
City Attorney

Department Description

The Columbus City Charter best describes the City Attorney's Office:

Section 67. Powers and Duties. [The city attorney]...shall be the legal adviser of and attorney and counsel for the city, and for all officers and departments thereof in matters relating to their official duties. [The city attorney]...shall prosecute or defend all suits for and in behalf of the city, and shall prepare all contracts, bonds and other instruments in writing in which the city is concerned and shall certify in writing his approval of the form and correctness thereof. He may appoint such assistants, secretaries and clerks as council may authorize.

Section 68. Prosecuting attorney. The city attorney shall be the prosecuting attorney of municipal court. He may detail such of his assistants as he may deem proper to assist in such work. He shall prosecute all cases brought before such court and perform the same duties, so far as they are applicable thereto, as are required of the prosecuting attorney of the county.

Section 69. Representing city. The city attorney shall prosecute or defend for and in behalf of the city all complaints, suits and controversies in which the city is a party, and such other suits, matters and controversies relating to city affairs as he shall, by resolution or ordinance of council, be directed to prosecute or defend.

Section 70. Rendering Opinions. The council, the director of any department, or any officer, board, or commission not included within a department, may by request in writing, require the opinion of the city attorney upon any question of law involving their respective powers and duties.

Table of Organization

To fulfill the obligations placed on this office by the Charter, Columbus City Council has authorized 147 full-time and 47 part-time positions for the City Attorney's Office. However, the proposed 2009 budget provides funding for only 128 full-time and 35 part-time positions. Of the full-time positions, 61 are scheduled to be occupied by attorneys.

The office has five basic units as follows: Police Legal Advisor unit, Claims Division, Real Estate Division, Prosecutor Division and Civil Division, with the last-mentioned containing a Business and Regulation section, a Litigation section, a Labor and Employment section and a team of attorneys who focus on abating public nuisances. The Prosecutor Division contains a Prosecution Resources unit that evaluates citizens' requests to file criminal charges, that promotes mediation to resolve disputes short of litigation and that operates a bad check resolution program. Also within the Prosecutor Division is a Domestic Violence/Stalking unit devoted exclusively to the protection of victims of domestic violence and stalking.

Department Mission

To carry out the duties and responsibilities prescribed by the Columbus City Charter and Columbus City Codes in a professional and competent manner so that the office's clients and the public are well and fairly served.

Department Goals and Objectives

To handle every matter to a conclusion that is just and fair both to the City of Columbus and to any other parties involved.

Strategic Priorities for 2009

Every day the City Attorney's Office is engaged in the delivery of legal services, whether it is approving contracts as to form and correctness, defending the city against law suits, assuring that enacted legislation fits properly into the City Code, evaluating whether criminal charges should be filed, prosecuting traffic and criminal cases, providing oral and written opinions, conducting police recruit and in-service training or eliminating public nuisances that persist in the city's neighborhoods.

Consequently, the strategic priorities and budget issues mirror each other and reappear each budget year; and they are: securing adequate resources so that the best qualified people are in the appropriate positions performing at the highest levels so that the law firm representing the City of Columbus is able to carry out the responsibilities assigned to it by the Charter in a competent and professional manner. Proper staffing levels and adequate compensation will always be this office's major priorities and budget issues.

2009 Budget Notes

- Costs for both outside counsel and legal settlements for general fund agencies are budgeted in Finance and Management's citywide account.
- A total of \$105,000 is budgeted for subscriptions to various legal research services and publications in 2009.

Budget and Program Summary

DEPARTMENT FINANCIAL SUMMARY					
DIVISION SUMMARY	2006 Actual	2007 Actual	2008 Original Appropriation	2008 Estimated Expenditures	2009 Proposed
City Attorney	\$ 9,710,456	\$ 10,164,795	\$ 10,484,529	\$ 10,120,887	\$ 10,321,636
Real Estate	344,297	355,289	390,405	342,795	220,095
Land Acquisition	728,379	695,624	864,143	748,532	904,900
TOTAL	\$ 10,783,132	\$ 11,215,708	\$ 11,739,077	\$ 11,212,214	\$ 11,446,631

NOTE: The general fund 2008 and 2009 figures, unlike in preceding years, do not include technology expenditures which are budgeted in Finance and Management. For an adjusted historical comparison, see page 26-9.

DIVISION SUMMARY BY CHARACTER					
CITY ATTORNEY GENERAL FUND EXPENDITURES SUMMARY	2006 Actual	2007 Actual	2008 Original Appropriation	2008 Estimated Expenditures	2009 Proposed
Personnel	\$ 8,800,554	\$ 9,285,259	\$ 9,905,534	\$ 9,536,028	\$ 9,839,265
Materials & Supplies	124,713	96,267	140,750	152,550	65,750
Services	678,082	650,301	438,245	398,976	416,621
Other Disbursements	-	35,482	-	-	-
Capital	-	-	-	-	-
Transfers	107,107	97,486	-	33,333	-
TOTAL	\$ 9,710,456	\$ 10,164,795	\$ 10,484,529	\$ 10,120,887	\$ 10,321,636
REAL ESTATE GENERAL FUND EXPENDITURES SUMMARY	2006 Actual	2007 Actual	2008 Original Appropriation	2008 Estimated Expenditures	2009 Proposed
Personnel	\$ 344,113	\$ 355,289	\$ 390,405	\$ 342,795	\$ 220,095
Materials & Supplies	-	-	-	-	-
Services	184	-	-	-	-
TOTAL	\$ 344,297	\$ 355,289	\$ 390,405	\$ 342,795	\$ 220,095

DIVISION SUMMARY BY CHARACTER					
LAND ACQUISITION LAND ACQUISITION FUND EXPENDITURES SUMMARY	2006 Actual	2007 Actual	2008 Original Appropriation	2008 Estimated Expenditures	2009 Proposed
Personnel	\$ 665,833	\$ 647,321	\$ 777,055	\$ 675,856	\$ 790,456
Materials & Supplies	9,111	3,294	17,300	17,164	17,300
Services	53,435	45,009	69,788	55,512	97,144
TOTAL	\$ 728,379	\$ 695,624	\$ 864,143	\$ 748,532	\$ 904,900

DEPARTMENT SUMMARY BY FUND					
FUND SUMMARY	2006 Actual	2007 Actual	2008 Original Appropriation	2008 Estimated Expenditures	2009 Proposed
General	\$ 10,054,753	\$ 10,520,084	\$ 10,874,934	\$ 10,463,682	\$ 10,541,731
Land Acquisition	728,379	695,624	864,143	748,532	904,900
TOTAL	\$ 10,783,132	\$ 11,215,708	\$ 11,739,077	\$ 11,212,214	\$ 11,446,631

DEPARTMENT PERSONNEL SUMMARY					
DIVISION	FT/PT*	2006 Actual	2007 Actual	2008 Authorized	2009 Authorized
City Attorney	FT	104	108	119	119
	PT	29	29	46	46
Real Estate	FT	6	4	7	7
Land Acquisition	FT	5	6	7	7
	PT	0	1	1	1
TOTAL		144	148	180	180

*FT=Full-Time PT=Part-Time

**2009 Operating Budget
City Attorney**

Program	Mission	Financial History by Program				Personnel by Program			
		2006 Budget	2007 Budget	2008 Budget	2009 Proposed	2006 FTEs	2007 FTEs	2008 FTEs	2009 FTEs
Administration	To provide management and support through the offices of the City Attorney.	\$ 1,137,633	\$ 1,360,391	\$ 958,089	\$ 846,468	7	9	5	6
Civil Prosecution	To provide support personnel to assist attorneys in the civil division by preparing legal documents, maintaining the case database, scheduling depositions and appointments and other duties that maintain the organized flow of legal documents.	\$ 290,467	\$ 345,050	\$ 452,014	\$ 407,489	6	5	7	6
Civil Part-Time	To provide law student interns who perform legal research for the attorneys in the civil division.	\$ 103,758	\$ 159,239	\$ 139,112	\$ 107,135	0	0	0	0
Appellate	To appeal misdemeanor prosecutions to the Franklin County Court of Appeals, and defend misdemeanor criminal appeals filed against the city.	\$ 362,336	\$ 441,720	\$ 425,441	\$ 368,464	3	3	3	3
Intake	To assist citizens requesting the filing of criminal misdemeanor complaints by assisting, advising and making appropriate referrals.	\$ 614,193	\$ 643,775	\$ 665,714	\$ 572,082	2	2	4	3

**2009 Operating Budget
City Attorney**

Program	Mission	Financial History by Program				Personnel by Program			
		2006 Budget	2007 Budget	2008 Budget	2009 Proposed	2006 FTEs	2007 FTEs	2008 FTEs	2009 FTEs
Victim-Witness Assistance	To prosecute domestic violence offenders and assist victims by providing them with immediate resources, and to educate and train all city and county law enforcement officers on the issue of domestic violence.	\$ 983,407	\$ 970,730	\$ 1,099,065	\$ 1,177,623	14	16	16	17
Business	To assist in the legal review and implementation of vital city development projects, give legal assistance to city officials with respect to city services, legislation, contracts, zoning, and relations with the suburbs, to assist city agencies in complying with state and federal environmental laws, and to take legal action against industrial facilities that fail to comply with water pollution laws and other environmental requirements.	\$ 927,969	\$ 963,334	\$ 877,280	\$ 911,740	9	9	8	8

**2009 Operating Budget
City Attorney**

Program	Mission	Financial History by Program				Personnel by Program			
		2006 Budget	2007 Budget	2008 Budget	2009 Proposed	2006 FTEs	2007 FTEs	2008 FTEs	2009 FTEs
Litigation	To defend the city and its employees in contract disputes, claims for personal injury or property damage, constitutional violations, wrongful death, tax disputes, and claims requesting money damages; as well as provide legal education, training, advice, and counsel.	\$ 719,439	\$ 726,541	\$ 799,177	\$ 786,905	6	6	6	6
Labor	To handle all labor and employment-related litigation, render legal advice to city officials on labor and employment matters, defend the city in employment litigation filed in federal and state courts, and counsel various city departments on day-to-day personnel matters.	\$ 564,570	\$ 572,672	\$ 549,840	\$ 570,611	5	5	5	5
Police Legal Bureau	To advise the Division of Police on legal and policy matters, serve as liaison for civil and criminal litigation involving police, and provide training on legal topics associated with law enforcement.	\$ 323,668	\$ 337,311	\$ 343,824	\$ 369,983	4	4	4	4

**2009 Operating Budget
City Attorney**

Program	Mission	Financial History by Program				Personnel by Program			
		2006 Budget	2007 Budget	2008 Budget	2009 Proposed	2006 FTEs	2007 FTEs	2008 FTEs	2009 FTEs
Claims	To handle pre-litigation claims against the city as well as the collection of funds owed to the city.	\$ 602,767	\$ 574,070	\$ 554,517	\$ 548,244	7	7	6	6
Legal Assistance	To provide clerical support to the prosecutors in the Franklin County Municipal Court, send out subpoenas and ensure that all case files have necessary paperwork for each prosecutor's daily docket.	\$ 876,789	\$ 849,143	\$ 888,719	\$ 902,858	15	15	15	15
Dispute Resolution	To solve problems and conflicts outside of the judicial process through the use of trained mediators, to bring students, parents, and educators together to develop a specific plan to keep children in school, and to assist in the collection of money lost to merchants due to the passing of bad checks.	\$ 55,128	\$ 57,897	\$ -	\$ -	1	1	0	0
Zone Initiative	To handle cases relating to housing, building, health and zoning code violations as well as nuisance abatement actions.	\$ 322,457	\$ 135,956	\$ 539,800	\$ 560,532	3	2	7	7

**2009 Operating Budget
City Attorney**

Program	Mission	Financial History by Program				Personnel by Program			
		2006 Budget	2007 Budget	2008 Budget	2009 Proposed	2006 FTEs	2007 FTEs	2008 FTEs	2009 FTEs
Criminal Prosecution	To provide attorneys in the prosecution of misdemeanor traffic and criminal cases including domestic violence, DUI and assault cases.	\$ 2,163,495	\$ 2,220,726	\$ 2,077,937	\$ 2,191,502	26	26	24	23
Real Estate Administration	To provide management and support for acquisition of all real property needed by city departments and legal assistance in all real estate matters.	\$ 369,827	\$ 371,339	\$ 390,405	\$ 220,095	4	4	4	4
Land Acquisition	To provide management and support for acquisition of all real property needed by city departments and legal assistance in all real estate matters.	\$ 792,424	\$ 803,847	\$ 864,143	\$ 904,900	7	7	7	7
		\$ 11,210,327	\$ 11,533,741	\$ 11,625,077	\$ 11,446,631	119	121	121	120

NOTE: The general fund 2008 and 2009 budget figures, unlike in preceding years, do not include technology expenditures, which are budgeted in Finance and Management. For an adjusted historical comparison, see page 26-9. Some program data will not match department summary data due to differences in data being reported (i.e., budgeted versus actual). This is compounded in cases of departmental reorganizations during the timeframe.

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