



Frank Little  
*President Judge*

### Letter from the President Judge

My official life has always been tempered by my personal belief in the system and the rights of individuals to participate in that system in a meaningful way. For those reasons, I am proud of the judges and employees of the Philadelphia Traffic Court because they are the standard bearers — the foundation — for most of Philadelphia’s citizens’ access to justice.

In their endeavors to deliver expedient but fair outcomes to cases arising from moving violations, the Traffic Court Judiciary, Administration, and staff provide an array of services to allow the public greater access everyday. In support of access, Traffic Court personnel listen to the customers’ cases, provide information and guidance, collect and disburse money from fines, and supply enforcement to further ensure public safety. Society at large benefits from safer streets, and in that way, even those people not having business before the Court are granted a measure of access to justice.

Together, we hope to continue our good work and make even more improvements. Our goal is, relying on the foundations of the past and present, to go on to widen access into the future.



Bernice DeAngelis  
*Administrative Judge*

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## Letter from the Administrative Judge

Philadelphia Traffic Court judges and employees are proud to be representatives of the First Judicial District's leader in the number of customers served. As the average citizen's first, and perhaps only encounter with the judicial system, Traffic Court provides more access to more people than any other Court of the First Judicial District.

During the 1996-1997 Biennium, numerous improvements were conceived, developed, and initiated to help more of citizens of Philadelphia participate more effectively in the judicial process. Physical plant upgrades and staffing improvements to customer services resulted in better surroundings and faster service for motorists appearing at the Court. The result: more citizens served more efficiently. Extended hours, including Saturday sessions, and implementation of Night Court afforded clients with jobs and other responsibilities greater opportunities to conduct their business with the Court.

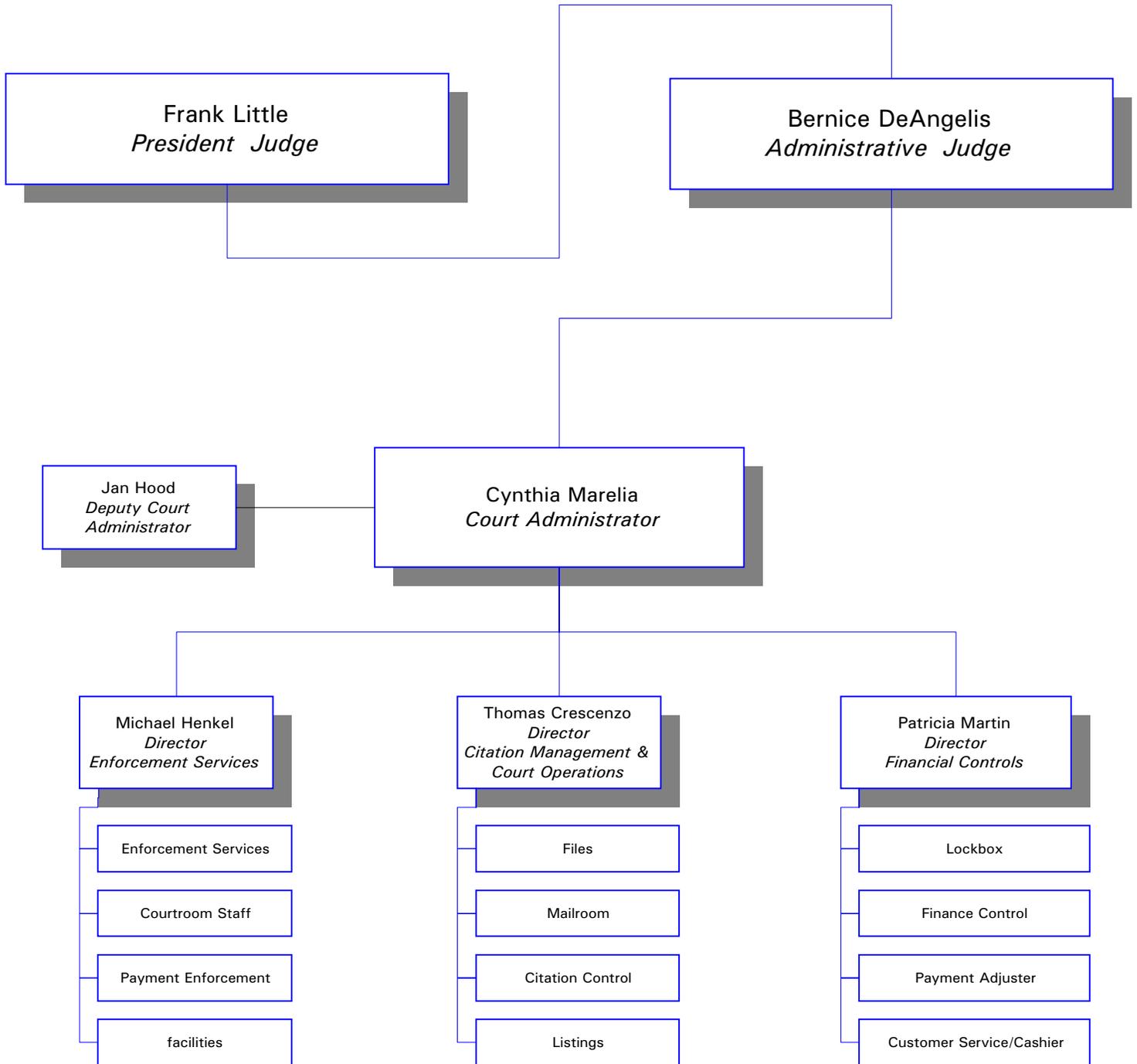
Technological improvements to the information services systems, which are continuing apace with the wave of current and future automated innovations, also serve to permit more people access through speedier case processing. Relatedly, streamlined case processing techniques, policies, and procedures compliment advances in other areas.

Here, citizens can, and most often do, plead their case directly to judges. All the while, members of the Traffic Court Bench, Administration, and staff continue in their endeavor to provide individualized, personal services. Our judges and employees have established a firm footing while looking to ongoing and future improvements. In the quest to further ensure public safety, while dispensing justice with ever increasing numbers of customers, the First Judicial District Traffic Court truly exemplifies the provision of "Access to Justice: A Foundation for the Future."

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Cynthia Marelia  
Court Administrator

## Traffic Court Mission Statement

*“We strive to accomplish two important goals:*

- 1) to utilize all reasonable, necessary and available measures to insure compliance with the laws of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania; and*
- 2) to preserve the safety of our citizenry.”*

## OVERVIEW AND ORGANIZATION

Judges and employees of the Traffic Court of the First Judicial District operate from its location at 800 Spring Garden Street, Philadelphia. Governed by statute, administrative orders, and the Pennsylvania Rules of Criminal Procedure pertaining to Procedures in Summary Cases, the employees in the Branch receive and process matters pertaining to moving motor vehicle violations.

During the biennium, the Traffic Court benefitted from the leadership of Bernice DeAngelis, Administrative Judge. President Judge Frank Little was appointed early in 1998, after the 1996-1997 Biennial Report period. Both are members of the First Judicial District Administrative Governing Board. Reporting to them are Court Administrator Cynthia Marelia and Jeanette Hood, Deputy Court Administrator. The non-judicial management team also includes three Directors who oversee various supervisors and their unit staffs in the Traffic Court Administrative structure. The three directorships are: 1) Enforcement Services; 2) Citation Management and Courtroom Operations; and 3) Financial Control.

Traffic Court has eight judges with over 100 non-judicial employees working in administration, administrative staff, management, court officer, clerical, and building services positions.

Traffic Court receives and records virtually all filings concerning moving violations charged within in the County of Philadelphia. In CY 1996, 246,620 citations were received and processed. In CY 1997, that number increased by more than 118,000, or 48%, to total \$364,823 filings.

## PURPOSE

Traffic Court is a summary court charged by the Pennsylvania Legislature with the processing of all moving violations issued pursuant to Title 75 of the Pennsylvania Consolidated Statutes, and all City ordinances pertaining to Title 75, following procedures as set forth in Chapter 50 of the Pennsylvania Rules of Criminal Procedure, and guided in part by local ordinances. The Traffic Court is: 1) the filing repository for all moving violations actions in the First Judicial District of Pennsylvania; 2) the adjudicative and dispositive agent of those proceedings; 3) with support, the enforcement arm for dispositions, statute and rules; and 4) a receiver and disperser of revenues. Traffic Court personnel fulfill the roles of the Protho-



Senior Judge Edward Cox

notary, the Clerk of Quarter Sessions, and the Sheriff's Department as well as the standard Court functions normally associated with other Courts and Divisions of the FJD.

### RESPONSIBILITIES

As the average citizen's first, and often only interaction with the justice system, and, considering the enormously high volume of customers as suggested by issuance statistics above, the Traffic Court's judges and employees are committed to, and ever mindful of, public service and "access to justice".

Traffic Court personnel receive citations from the Philadelphia Police and maintain accurate records reflecting citations, customer histories, and collection and disbursement of funds. Employees respond to requests for information and pleadings, schedule hearings, facilitate the disposition of cases, and collect and properly disperse public funds geared toward the efficient administration of justice in the interest of public safety.

Along with the relationship between the Court and the Police and other law enforcement agencies, Traffic Court maintains operational linkages with the Pennsylvania Department of Transportation, the Philadelphia Parking Authority, the Prothonotary's Department in the Office of the President Judge of the Court of Common Pleas, and the Common Pleas Court to which appeals from Traffic Court judgments are referred.

Enhanced access to Traffic Court facilities is provided by accommodating the public with extended weekday court hours (8:30 a.m. to 7:00 p.m.)

and on Saturdays from 9:00 a.m. to 1:00 PM.. With the advent of the recent "Boot and Tow" legislation requiring motorists to appear at the Court within 24 hours, providing access becomes all the more important.

Customer service representatives serve the public through: 1) the provision of information regarding citations and records; 2) receipt of payments for violations (MAC and credit cards permitted); 3) scheduling hearings; and 4) providing assistance with other governmental entities concerning license suspension when requested.

Aside from myriad administrative duties, the Administrative Judge's Office provides service to those individuals who have fulfilled their obligations with regard to their suspended driving privileges by corresponding with PennDOT and facilitating the restoration of driving privileges.

Access is afforded through scheduled hearings before capable judges who allow the public to state their defense and then render fair and equitable decisions.

Traffic Court programs particularly associated with access to justice include the following:

- Working Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) strategies are in compliance with the Act, including the availability of a TDD phone system for the hearing impaired.
- Individuals who are visiting from out-of-state have the opportunity of an immediate hearing in Motion Court.
- An excellent scofflaw enforcement system that promotes traffic safety and generates revenue as well.
- A program in conjunction with the Prothonotary's Office whereby liens are lodged against violators who default on payment plans, also a source of revenue.



Judge Francis E. Kelly



Judge Lillian Podgorski

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## ACHIEVEMENTS

**Record Years for Collections:** Lead by Administrative Judge Bernice DeAngelis, beginning in FY 1996, the Court's record for collection and disbursement of funds underwent a comprehensive evaluative and improvement process. Driven in part by issuance, but arising also from efficiencies implemented during the last two years, money disbursed to the City and State through Traffic Court collections rose 31% — from \$7.1 million in CY 1996 to a record \$9.3 million in CY 1997 — an increase of \$2.2 million.

**New Safety Initiative:** Additionally, new steps designed to contribute to the improvement of safety of Philadelphia's streets have been implemented by the Court. Responding to public interest and legislative mandates — and led by the Court — the Mayor's Office, the City Police, the Philadelphia Parking Authority (PPA), and the Pennsylvania Department of Transportation (PennDOT) have been working toward instituting a pilot program that will remove unregistered cars and those of unlicensed drivers from Philadelphia highways. A new law allows for the immobilization, impoundment, and eventual sale of cars — hence the common name "Boot and Tow Law." — a future source of revenue.

Aside from a plan for heavy trucks, the law sets forth procedures for the confiscation of vehicles owned by individuals having more than \$250 in unpaid traffic fines and unregistered autos and cars driven by persons without valid operator's privileges whether the driver owns the vehicle or not. The process requires involved operators and/

or owners to appear at Traffic Court within 24 hours. There, drivers and owners must pay their fines or agree to a payment plan to be able to get their car back. In either instance, individuals failing to cooperate and satisfy their debt to the Court, or to make arrangements for doing so through an installment plan, will have their cars sold at auction.

With these new enforcement tools, increased public safety and enhanced Traffic Court efficiency are expected.

**Facility Upgrades and Court Modernizations:** During the past two years the Traffic Court lobby area has been completely redesigned to accommodate "one stop" customer service. Cashiers and inquiry clerks became customer service representatives capable of responding to public needs. For security purposes, metal detectors and bullet-proof barriers have been installed. There are also plans on the drawing board for enhanced detention facilities.

**Technology Upgrades:** More PennDOT and Lockheed TIMS system mainframe terminals have been installed to better serve the increasing informational needs of the public, including the addition of terminals in each courtroom, allowing on-line, real-time access to case information benefitting citizens who appear for a hearing. Direct data and communication links with the Philadelphia Police have been developed to support the effective enforcement of new legislation. The automation system is also undergoing and will continue to undergo evaluation to identify problem areas and make appropriate improvements to enhance service delivery, increase efficiency, and ensure timeliness in support of Court operations.



Judge Joseph A. Howlett



Judge Fortunato Perri



Judge Thomasina Tynes

The Traffic Court systems integration contractor, Lockheed Martin IMS, has developed comprehensive software to support the Court's recent enforcement initiative for impounding the vehicles of delinquent motorists under Title 75, Pennsylvania Consolidated Statutes §6309 et seq. (Boot and Tow Law). This has included real-time integration with the database of the Philadelphia Parking Authority for the on-street capture of vehicles owned by delinquent offenders.

Additional personal computer devices on the FJD local area network for e-mail and office automation access have been installed, with staff training for Windows 95 expected in the coming months.

### DEPARTMENTS

#### ***Citation Management and Court***

***Operations:*** This department receives citations, schedules hearings, assembles documentation, records results on the automated system, and maintains files. Additionally, personnel provide requested information from citation source documents and court proceedings records when requested by the judicial staff, court employees and parties involved in the appeal process. Appeal cases are prepared here and forwarded to Common Pleas Court.

Employees in sub-units interface with the Police Liaison Unit to ensure citation accuracy, perform quality-control checks on the finished product produced by the data-entry vendor, and secures the permanency of the citation through micro-filming with a document number for filing and retrieval purposes. Employees also record each decision rendered, schedule special hearings, and update payment plans.

This department is responsible for maintaining the court calendar in the computer system, i.e. the correct number of cases in a courtroom, number of open courtrooms per month and courtroom accommodations for special hearings. Case research and report reviews are included in the clerical duties of this department.

Court Officers are responsible for expediting the recording of dispositions of all cases efficiently while maintaining discipline and decorum in the courtroom. Tipstaves manage case flow by assuring courtroom preparation and coordinating agencies, attorneys, clerks and police liaison officers effectively. This provides an environment beneficial to the judiciary and defendants.

Mail Room employees pick up mail at the post office each morning and make two daily in-house mail pick-ups throughout the building. Mail room personnel are responsible for folding, presorting and running at least 1,000 notices through the Inserta-Max for daily mailing. All packages, certified, computer tapes and special notices are mailed from here. The postage meter and all other equipment are maintained by personnel. Bar coding has been introduced with an estimated \$30,000 per year in savings expected.

Maintenance workers perform all necessary janitorial and other duties to maintain the building. They construct, repair or renovate any area of the court when necessary to allow for a more conducive work environment. This department handles receipt of shipped packages and distributes them.

***Enforcement Services:*** Enforcement Department workers contact scofflaws and others with defaulted payment plans by phone, and execute and dispose of outstanding warrants for the Court

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through personal contact with violators either at home or wherever they may be located. Arrested violators are supervised in cell rooms while their records are compiled in preparation for their arraignment in Traffic Court courtrooms.

Violators arrested by enforcement officers or others are secured in a detention unit to ensure their safety and speedy legal processing. This department works in conjunction with other law enforcement agencies to maintain security and to ensure violators' rights.

Warrant files are maintained and updated daily by this department.

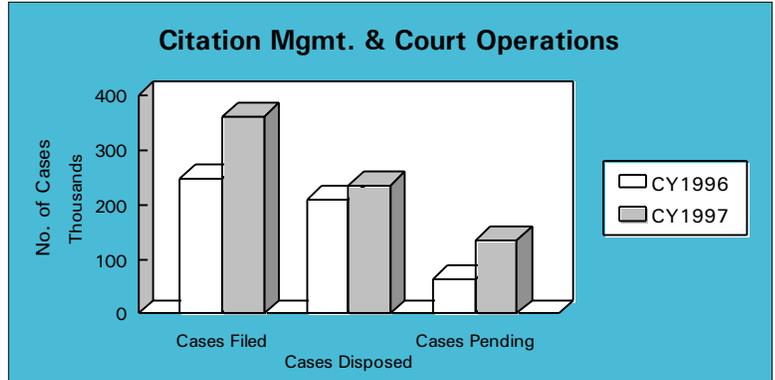
**Financial Control:** This department receives all monies from violators who come to the court for citation payments, to schedule a hearing, to pay fines imposed at a court hearing and to establish payment plans. Customer Service Cashiers dispense information regarding citations, suspensions, default payments, and the Boot and Tow program. They also provide guidance to courtrooms. Cashiers are responsible for the balancing of all monies collected at the Court on a daily basis.

This department is responsible for all monies received by the Traffic Court, including verification of Cashiering and Lock Box transactions, all bank deposits and bank account reconciliation. Collateral and citation payments are monitored, refunds approved and daily revenue distribution reports are prepared. A monthly financial analysis is prepared to analyze the dramatic revenue growth reported above.

Lockbox employees of the Financial Control Department receive and sort all incoming mail for distribution throughout the court. All citation and collateral payments are received and recorded. Returned mail is recorded as well. This department is responsible for purging the system of all incorrect mailing addresses, saving postage for items previously mailed to non-existent addresses. All payment documents are authenticated for future access through microfilming.

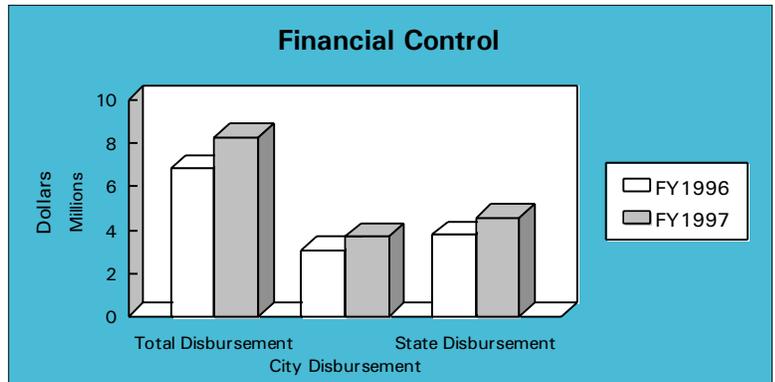
**Citation Management and Court Operations**

	<i>CY1996</i>	<i>CY1997</i>
<i>Cases Filed</i>	246,539	360,774
<i>Cases Disposed</i>	209,265	235,704
<i>Cases Pending</i>	62,429	133,386



**Financial Control**

	<i>FY1996</i>	<i>FY1997</i>
<i>Total Disbursement</i>	\$6,819,768.54	\$8,272,029.00
<i>City Disbursement</i>	3,048,343.43	3,692,569.53
<i>State Disbursement</i>	3,771,425.11	4,579,459.47



**Enforcement**

	<i>CY1996</i>	<i>CY1997</i>
<i>Cases Pending</i>		
<i>w/Payment Plans</i>	5,945	6,587
<i>Arrests</i>	62,429	133,386

