



April 10, 2024

MEMORANDUM

TO: Ingrid S. Watson, Chair
Government Operations and Fiscal Policy Committee (GOFP)

THRU: Joseph R. Hamlin *DRH*
Director of Budget and Policy Analysis

FROM: David Williams *D.W.*
Legislative Policy Analyst

RE: Office of Law
Fiscal Year 2026 Budget Review

Budget Overview

The FY 2026 Proposed Budget for the Office of Law is \$4,944,200, a decrease of \$403,900 or -7.6% below the FY 2025 approved budget. The decrease is due to a reduction in the fringe benefit rate and increased technology costs. The Office of Law is funded entirely by the General Fund.

Budget Comparison

Actual FY 2024 to Proposed FY 2026

Category	FY 2024 Actual	FY 2025 Approved	FY 2025 Estimate	% Change - Est vs App	FY 2026 Proposed	\$ Change	% Change
Compensation	\$ 5,929,787	\$ 6,367,500	\$ 6,641,300	4.3%	\$ 6,836,900	\$ 469,400	7.4%
Fringe Benefits	1,886,264	2,228,600	2,009,800	-9.8%	2,200,400	(28,200)	-1.3%
Operating Expenses	653,904	613,800	602,900	-1.8%	658,100	44,300	7.2%
Sub-Total	\$ 8,469,955	\$ 9,209,900	\$ 9,254,000	0.5%	\$ 9,695,400	\$ 485,500	5.3%
Recoveries	(3,406,389)	(3,861,800)	(3,700,100)	-4.2%	(4,751,200)	(889,400)	23.0%
Total	\$ 5,063,566	\$ 5,348,100	\$ 5,553,900	3.8%	\$ 4,944,200	\$ (403,900)	-7.6%

Authorized Staffing Count - General Fund				
	FY 2025 Approved	FY 2026 Proposed	Change Amount	Percentage Change
Full-Time	65	66	1	1.5%
Total	65	66	1	1.5%

Staffing and Compensation

- The proposed staffing level for FY 2026 shows an increase of 1 from the previous year. There is currently a vacancy rate of 11% with 7 positions that have yet to be filled.
- Proposed FY 2026 compensation is increased by \$469,400 or 7.4% above the FY 2025 Approved Budget due to mandated salary increases.
- As of March 2025, the Office reported an attrition rate of 15.3%. Experienced attorneys and support staff are most affected. The most commonly cited reasons for this are listed as continual turnover.
- The Office has one Attorney 5G that is assigned to the Police Department. And another Attorney 5G to the Housing Authority.

Fringe Benefits

- Fringe benefit expenditures are proposed to decrease by \$28,200 or 1.3% above the FY 2025 Approved Budget due to anticipated adjustments to compensation.
- A five-year trend analysis of fringe benefit expenditures is included below.

	FY 2022 Actual	FY 2023 Actual	FY 2024 Actual	FY 2025 Estimated	FY 2026 Proposed
Fringe Benefit Expenditures	\$ 1,417,031	\$ 1,714,590	\$ 1,886,264	\$ 2,009,800	\$ 2,200,400
As a % of Compensation	26.3%	36.7%	36.3%	32.9%	34.6%

Operating Expenses

- FY 2026 proposed operating expenses are estimated at \$658,100, a 7.2% increase from the estimated FY 2025 amount.
- The top spending areas are:

◆ Office Automation	\$403,600
◆ General and Administrative	\$164,000
◆ General Office Supplies	\$20,000
◆ Telephone	\$12,000
◆ Periodicals	\$11,300

- The accompanying table compares the FY 2026 proposed budget operating expenditures with the FY 2025 approved operating expenditures. FY 2026 proposed expenditures increase in two categories compared to the FY 2025 approved budget.

Operating Objects	FY 2025 Budget	FY 2026 Proposed	FY 2025 - FY 2026	
			\$ Change	% Change
Training	\$ 10,000	\$ 10,000	\$ -	0.0%
Membership Fees	8,000	8,000	-	0.0%
Printing	5,000	5,000	-	0.0%
Mileage Reimbursement	10,400	10,400	-	0.0%
Travel: Non-Training	800	800	-	0.0%
Telephone	12,000	12,000	-	0.0%
Miscellaneous	10,000	10,000	-	0.0%
Office and Operating Equipment Non-Capital	3,000	3,000	-	0.0%
General Office Supplies	20,000	20,000	-	0.0%
Periodicals	11,300	11,300	-	0.0%
General & Administrative Contracts	122,700	164,000	41,300	33.7%
Office Automation	400,600	403,600	3,000	0.7%
TOTAL	\$ 613,800	\$ 658,100	\$ 44,300	7.2%

- The only increases between the FY 2026 proposed budget and the FY 2025 budget are the Office Automation (\$3,000 increase) due to a countywide increase in technology allocation charges and General and Administrative contracts (\$41,300) due to an increase in the contract per price agreement.

Recoveries

- FY 2026 proposed recoveries are \$4,751,200, an increase of \$889,400 or 23% from the FY 2025 approved budget level. There was a noticeable increase in recoveries due to additions from the Fire/EMS Department, Department of Social Services, Risk Management, Housing Authority, Dpie, Office of Procurement, Police Department, Department of the Environment and Office of Central Services.
- The following is a two-year display of the Office's recoveries classified by the source and fund type:

Recoveries for FY 2025 and FY 2026				
Description	FY 2025 Estimated	FY 2026 Proposed	Difference	Fund*
Department of Social Services	\$ 323,900	\$ 323,900	\$ -	Grant
Health Department	54,900	228,000	173,100	GF
Office of Central Services	110,300	116,400	6,100	GF
Fire Department	163,500	176,100	12,600	GF
Housing Authority	213,900	257,300	43,400	GF
Department of the Environment	95,300	104,400	9,100	GF
Police Department	228,000	249,100	21,100	GF
Office of Finance	2,400,000	2,946,500	546,500	GF
DPIE	-	205,300	205,300	GF
Office of Procurement	110,300	144,200	(33,900)	GF

Highlights

- In FY 2025 the Office:
 - ❖ established rent stabilization group;
 - ❖ fully staffed the Transparency Division;
 - ❖ reduced Government Operations vacancies to one (1) position; and
 - ❖ reduced the MPIA backlog reduced by over 90%.
- The Office reported a number of workload challenges:
 - ❖ Increase in turnover in staff and attorneys, resulting in a loss of experience and institutional knowledge.
 - ❖ The lack of paralegals in the Litigation unit.
 - ❖ Struggling to fill vacancies.
 - ❖ Increases in the number of transactional matters.

- ❖ Turnover of staff in agency partners.
- For FY 2025, the Office's priorities include:
 - ❖ Bring in additional paralegal support staff.
 - ❖ Fully implement the new case management system
 - ❖ Completely clear MPIA backlog
 - ❖ Expand staff to accommodate workloads generated by public safety trial boards.

The Office's FY 2025 legal services contracts are shown on the table below:

FY 2025-2026 LEGAL SERVICES CONTRACTS

Vendor/Contract or	1 =MBE 2=CBB 3=CBSB 4=CLB Unknown	Summary of Contract Services	FY 2024	Contracts, FY 2025 and FY 2026					FY 2026	
				FY2024 Actual	FY2025 Approval Budget	FY2025 Actual/Esti mated Contract Amount	Current Contract Term (month/year- month/year)	Number of Addition al Option Years Available		
Law Office of Johnine Clark	Legal Services	\$74,700	\$74,700	\$74,700	7/1/25 – 6/30/25	0	Executed	\$74,700	GF	
Thomson Reuters / West Proflex	Legal Research	\$25,674	\$48,000	\$48,000	7/1/25 – 6/30/25	0	Executed	\$48,000	GF	
Blue Sky Innovative Solutions	Temps	\$68,384								
Thomson Reuters / High Q	Software / File Manage ment	\$35,387	\$0	\$41,300	7/1/25 – 6/30/25	0	Executed	\$41,300	GF	
Total		\$204,145	\$122,700	\$164,000				\$164,000		