



# 2024 Annual Report

## Red Bank Municipal Court

Our mission is to deliver fair and accessible justice for all, ensuring equal treatment under the law. We strive to protect rights with compassion, operate with integrity, and exceed community expectations through exceptional service. By supporting the Constitution of the United States of America and the State of Tennessee, we strive to maintain the highest standards of accuracy and excellence in all our endeavors.

## Meet Our Staff



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*Judge: Honorable  
Johnny Houston, Jr*

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*Court Clerk:  
Alicia Donahue*

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*Deputy Court Clerk:  
Alley Hindmon*

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*Special Assistant:  
Christian Byrd*

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## Message from the Court Clerk

It is my honor to present the 2024 annual report for the City of Red Bank Municipal Court. We have worked hard to make our office accessible to all who need assistance. There are some things I would like the public to know about our court and the court process. Court is every Monday, except for most National holidays. It begins at 1:30pm with the traffic docket, then moves into the criminal docket starting at 2:00pm. We advise you to arrive about 15 minutes early with all the documentation you need for your court appearance. We ask that you arrange childcare for small children; do not bring them to court with you. Weapons, food and drinks are prohibited, and will either be taken at the security check, or you will be asked to take them to your vehicle. All juveniles must be accompanied by a parent or guardian for their case. Please wear proper clothing for court. Dressing inappropriately for court will result in you being asked to leave the courtroom and having to return to court dressed in suitable clothing. The rules and dress code are posted on our website.

One of the things we see often is people being afraid to call if they are not able to make their court appearance or pay their fines. We will work with anyone who needs assistance with either of these. We would rather reschedule your court date than issue a warrant for failing to appear in court. We do ask that you call prior to your court date to reschedule because we do not usually answer phones after 12:00pm on court days due to preparing for and dealing with court obligations. If you do miss court or think you have missed court, please do not hesitate to call the clerk's office. Again, we would rather reschedule than you having to deal with another arrest due to your failing to appear in court. However, if you have not completed all classes or public workdays required, you will need to appear in court that day to ask the Judge for an extension. Our office, along with Judge Houston, understand that court can be a scary experience for some people, especially those who have never been to court, but we are here to assist you when we can.

The court clerk's office is committed to providing accessible and efficient services to the public. I encourage you to visit our website for useful links, information on court procedures and other general information. The public is welcome to call the office to get any information they need regarding future court dates, fines and costs, or past cases. So please do not hesitate to reach out if you have any questions or need assistance. While we strive to help as much as possible, we cannot give legal advice. Our office looks forward to continuing to serve our community with compassion and integrity and acting with empathy, kindness and honesty.

## The Vital Role of Red Bank's Municipal Court in Serving the Community

The Municipal Court of Red Bank, Tennessee, serves as a cornerstone of the local justice system, addressing cases that directly affect the daily lives of its residents. Under the jurisdiction of the Honorable Judge Johnny Houston, the court handles matters such as traffic violations, city ordinance infractions, and specific misdemeanors occurring within the city's boundaries.

### Accessibility and Convenience for Residents

One of the primary benefits of Red Bank's Municipal Court is its accessibility. Located at 3117 Dayton Boulevard, Red Bank, TN 37415, the court provides a local venue for residents to address legal issues without the need to travel to downtown Chattanooga. This proximity is especially advantageous for victims of crimes and individuals with limited mobility or tight schedules, as it reduces the logistical challenges associated with attending court proceedings.

### Efficient Case Management

By focusing on specific local cases, the Municipal Court can process matters more swiftly than higher courts. This efficiency helps in reducing case backlogs and ensures that justice is delivered promptly, benefiting both the community and the individuals involved.

### Strengthening Community Relationships

The presence of a local court fosters stronger connections between law enforcement, city officials, and residents. It promotes a sense of accountability and trust, as community members can directly engage with the judicial system within their own city. This localized approach enhances the overall sense of community and ensures that the unique needs of Red Bank's residents are addressed.

In summary, Red Bank's Municipal Court is more than just a judicial body; it is an integral part of the community that enhances accessibility, efficiency, and trust in the local justice system.

# Brief Overview of the Tennessee Judicial System

The judicial branch, one of the three basic divisions of state government, serves as a check on the powers of both the legislative and executive branches. Through the power of judicial review, the courts rule on the constitutionality of legislation passed by the Tennessee General Assembly and consider the legality of administrative policies and regulations.

Tennessee's judicial system is derived from a constitutional foundation: "The judicial power of this state shall be vested in one Supreme Court and in such Circuit, Chancery, and other inferior courts as the legislature shall from time to time ordain and establish . . ." (Article VI, Section 1, Constitution of the State of Tennessee).

Although not a part of the court system, the offices of the attorney general, district attorneys general and district public defenders are associated with the judicial branch of state government. The attorney general represents the interests of the state in civil litigation and in criminal cases in the appellate courts. The 31 district attorneys serve as prosecuting counsel in criminal cases in the trial courts. Public defenders and court-appointed private attorneys represent indigent defendants, primarily in criminal cases.

The Supreme Court is the highest court in the state. The five justices are nominated by the Judicial Nominating Commission, appointed by the governor and retained by a "yes-no" vote for eight-year terms. The majority of this court's workload consists of criminal and civil cases appealed from lower state courts.

The intermediate appellate courts -- the Court of Appeals and Court of Criminal Appeals -- hear civil and criminal cases appealed from the trial courts.

The state's trial courts include Chancery, Criminal, Circuit and Probate Courts. Judges in these courts are chosen by popular elections within their judicial districts.

The fourth level of courts in Tennessee is composed of the courts of limited jurisdiction -- General Sessions, Juvenile and Municipal Courts. Their respective counties or municipalities fund these courts.

The Tennessee Supreme Court created the court interpreter program to help mitigate the challenges that non-English speakers face in court. Consequently, all non-English speakers who appear before a Tennessee court have the right to an interpreter so that they can understand and participate in courtroom proceedings and have meaningful access to the judicial system.

\* <https://www.tncourts.gov/node/264980>

# Purpose and Job Function of the Court Clerk

The general function of the court clerks involves administrative, clerical, and technical duties while performing tasks as outlined in the general statement of duties. Some of these general duties include maintaining all court records in accordance to Tennessee statute, supporting the Judge and assisting other agencies including the District Attorney's Office as well as the Public Defender's Office. We prepare court dockets and litigation tax reports for the State of Tennessee while performing the duties of the court clerk in compliance with state regulations, record and document the judicial procedures, and perform a variety of calculating, accounting and typing duties necessary to accomplish the processing of citations and court cases.

The voters of the City elect a City Judge for a term of eight (8) years. The Judge tries all persons charged with violations of the ordinances of the city. He has the power to levy fines, penalties, and forfeitures in accordance with the offense and to impose court costs established by ordinance. He is also charged with issuing all necessary process papers, administering oaths, and penalizing them for contempt.

A few cities in Tennessee have concurrent General Sessions jurisdiction. These cities have similar authority as a county general sessions court at the same time as municipal court jurisdiction. This means that the Red Bank Municipal Court has authority over all infractions of municipal ordinances of the City of Red Bank and concurrent jurisdiction with courts of general sessions in all cases of criminal violations committed within the City, including the jurisdiction to conduct misdemeanor trials, felony and misdemeanor preliminary trials and bind over defendants to the grand jury for indictment. A few other responsibilities are:

- Docket citations and criminal cases and maintain a record and filing system for their orderly processing
- Receive and process bonds, fines and costs and receipt all money collected
- Complete dispositions and necessary forms as well as distribute them to appropriate agencies and file and maintain those records
- Type and send court documents such as warrants, jail commitment orders and subpoenas
- Greet and serve the public at the counter, on the phone and through email in a courteous manner and provide information within our scope of knowledge and authority

# General Rules and Dress Code for Court

## General Rules

Plan to arrive early! Parking is limited; a few parking places are available in the City Hall parking lot. There is additional parking between the Municipal Building and Red Bank Fire Station 1.

- No small children. Please plan for childcare prior to your court date.
- No food or drink will be allowed in the courtroom.
- Bring all the documentation that you may need for your court appearance. This may include a state-issued driver's license or identification card, vehicle registration, vehicle insurance, copies of receipts, letters, or other correspondence.
- All weapons are prohibited.
- All phones must be silenced before entering the courtroom.
- All juveniles must be accompanied by a parent or guardian.

## Court Dress Code

You must be dressed appropriately for court. If you are not, you will be asked to leave and return to court dressed appropriately.

- No shorts
- No short dresses / rompers / skirts
- No tank tops / halter tops / strapless tops / muscle shirts
- No ripped shirts or ripped jeans
- No house shoes / slippers
- No low-cut shirts / blouses
- No hats / caps / sunglasses
- No pajamas
- No shirts with obscene language or inappropriate graphics
- No exposed underwear or underclothing and pants must be worn at the waist

# Court Procedure for Traffic Offenses

## Pay the Citation

Paying the citation will have the same force and effect as a GUILTY judgment before the court. Points may be assessed to your driver's license by the Tennessee Department of Safety.

## Be Granted a Continuance

If continuance is needed, contact the court clerk before the court date. Family and Medical emergencies will be handled on a case-by-case basis. Individuals will not be charged for the first continuance. After that 1st continuance individuals will be charged \$5 per request.

## Guilty Plea/ No Contest

This results in court costs, fines, and points added to the defendant's driver's license. Or it can result in a dismissal with cost and no points being added to the defendant's driver's license. All costs must be paid on the court date, or a payment plan must be set up.

## Contest the Citation

You have the right to contest the citation. This equals a plea of Not Guilty. Once contested, individuals will be given a trial date. At the given date, defendants will be able to provide their side of the occurrence as well as present any evidence.

## Dismissed on Good Behavior

If the citation is dismissed on good behavior, an individual is expected to maintain good and lawful conduct during the probationary period. If cited or arrested again, you will have to return to the review court date in person.

## Juvenile Mandatory Court Appearance

Juveniles who have received a citation are required to appear in court with a parent or guardian on the assigned court date printed on the citation. (Even if you turned 18 before the court date...) **Complete payment of the citation is expected on the day of court. If a citation is not paid in full on the court date, a payment plan will be available.**

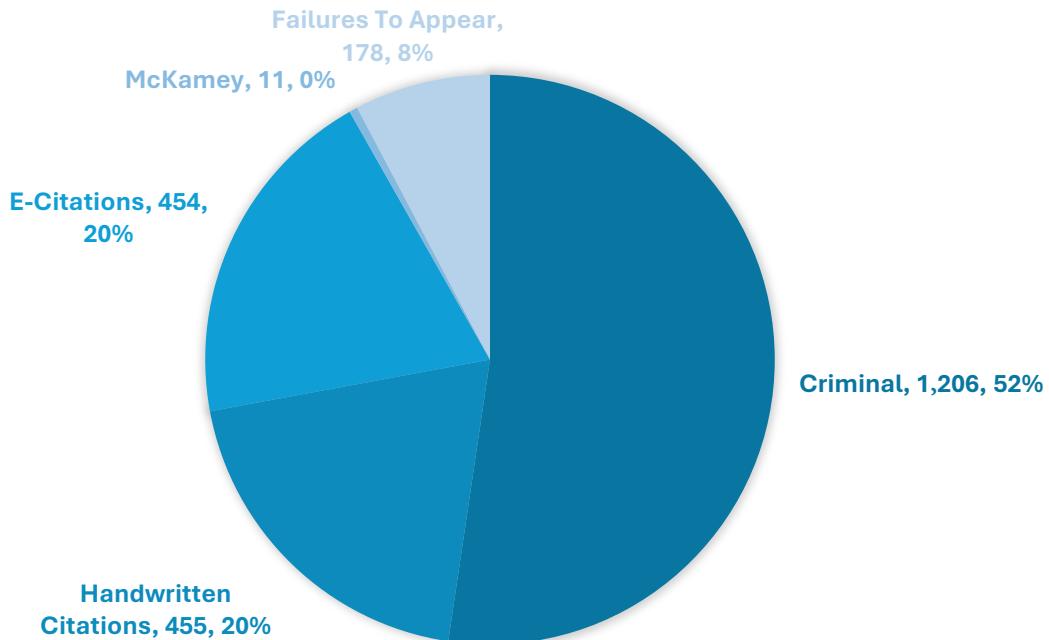
## Failure to Appear/ Comply

Failure to appear in Court or satisfy a citation by the compliance date may result in suspension of your driving privileges by the Tennessee Dept. Of Safety or a warrant being issued for your arrest.

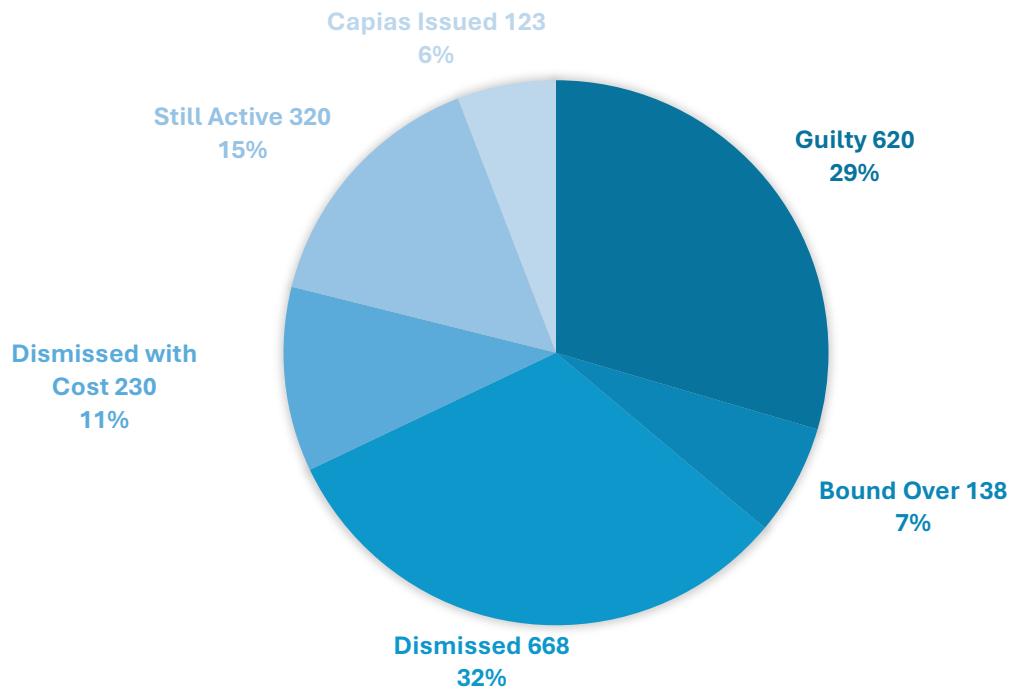
## Restricted Driver's License

After the license is suspended, the person may apply for a restricted license. The restricted license is valid only for travel necessary for employment, school, religious worship, participation in a recovery court, or serious illness of the person or immediate family member. The court's order must state the specific time and places that the individuals may drive. The person is still required to comply with the payment plan.

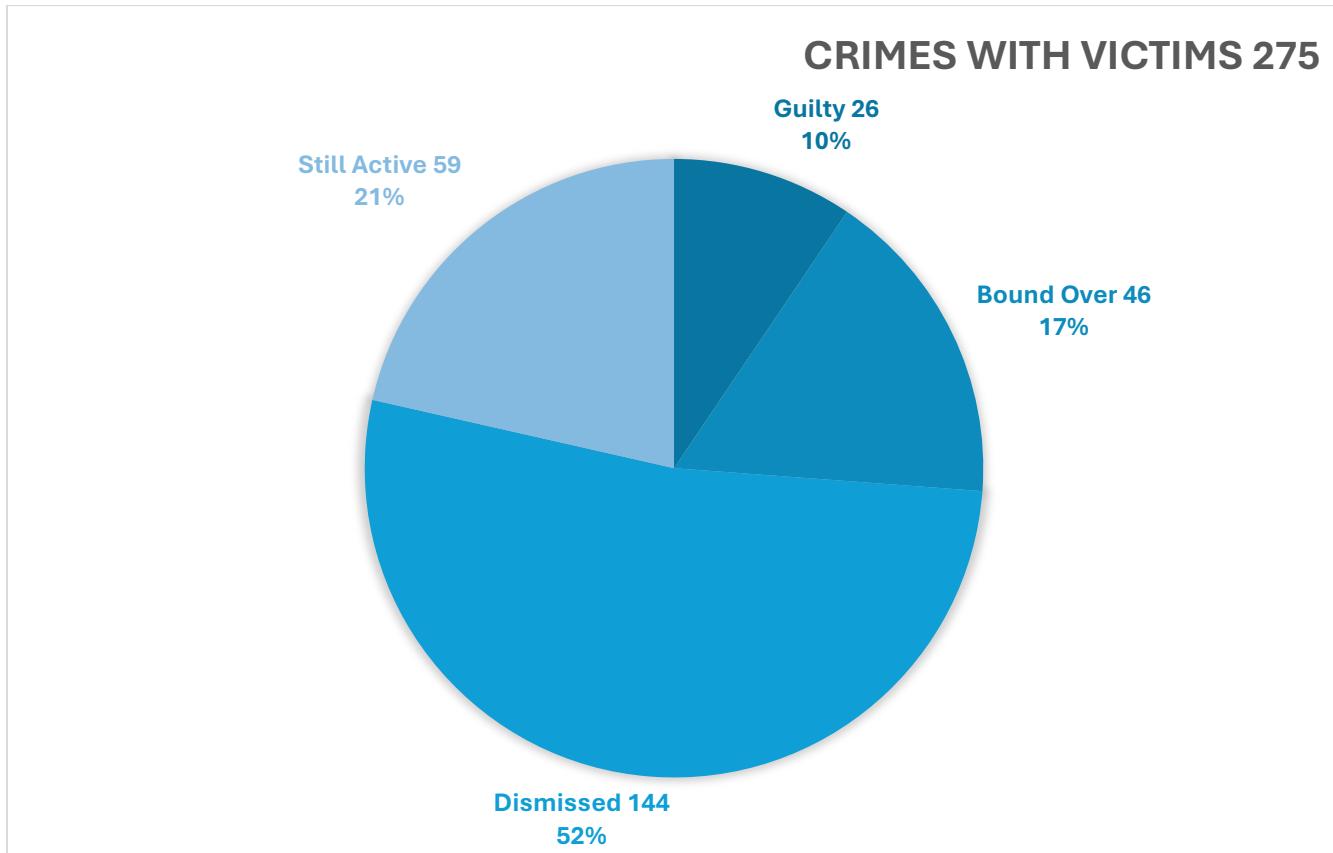
## CASES 2,116



## DISPOSITIONS 1,656



\*\*\*Charts are based per violation, meaning some defendants may have multiple charges where some were dismissed and the others found guilty. There were 976 defendants with a total of 2,304 violations.



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\*\*\*Crimes with victims include crimes where an individual is the victim i.e. Assault, robbery, criminal impersonation and forgery to name a few.

**CITY OF RED BANK, TENNESSEE**  
**General Fund**

**Statement of Revenues, Expenditures and Changes in Fund Balances - Budget and Actual (Continued)**  
**Year Ended June 30, 2024**

	<b>Budgeted Amounts</b>		<b>Actual</b>	<b>Variance</b>
	<b>Original</b>	<b>Final</b>		
<b>REVENUES (Continued)</b>				
Fines and forfeitures				
Court fines and costs	\$ 90,000	\$ 90,000	\$ 140,451	\$ 50,451
<b>EXPENDITURES</b>				
<b>Current expenditures</b>				
General government				
Judicial				
Salaries	136,322	136,322	142,644	(6,322)
Payroll tax	10,372	10,372	10,052	320
Employee benefits	14,635	14,635	14,452	183
Contract services	16,000	16,000	17,992	(1,992)
Office supplies and expenses	1,500	1,500	1,973	(473)
Operating supplies			185	(185)
Repairs and maintenance	1,000	1,000		1,000
Telephone	900	900	1,264	(364)
Training	1,200	1,200	1,056	144
Travel	1,200	1,200	1,622	(422)
Total judicial	183,129	183,129	<u>191,240</u>	<u>(8,111)</u>

## Advancing Technology

Cultivating innovative technology applications will help the judiciary to meet the evolving obligations of judges, judiciary employees, and the public. Technology can increase productivity and expedite work processes. For the public, technology can improve access to courts, including information about cases, court facilities, and judicial processes.

Making sure we are staying current with technology will help with communication, organization, increase productivity and efficiency, and customer reach to name a few. The goal is to network with other clerks and vendors at conferences and find out what they might be using that could better our service model.

Another goal for the coming year is to explore using Hamilton County's CJUS software. This is the software that the Hamilton County Jail uses, as well as other municipalities. The benefits of using the same software would be that we could view cases the defendants have in other courts, communication with the jail about charges, dispositions, and bonds on our cases, and access to the paperless bond system the jail currently uses. This is dependent on whether it is conducive to our operations.

One advancement that we have been working on is the digitization of court records. For the past two years, we have gone through the procurement process for a system to digitize our archived records as well as day forward records. Currently our archived records are being stored in a separate building that reduces the turnover time in getting record requests processed. There are approximately 200 boxes with around 1,000 files in each that are stored in the archives that we must search through to fulfill a records request.

Once they are digitized, we will be able to pull it up electronically in our office and have it sent to the citizens much quicker than the current system. While the procurement process was arduous, it was worthwhile. We will soon begin the actual process of scanning archived records and processing new records going forward.

## Training and Education

Continued training and professional development as well as any new training will always be a goal for us. Alley and I will be receiving our Certified Court Clerk certificates in April, 2025, at the MTAS (Municipal Technical Advisory Service) Spring Conference in Franklin, TN. This consists of four components: attending the Municipal Court Clerk Conference 3 years in a row, the Foundations class, a site visit to our office and online classes.

Alley and I were certified in CPR in January through a class organized by our Red Bank Fire Department. In August, I attended a Municipal Leadership class presented by MTAS to learn my leadership style and how to better lead and supervise. The MTAS Foundations and Updates class was in September. During this training, Alley and I were able to get a refresher on things we already knew but also got updated on things that were new or had changed since the last conference.

The TBI (Tennessee Bureau of Investigations) put on a mini conference pertaining to data quality, dispositions, diversions, drug offender registry, expungements and the FlexCheck system to name a few in December. Presenters included those from the TBI, Administrative Office of the Courts, TN Department of Corrections and TN Department of Safety among others. Alley and I both attended this training. During September, I also attended the TAMCAR (Tennessee Association of Municipal Clerks and Recorders) Fall Conference.

Judge Houston also attends all his required training including the Tennessee General Sessions Judges Conferences every year. We will all continue to attend any training and educational sessions that are offered by MTAS and TAMCAR (Tennessee Association of Municipal Clerks and Recorders) to better serve our community.

