



February 22, 2024

**Christopher J. Towle**

*City Attorney*

City of Newton, Kansas

ctowle@newtonkansas.com

p: (316) 284-6018

201 E. 6<sup>th</sup>, P.O. Box 426

Newton, KS 67114-0426

The Law Department experienced significant growth in 2023. The office of the City Attorney continued its role as the legal backstop for all departments within the City, while Municipal Court took on additional staff and roles addressing the criminal aspects of the law.

The City Attorney's office is tasked with handling the civil law aspects of City business. We opened 147 new files in 2023, while closing 139. Those files included, among many other matters, fielding and responding to eight citizen complaints and 13 Kansas Open Record Act (KORA) requests; reviewing, negotiating and drafting 22 agreements between third party vendors, businesses and private residents; and drafting and reviewing 32 ordinances and 36 resolutions.

Some tasks require more of the City Attorney's efforts than others. Our team devoted exceptional time to the drafting and successful negotiation of the lease agreement for the new Newton Public Library; the land purchases, rail and development agreements associated GAF Materials LLC; the drafting and implementation of a complete overhaul of the City Ordinance regulating alcohol sales and consumption in the City; negotiation and implementation of a new School Resource Officer Agreement between Newton Police and USD 373; and the finalization of a Resource Officer Agreement between Newton Medical Center and Newton Police. The year culminated in the City Attorney assuming the role as interim City Manager in October 2023 and continued until the role was permanently filled in January 2024.

Municipal Court saw an uptick in cases filed in 2023 from the previous year; the highest amount since 2020. Though traffic violations continue to take the lion's share of charges, our City Court has recently implemented a new diversion program aimed at giving alternative means of restitution for individuals convicted of driving with a suspended license. Person crimes, property crimes, driving under the influence infractions, and others comprise notable percentages of overall charges. There were 60 environmental cases (e.g. building, discharge, and nuisance code enforcement, etc.) in 2023, extending the steady annual decline since 2019 with 121 cases. Of those 60 cases, 49 have been resolved.

Both the City Attorney's office and Municipal Court benefited from the hiring in September the new Assistant City Attorney and City Prosecutor. He has acclimated to the case load and file demands and is leading the way in providing new insight on court processes, argumentative analysis, courtroom successes, and departmental and public outreach. In his first six months, he has embodied the Municipal Court's guiding principles of fairness and equity, efficiency, professionalism, and courtesy. We are excited for what the Court and Law team will contribute to the City of Newton in 2024.

Best,



Christopher J. Towle  
City Attorney