

Budget and Finance Committee

June 12, 2025



City Attorney's Office
Presentation by:
Farimah Faiz Brown
Sara Stephens
Nate Dahl

Recent Increase in Legal Needs

- Our office has taken on important new legal work recently in addition to the existing work due to:
 - The change of administration at the federal level, and affirmative litigation to protect the City as a sanctuary jurisdiction.
 - At the same time, we are working closely with the City Manager and departments to navigate the Executive Orders from the Trump administration.
 - As the City is stepping up enforcement of the encampments, there are numerous lawsuits against the City and its public officials regarding encampments and more is anticipated.

City's Legal Needs Are Growing

- The City's legal needs do not diminish when we have vacancies in the office, requiring us to tap into additional resources to provide the necessary legal services to protect the City's interests.
- We have been able to operate within our budget with no new funding requests in AAO1 or AAO2. Increasing our internal capacity by filling vacancies will help us continue to operate in a cost-effective manner and protect the City's legal interests.

CAO FY25 Staffing & Budget

20 Budgeted FTE

- | | |
|--|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• City Attorney• Assistant City Attorney (vacant)• Assistant to the City Attorney• Deputy City Attorneys (10) | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Risk Manager (vacant)• Office Supervisor• Senior Legal Paralegal (vacant)• Paralegals (2)• Legal Secretaries (2) |
|--|--|

CAO FY25 Staffing & Budget

- FY 25 Personnel Budget - \$4,692,327
- FY 25 Non-Personnel Budget - \$7,476,862
- Total FY 25 Budget - \$12,169,189

- Includes transfers from FY24 salary savings and public liability to cover outside counsel contracts

Current CAO Vacancies

- Assistant City Attorney
- Risk Manager
- Senior Legal Secretary/ Senior Paralegal

Assistant City Attorney

Salary & Benefits FY26 - \$426,491

- The Assistant City Attorney is currently vacant.
- The Assistant City Attorney position supervises key staff, helps with the Budget, and administers certain programs in the office, handles complex legal matters, and serves as the department head in the absence of the City Attorney.
- The City Attorney is in the process of filling this position to be able to continue to provide the services that are required of the legal department.

Risk Manager

Salary & Benefits FY26 - \$258,968

- The City Risk Manager position was authorized by the city in 2024.
- It is uncommon for a City the size and the work of the City of Berkeley not to have a professional Risk Manager.
- The CAO is working collaboratively with HR to develop the classification details and initiate a recruitment.
- Currently, two Deputy City Attorneys cover aspects of work that the Risk Manager will ultimately be responsible for.
- With the placement of a Risk Manager within the CAO, the two Deputy City Attorneys will have increased capacity to address other pressing legal needs.

Senior Legal Secretary / Senior Paralegal

Salary & Benefits (\$179,876.42) / Salary & Benefits (\$208,091.97)

- In 2024, the City created the new classification of Senior Paralegal (Reso. #71,615-N.S.) to allow for enhanced paralegal duties
- While not budgeted for FY25, the CAO intended to convert one vacant Senior Legal Secretary position to a Senior Paralegal in FY26 at an additional cost of approximately (\$28,215.55) in salary and benefits.
- The CAO recognizes the City's current budget constraints and is not intending to pursue this conversion and will leave this position vacant for FY26 to help with the deficit.

Filling Current Vacancies

- Filling the current vacancies of the Assistant City Attorney and Risk Manager within the CAO are essential for departmental operations and expanding internal capacity and furthering the goal of reducing the need for outside legal services contracts.

Questions?
