes in the attached.

SECTION 3. That the Administrative and Presiding Judge of the Franklin County Municipal Court be and is hereby authorized to enter into contract with Elford, Inc. for Franklin County Correction Center renovations through December 31, 2021.

SECTION 4. That this Council finds that it is in the best interests of the City to waive the relevant provisions of Chapter 329 of the Columbus City Codes regarding competitive bidding to enter into this contract, and the same are hereby waived.

SECTION 5. That for the reasons stated in the preamble hereto, which is hereby made a part hereof, this ordinance is hereby declared to be an emergency measure and shall take effect and be in force from and after its passage and approval by the Mayor or ten days after passage if the Mayor neither approves nor vetoes the same.