

## **A BRIEF HISTORY OF THE ROCKWALL MUNICIPAL COURT**

### **A. Creation**

The Rockwall City Council first established the Rockwall Municipal Court through Ordinance No. 76-04, enacted on April 5, 1976. The newly establish Court had “jurisdiction within the territorial limits of the City of Rockwall, and all criminal cases arising under the ordinances of said City, and also shall have concurrent jurisdiction with the Justice of The Peace of the precinct in which the City is situated in all criminal cases arising under the criminal laws of the State in which punishment is by fine only and where the maximum of such fine may not exceed Two Hundred Dollars (\$200.00).” The ordinance provided that the Presiding Judge of the Court must hold court at least once a week at the Rockwall City Hall.

### **B. Location**

The Rockwall Municipal Court was first housed at 102 East Washington in an existing structure, along with the entirety of the City of Rockwall’s municipal offices and police force.

In April 1984, the Court, along with all municipal offices and the police department, moved into the newly constructed Rockwall City Hall at 205 West Rusk Street in downtown Rockwall. As the City continued to grow, so did its police force and the need for more space for municipal offices. In May 2002, the City’s new (and current) City Hall opened at 385 South Goliad Street in downtown Rockwall. The Court and the Rockwall Police Department remained in the former city hall, and the building was renamed the Rockwall Police and Municipal Court Building.

As the police department continued to expand, space limitations resulted in the City needing to find a new location for the Rockwall Municipal Court. With the help of then Chief Clerk and Associate Judge Deborah Waters, the City located and purchased a former office complex at the Northeast corner of SH 66 and FM 549. The structure was gutted and a new courtroom was built, including a dedicated jury room, judges’ chambers, and clerk offices. On February 21, 2013, the Rockwall Municipal Court opened in its new (and current) location at 2860 State Highway 66 in Rockwall, Texas.

### **C. Judges**

At the time of the Court’s creation in April 1976, the City Council appointed Harold Crawford as the first Presiding Judge of the Rockwall Municipal Court. Judge Crawford served as Presiding Judge from its creation on April 5, 1976 until 1982.

On December 13, 1982, the City Council appointed Bill Bell as Presiding Judge of the Rockwall Municipal Court. Judge Bell served in that role until his resignation on November 5, 1984.

On December 3, 1984, the City Council appointed William (Bill) Briggs Lofland as Presiding Judge of the Court. Judge Lofland served in that role until early 1986.

On April 29, 1985, the City Council appointed William F. Kortemier as Presiding Judge of the Court. Judge Kortemier served in that role until August 2007. Serving for more than 22 years, Judge Kortemier remains the longest-serving Presiding Judge in the Court's history.

As the City of Rockwall's population grew, so did the need for judicial officers. Thus, on January 20, 2004, the City Council created the position of Associate Judge to serve under the Presiding Judge and in cases of emergency. At the same time, the City Council appointed Chief Clerk Deborah Waters as the Rockwall Municipal Court's first Associate Judge. Judge Waters took her oath of office on February 4, 2004, and remained in that position until May 2015 when the City Charter was amended to require all judges be licensed attorneys. She continued to serve as the Court's Chief Clerk until her retirement on February 28, 2023.

On August 20, 2007, the City Council named Matthew R. Scott as the Interim Judge of the Court. Then, On September 4, 2007, the City Council appointed Cathy Penn as the Presiding Judge of the Court.

In May 2015, the citizens of Rockwall amended the City of Rockwall Charter to provide that both the Presiding Judge and the Associate Judge of the Rockwall Municipal Court must be attorneys licensed to practice law in the State of Texas (before this amendment, only the Presiding Judge was required to be a licensed attorney). On July 6, 2015, the City Council appointed Hon. David Mallard as Associate Judge of the Court.

In November 2018, Judge Penn was elected Judge of the Rockwall County Justice of the Peace Court Precinct 2. As a result of Judge Penn beginning in that new role, on December 3, 2018, the City Council appointed Associate Judge David Mallard to serve as Presiding Judge of the Rockwall Municipal Court. Also at that time, the City Council appointed former Rockwall City Council Member and Interim Judge Matthew R. Scott to serve as Associate Judge of the Court.

In April 2021, Judge Mallard announced his retirement effective June 2021. On June 7, 2021, the City Council appointed Associate Judge Matthew R. Scott to serve as Presiding Judge of the Court. At that same time, the Council appointed Ryan K. Lee to serve as Associate Judge of the Court. Both Judge Scott and Judge Lee remain in their positions today.