



MEMO

To: Mayor and City Council

From: Mark O. Lambert, City Attorney

Date: July 14, 2026

Subject: Court Services in City Hall

BACKGROUND:

Although the City of Ames is not the county seat of Story County, for many years the Iowa Judicial Branch has maintained a courtroom in Ames City Hall. This arrangement has served as a convenience for the Ames community, since a variety of court proceedings and services can be accessed without necessitating travel to Nevada. This is also a substantial benefit for City operations, since less staff time and mileage is required for police officers and City Attorney's Office staff to travel back and forth to Nevada.

A 28E agreement currently exists between the Second Judicial District of the Iowa Judicial Branch, Story County, and the City of Ames regarding the court system having operations in the Ames City Hall location. The current 28E agreement was approved in 2010.

Last year, the Iowa Judicial Branch has indicated its desire to implement a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU; see Attachment), which would replace the 28E Agreement. All parties approved the MOU last year, and this is the second year of utilizing an MOU. If the MOU is approved by Council, it is effective retroactively to July 1, 2026, and will expire on June 30, 2027, unless terminated earlier in accordance with the agreement. It may be renewed for additional terms upon mutual written agreement prior to expiration.

In consideration of the convenience of the Judicial Branch offering services in Ames, the Judicial Branch is not charged rent or utilities for its space in City Hall. However, the MOU obligates the City to reimburse the Iowa Judicial Branch for its information technology costs associated with holding court in Ames. These itemized costs total \$11,506.43. Of this amount, 10% is paid from the Legal Department's operating budget and 90% is paid from the Police Department's operating budget.

OPTIONS:

1. Approve the attached Memorandum of Understanding with the Iowa Judicial Branch, Second District, and Story County for court services in Ames City Hall.
2. Do not approve the Memorandum of Understanding.
3. Refer this item back to staff to negotiate different terms for the MOU.

STAFF COMMENTS:

This partnership benefits residents and City staff by providing a convenient location to access the court system, file documents, and attend hearings for small claims actions, municipal infractions, mental health and substance abuse proceedings, and simple misdemeanor criminal offense. Staff has reviewed the MOU and finds it acceptable. Therefore, staff believes approving this MOU for an additional year, Option #1, can be supported.

ATTACHMENT(S):

[MOU FY26-27.pdf](#)