

FERGUSON COMMISSION

Third Commission Meeting
December 15, 2014

Community Discussion
Report

*Prepared by Commission Consultants
January 5, 2014*

*Third Meeting
Community Discussion Report
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Meeting Overview

Sixteen members of the Ferguson Commission met on Monday, December 15, 2014 for their final meeting of the year at St. Louis University's Il Monastero from 5:00 pm to 8:30 pm. Two hundred and thirteen community members joined Commissioners as they:

- Shared community input findings from their second meeting;
- Conducted an electronic survey of meeting participants;
- Held an open mic comment period;
- Invited public discussion of municipal court systems and practices in small group breakouts;
- Listened to presentations on municipal court issues and operations; and
- Carried out administrative business.

This document provides a summary of the meeting's findings and serves as a record of the insights and suggestions that emerged from community input.

Attendance

Commissioners in attendance included:

Co-Chair Rev. Starsky Wilson
Brittany Packnett
Scott Negwer
Gabriel E. Gore, J.D.
Grayling Tobias, Ed.D.
Felicia Pulliam, J.D.
Patrick Sly
T.R. Carr, Ph.D

Co-Chair Rich McClure
Daniel Isom, Pn.D.
Bethany A. Johnson-Javois, MSW
Rose A. Windmiller
Becky James-Hatter
Sgt. Kevin Ahlbrand
Rasheen Aldridge, Jr.
Rev. Traci deVon Blackmon

Public Discussion Summary

I. Electronic Polling Results

The meeting began with a welcome from St. Louis University officials, an explanation of the evening's charge by Commission Co-Chairs, and an overview of public input findings from the Commission's second meeting. Following this, meeting staff conducted an electronic polling exercise to obtain demographic information on meeting attendees. Participants were asked five questions (excluding the initial test question) that focused on the geographic areas in which they worked and lived and subsequently surveyed their gender, race / ethnicity, and age. Though the number of respondents varied by question, a total of 170 attendees participated in the electronic polling process. Survey findings are presented in the accompanying table on the following page.

Participant Demographic Findings	
Geographic Work Area	Principal Place of Residence
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ St. Louis City, MO – 56% ■ St. Louis County, MO – 29% ■ St. Charles County, MO – 0% ■ Jefferson County, MO – 1% ■ Franklin County, MO – 1% ■ St. Clair County, IL – 2% ■ Madison County, IL – 1% ■ Monroe County, IL – 0% ■ Other – 12% <p>Total Number of Respondents – 160</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ St. Louis City, MO – 53% ■ St. Louis County, MO – 36% ■ St. Charles County, MO – 1% ■ Jefferson County, MO – 1% ■ Franklin County, MO – 0% ■ St. Clair County, IL – 1% ■ Madison County, IL – 1% ■ Monroe County, IL – 0% ■ Other – 8% <p>Total Number of Respondents – 160</p>
Gender	Race / Ethnicity
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Female – 51% ■ Male – 47% ■ Other – 0% ■ Decline – 2% <p>Total Number of Respondents – 167</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ White – 52% ■ Black, African American – 37% ■ Hispanic, Latino or Spanish Origin – 2% ■ Asian – 2% ■ American Indian or Alaska Native – 1% ■ Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander – 1% ■ Other – 2% ■ Decline – 2% <p>Total Number of Respondents – 165</p>
Age	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ 21 and Under – 8% ■ 22 to 34 – 26% ■ 35 to 44 – 19% ■ 45 to 54 – 21% 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ 55 to 64 – 19% ■ 65 and Over – 7% ■ Decline – 1% ■ Total Number of Respondents – 170

II. Public Open Mic Session

Immediately following electronic polling, community members were invited to speak to Commissioners regarding their municipal court experiences and general interests. In this public open mic session, which lasted twenty-five minutes, thirteen community members were able to share their insights, ideas and concerns with Commissioners and other meeting attendees. Speaking for an allotted period of two minutes or less, participating attendees covered a range of topics from municipal fines and fees to state appellate law to municipal revenue sharing with the state treasury. A summary of comments is presented on the following pages.

OPEN MIC COMMENTS

Municipal Court System Comments

- St. Louis University's Law Clinic requested true amnesty for all non-violent offenses from Ferguson's municipal courts to help address past wrongs by the courts. The Clinic recommended, a waiver of fees and fines for minor offenses but received no response to its request
- The municipal justice system delivers "Just Us." It violates black people's constitutional rights daily. Municipal courts ignore state appellate law. Laws from 50 years ago have yet to be fully enforced
- Express Scripts is building new offices in Ferguson and does not have to pay property taxes for 20 to 30 years because of a deal with the City. This has a negative consequence on municipal revenue and limits the City's options for raising needed funds. In light of this kind of corporate deal making, it is not surprising that municipalities turn to fees and fines to generate needed resources
- The State of Missouri is taking revenue from the St. Louis region and spending it out-state. Half a billion dollars are spent this way annually, which is part of the reason why area municipalities are caught in a bind. The real issue is not about municipal fees and fines, but about taxes and how the state distributes revenues. Until the community addresses this, it will not make a dent in this problem. The only way taxes can be raised in Missouri is through the Hancock Amendment. This is a broken process, which has contributed to a broken system
- Municipal court reform is necessary because the system does not work for many people
- The City of Ferguson terrorized protesters and are now raising municipal fines and fees
- People do not have money to pay the fines and fees that are imposed on them unjustly
- Instead of fines, municipal courts should consider time banking. In time banking systems, people exchange their time, talents and services with the community instead of being criminally penalized and put in jail

General Comments

- Many community members were upset that they could not engage St. Louis City Chief of Police Sam Dotson directly at the second Commission meeting. He was conducting a public relations campaign and did not address the Commission's questions and community's issues. Chief Dotson was not held accountable by the Commission
- We do not need any more studies. What are we going to do? Do not just keep talking about the same issues. OneSTL completed a study and has insights
- Picking juries during trials is made more difficult by the fact that many people of color choose not to serve. They have a civic responsibility to serve because one day they may need, and want, a jury of their peers. The community needs to know more about the jury sequestration process in order to improve it. People do not have to be guilty to be found guilty, so the sequestration process needs to be as fair as possible
- Commission meetings are not easily accessible to community residents. Not enough is being done to get the community out to attend these meetings
- The issues that the Commission is studying are longstanding. Leadership's hands are dirty. Leaders have not been proactive in addressing community concerns. The response times to the fires in Ferguson was slow and resulted in great economic damage
- There need to be more Ferguson community members at Commission meetings
- The City of St. Louis is engaged in gentrification. It is using Board Bill 331, which focuses on nuisance violations, to push people out of their homes. These violations are being prosecuted unjustly in municipal courts

II. Small Group Discussions

At the conclusion of the public comment period, meeting attendees broke into facilitated small groups to discuss their experiences with municipal court systems. The small groups were given 45 minutes to consider the following questions:

- What concerns, if any, do you have with the region’s municipal court systems?
- What reforms or changes would you suggest to improve our region’s municipal court systems?

Representatives from each of the four small groups reported back to the collective at the discussion’s end, sharing their themes and highlights with all in attendance. Findings from the discussions are captured in the accompanying tables.

Group 1 Findings

MUNICIPAL COURT SYSTEMS – GROUP 1	
<u>Issues:</u> What concerns, if any, do you have with the region’s municipal court systems?	<u>Improvements:</u> What reforms or changes would you suggest to improve the region’s municipal court systems?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Police Interaction Precipitating Municipal Court Appearance</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Racial profiling and racial discrimination leads to a disproportionate number of African Americans in the municipal court system ○ There shouldn’t be a fine for DWB (Driving While Black) ○ There seems to be a quota for writing tickets ○ There are arbitrary and increased “fine zones,” particularly in North County ○ Upon arrest, vehicles are quickly towed, leading to additional charges and wasted time • <i>Racial Inequality</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ People of color are disproportionately represented in the municipal court system ○ People of color receive greater fines for municipal charges ○ There are not enough prosecutors and judges of color • <i>Economic Inequality</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ People without money do not receive legal representation ○ People are sent to jail for an inability to pay their fines ○ Reasonable payment plans are not set up for indigent defenders 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Court Accessibility</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Increase court hours and availability ○ Permit defendants to appear remotely through video and web conferencing ○ Provide transportation to court • <i>Accountability</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Consolidate local police and municipal courts ○ Establish an independent review board ○ Hold municipal judges and prosecutors accountable ○ Prosecute judges ○ Hire judges who represent the community ○ Mandate diversity training for municipal judges and prosecutors ○ Enforce legislation on the books, such as the 30% rule ○ Gather and analyze data on the collection of fines and fees ○ Follow the money and review taxation • <i>Judicial Practices and Procedure</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Utilize video cameras in the courtroom ○ Provide all defendants with quality legal representation by establishing a legal fund (funded by fines), utilizing law students, or hiring public defenders ○ Refrain from jailing people for minor infractions

Group 1 Findings Continued

MUNICIPAL COURT SYSTEMS – GROUP 1 CONTINUED	
Issues: What concerns, if any, do you have with the region’s municipal court systems?	Improvements: What reforms or changes would you suggest to improve the region’s municipal court systems?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Judicial Practices and Procedure <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Court hours are not convenient for working adults ○ Warrants are issued hastily & people are sent to jail too quickly ○ Minor offenses are criminalized ○ Defendants do not receive legal representation and do not know their rights ○ Some courts do not accept checks/credit cards and arrest defendants who do not have cash with them ○ Banning children from court forces parents to make difficult decisions ○ There are too many municipal courts & police departments ○ There should not be financial consequences to municipal court proceedings ○ There are not enough amnesty programs ○ Current laws are not being enforced, such as the 30% law 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fines and Fees <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Establish reasonable payment plans for fines and fees ○ Institute alternatives for fines and jail for people unable to pay, such as community service or “time banks” ○ Do not use municipal courts and police as a source of revenue ○ In accordance with the law, redirect money to local schools (30% rule) ○ Eliminate the collection of municipal court fines and fees ○ Provide true amnesty • Miscellaneous <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Refrain from racial profiling ○ Refrain from suspending licenses ○ Address predatory towing practices ○ Raise minimum wage so people can afford their fines and fees ○ Encourage voter registration and participation ○ Encourage community members to serve on juries ○ Address education equality during commission meetings

Group 2 Findings

MUNICIPAL COURT SYSTEMS – GROUP 2	
Issues: What concerns, if any, do you have with the region’s municipal court systems?	Improvements: What reforms or changes would you suggest to improve the region’s municipal court systems?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bench Warrants <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ The current bench warrant process is broken. If people cannot pay the fines, a warrant is issued. Many do not know that they have warrants. Lives are interrupted when people are jailed because of an inability to pay and the consequences can include job losses and other hardships ○ Tens of thousands of warrants are issued illegally in St. Louis City and County. People appear in court, but often the warrants are issued anyway 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Legislative Action <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Advocate for legislative action that lowers the percentage of revenue that municipalities can collect from fines and fees from 30% to 10% ○ Pursue legislative reforms of local municipal governance structures • Fee & Fine Options <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Research Montgomery, Alabama’s court reforms. Because of a lawsuit, the city has replaced fines with community service ○ Implement time banking as an alternative to fees and fines ○ Institute payment plans for people incapable of paying their fines / fees

Group 2 Findings Continued

MUNICIPAL COURT SYSTEMS – GROUP 2 CONTINUED	
Issues: What concerns, if any, do you have with the region’s municipal court systems?	Improvements: What reforms or changes would you suggest to improve the region’s municipal court systems?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Bench Warrants Continued</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Municipalities have a legal obligation to send bench warrant notifications within 10 days of their issuance. Often, this notification is never received. Municipal databases are usually old and outdated • <i>Ticketing & Towing</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ People are frequently given tickets for non-valid reasons. Bogus ticketing and arrest are common practices ○ Ticketing is too often an effort not to enforce the law or to improve public safety, but to generate revenue ○ Even when tickets are dismissed, people are stuck with having to pay court fees ○ Vehicle towing is also part of the revenue racket • <i>Court Operations & Accessibility</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ There are 82 municipal courts, which is far too many. Of the 82 courts, only about 50 are good ○ Courts have varying hours of operation, which makes scheduling and appearance difficult ○ Attending court is often inconvenient. Waiting for appearances can take long periods of time ○ Judges do not do a good job of communicating that people have payment options if they do not have money for fines and fees, and that they still need to come to court ○ Police officers should not be able to take people’s drivers’ licenses to force court appearances ○ The current court system scares people out of their rights and is filled with lots of little abuses ○ When people leave court, they feel robbed • <i>Jail Conditions</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ The Justice Center houses people for up to two years and the conditions are deplorable ○ Jails should be condemned 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Fee & Fine Options Continued</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Allow people to plea and pay online to improve court accessibility ○ Have St. Louis County create a centralized fee/fine payment system that has convenient locations throughout the County. Each location would keep the same business hours. Revenues would go back to the municipalities that issued the fines so that they do not lose money as a result of having their fine functions centralized ○ Place a moratorium on the issuance of bench warrants while systems reforms are being determined • <i>St. Louis County Municipal Court Reforms Currently In Progress</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ The St. Louis County Municipal Court Improvement Committee was established and is developing reforms. Many judges know that the system is broken and the Ferguson crisis served as a catalyst for bringing them together. The Committee is working to: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Have municipalities adopt the same fines b. Set aside \$1 out of every \$12 to pay for public defenders for every court. Public defenders will be provided to people who have been arrested and cannot afford legal counsel c. Create legal advisors to help people who have not been arrested, but who have been charged with offenses and infractions d. Require that every court be open at least one hour before hearings begin so that people are not as inconvenienced e. Issue an automatic stay for people who do not have the money to pay their fines / fees and instead offer payment plans f. Communicate payment options via collateral that is distributed by police, during ticketing and other citizen interactions g. Establish a community service program • <i>Accountability</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Hold police officers accountable for fair ticketing and arrest practices. Cameras are not enough ○ Conduct routine background checks of all law enforcement officers and court authorities. Research their affiliations and personal views to assess the presence of bias

Group 2 Findings Continued

MUNICIPAL COURT SYSTEMS – GROUP 2 CONTINUED	
Issues: What concerns, if any, do you have with the region’s municipal court systems?	Improvements: What reforms or changes would you suggest to improve the region’s municipal court systems?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Economic Impacts <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ People cannot pay the fines that are imposed ○ The primary reason that so many people go to jail is because they are poor ○ Poor communities have more traffic cameras. Wealthier communities do not have as many of these because they are not as dependent upon fees and fines for their municipal revenue ○ When people leave court they feel robbed • Miscellaneous <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ St. Louis City is involved in gentrification efforts, using Board Bill 331, which focuses on nuisances, to move people out of their properties. The city’s municipal court is being used in this process. This is another costly form of citizen harassment. Citizens’ concerns go far beyond unfair traffic tickets. The whole system is corrupt ○ Beyond guns, police use harsh tactics to control people, including nets and straight jackets 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Municipal Governance <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Dis-incorporate municipalities that abuse citizens ○ Encourage more municipalities to merge. Reduce regional fragmentation • Civic Education <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Help citizens determine if the charges they are issued are valid. People need more information on how to address charges and should be able to challenge them without the risk of going to jail ○ Educate citizens on their rights

Group 3 Findings

MUNICIPAL COURT SYSTEMS – GROUP 3	
Issues: What concerns, if any, do you have with the region’s municipal court systems?	Improvements: What reforms or changes would you suggest to improve the region’s municipal court systems?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Biased Court System <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ The system is set up to disproportionately affect the economically disadvantaged ○ Laws detrimental to poor people ○ Laws discriminate against motorists. The speed limit on I-64, I-44 and I-55 is 60 miles per hour, but on I-70 north of the Delmar divide, it is 55 miles per hour. Selective enforcement. Local jurisdictions should not be policing federal highways. Another way for municipalities to raise money ○ Cash bail versus credit card versus checks. This penalizes certain people ○ There are too many privileges in terms of race, gender, education, age and class and the ordinances are not applied fairly to all groups ○ Everyone is held accountable for their actions except the police ○ When can a \$70 speeding ticket be let go? Punishment does not fit the crime ○ Reaction doesn’t match offense • Municipal Courts & The Law <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Municipal courts do not follow the laws ○ 30% cap on fees is not followed because municipalities do not report out ○ It is a predatory judicial system ○ If private people did what the municipal courts do it would be called extortion. Laws are being ignored. Who is benefitting from this? Those breaking the law should be held accountable. This is corruption ○ Too many incentives to raise money through municipal courts 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Municipal Court Structure <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Abolish the entire system and create something new that works for MOST people! Most states have done away with municipal courts ○ Replace municipal courts with real courts, circuit courts ○ Make all courts uniform ○ When a new system is created, be sure to educate general population about it • Fee & Fine Options <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Institute time banking as described during open mic session ○ Base fees on how much money the person makes – a sliding scale ○ Give money raised from fines to charity so there is no incentive to levy fines. Create a constitutional amendment making it illegal for any municipal court or state government to keep money they get from fines ○ Decide reasonable amounts for infractions. For instance, \$30 fine for speeding ○ Get rid of court fees because some people pay just to get rid of them ○ Create a building separate from police departments for people to pay their fines ○ Allow people 30 days to pay their fine ○ Create a more uniform way of paying a fine ○ Make municipalities reinvest the money they get from fines back into their communities • Traffic Violations & Ticketing <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Have St. Louis County take over traffic violations and leave the criminal cases to the municipalities ○ Make a uniform speed limit for all interstates and one for all streets ○ Reduce the number of stop signs in the city. Ridiculous to have a stop sign on every corner ○ Create a solution that does not include a fine for cars that don’t pass inspection ○ Do not give tickets to people who can prove they are enrolled in college

Group 3 Findings Continued

MUNICIPAL COURT SYSTEMS – GROUP 3 CONTINUED	
Issues: What concerns, if any, do you have with the region’s municipal court systems?	Improvements: What reforms or changes would you suggest to improve the region’s municipal court systems?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Municipal Courts & The Law Continued</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ The Missouri Bar knows about all this and they have not done anything. The onus is on them who have been operating this system for 30+ years ○ Municipal court judges are not really judges • <i>Impact of Fines</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Can pay fee or appeal, but then it is hard to take off from work ○ No flexible court dates so hard to fight fines ○ Failure to appear and courts say you’re guilty and charge you a fee. For example, I was arrested for protesting and fined for not appearing in court for my traffic violation ○ Your case can be dismissed but you still have to pay outrageous court costs so municipalities are getting money by any means necessary ○ It is not just the ticket that is the problem but the impact on families. People sit in court and jails for months. This drains families. It is an evil predatory system • <i>Legal representation</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Punishments are not tied to the offense. The prosecutor knowing the attorney can help and that is unfair. The level of representation drives results 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Municipal Court Operations</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Make court dates flexible for people so they can pursue their innocence ○ Abolish warrants for anything not a felony ○ Abolish jail time for municipal offenses ○ Make sure ordinances are applied fairly to all groups ○ Provide adequate legal support for people, as many are deemed guilty because of ineffective counsel ○ Make prosecutors not only speak to attorneys but also to people who do not have legal representation • <i>Municipal Governance</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Consolidate some of these municipalities by creating a rule on what size they can be. Use the size of a municipality’s geographic area as the measurement • <i>Miscellaneous</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Do away with collect calls from jails. Who is making money from this?

Group 4 Findings

MUNICIPAL COURT SYSTEMS – GROUP 4	
Issues: What concerns, if any, do you have with the region’s municipal court systems?	Improvements: What reforms or changes would you suggest for improving the region’s municipal court systems?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Over dependence of ticket and court fines to fund general budget <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Causes aggressive ticketing, especially targeted to African Americans living in municipalities with minimal tax revenue (70% of Pine Lawn’s operating revenue was sourced from ticket and court fees) ○ Too many municipalities with courts and many are competing for revenues (tax, court fees, etc.); this leads to excessive ticketing to support the municipality’s operations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Audit all municipalities and enforce statutory court revenue limit • Penalize municipalities collecting court revenues above the statutory limit • Pool municipal ticket and court revenues across St. Louis County and redistribute based on populations • Pool excessive funds and create a community fund to assist people with violations, especially failure to appear warrants
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Excessively high ticket and court fees 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cap fines and ensure that municipalities are not overcharging • Offer a sliding scale for some fines (Note: some low-income residents will be unable to pay a lower fee in a timely manner) • Offer community service in exchange for some fines
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Legal conflicts of interest <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Legal professionals, i.e., judges and prosecutors, serve multiple municipalities and may see violators multiple times, but in different municipal courts 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Minimize the number of municipalities that lawyers can serve • Investigate the hiring of legal professionals (possibly only a few are being used across the region)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Violators lack access to free defense counsel and are unaware of rights associated with fines, court fees and warrants (such as appearing for court even when inability to pay exists, asking for an installment plan) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Require each municipality to have a public defender • Create a hotline for information and have a pool of defense attorneys to address violation issues
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Minimal diversity in legal profession <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Biased judges and prosecutors whose salaries are dependent on high court and ticket revenue 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recruit a more diverse body of judges and prosecutors using Mound City Bar Assn.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Multiple warrants for failure to appear in court exacerbate personal issues <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Warrants, of any type, impact a person’s ability to be employed and rent housing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Require municipal reciprocity when failure to appear warrants are dismissed in one municipality, all other municipalities should do the same • Allow at least two to three hours after a warrant violation arrest for the violator to arrange to pick up vehicle; too often tow truck arrives and violator is subjected to additional fees, associated with towing the vehicle
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inhospitable environment <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Many courts don’t allow children and violators may lack childcare during evening hours; court dockets are too full to allow anyone other than those with court business ○ Ferguson’s ticket payment window is on the building’s exterior, subjecting payers to weather conditions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conduct at least one monthly municipal court session in the early afternoon and allow violators to choose the most convenient session to attend • Allow children in the court, as long as they behave • Have an overflow room and call violators in by time slots; that way, parents can bring children, if necessary

Group 4 Findings Continued

MUNICIPAL COURT SYSTEM – GROUP 4 CONTINUED	
Issues: What concerns, if any, do you have with the region’s municipal court systems?	Improvements: What reforms or changes would you suggest for improving the region’s municipal court systems?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Aggressive prosecution of occupancy permits, especially impacts teenagers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review current occupancy permit standards to ensure they are still valid and relax requirements, if necessary • Determine if occupancy requirements are still required (some areas outside of St. Louis don’t require)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Housing violation citations, while fewer, are more expensive to repair in a timely manner 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide forgivable loans for home improvements (use a sliding scale for determination – lower income residents can receive more funds than middle income residents)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Miscellaneous Comments <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Municipalities are a reflection of the state and federal governments; policy reform must begin at the federal and state levels to ensure change at the local level ○ Use of private firms, such as SATOP, is a form of extortion ○ Driver’s license suspension is another form of extortion; in less than 30 years the reasons for suspending a license have increased more than 300% (from 6 to 21 reasons) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Miscellaneous Improvements <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Investigate racial demographics with school fights; African American students are more likely suspended and sent to juvenile courts ○ What are the standard questions, if any, asked of legal professionals who serve municipal courts? How are they chosen?

Conclusion

The fourth meeting of the Ferguson Commission will be held on Saturday, January 10, 2015 from 10:00 am until 2:30 pm at St. Louis Community College's Florissant Valley Campus, in the Student Center's multipurpose room (located at 3400 Pershall, Ferguson, MO 63135). The focus of this meeting will be on youth well-being. As with previous meetings, community input is welcomed.