

COUNTY ATTORNEY

DESCRIPTION

The County Attorney's Office serves as legal advisor to the county government, including its various departments, divisions, and agencies. The office prosecutes or defends all actions involving county officials and employees arising out of acts performed in the course of their employment. In addition to litigation, the office is called upon to interpret State and Federal laws, county ordinances and resolutions, and to draft county ordinances and proposed State legislation.

OBJECTIVES

- To provide the county government with quality legal services.
- To protect the county treasury from damage awards as a result of litigation.

BUDGET HIGHLIGHTS

The department's budget for FY25 is \$3,479,885. This represents a 12.2% increase to the FY24 budget in the sum of \$377,213. This increase includes rising employee salaries, healthcare, and benefit costs.

DEPARTMENT HIGHLIGHTS

The office serves as a mini-law firm for the County, its various boards, commissions, agencies, and Henrico County Public Schools (HCPS). The office drafts County ordinances for presentation to the Board of Supervisors (Board); drafts resolutions for presentation to the Board, the School Board, the Economic Development Authority (EDA), the Sports and Entertainment Authority (SEA); and drafts, reviews and approves property conveyances and contracts of the County, School Board, EDA, and SEA.

To minimize liability and ensure compliance with the law, office attorneys regularly provide advice and training on the Virginia Conflict of Interests Act, Virginia Public Procurement Act, the Virginia Freedom of Information Act, as well as civil liability, civil commitment laws, and the confidentiality of health and educational records.

FISCAL YEAR 2025 SUMMARY

Description	FY23	FY24	FY25	Change
	Actual	Original	Approved	24 to 25
Personnel	\$ 2,861,419	\$ 2,977,918	\$ 3,355,131	12.7%
Operation	370,496	124,754	124,754	0.0%
Capital	18,298	0	0	0.0%
Total	<u>\$ 3,250,213</u>	<u>\$ 3,102,672</u>	<u>\$ 3,479,885</u>	<u>12.2%</u>
Personnel Complement	23	23	23	0

PERFORMANCE MEASURES

	FY23	FY24	FY25	Change 24 to 25
Workload Measures				
New Cases Filed over \$25,000	46	35	35	-
Administrative Proceedings	28	20	20	-
Contracts Drafted or Reviewed	730	700	700	-
Deeds and Leases Drafted or Reviewed	282	250	250	-
Freedom of Information Act Requests Handled	828	800	800	-

DEPARTMENT HIGHLIGHTS (CONTINUED)

Training session participants include the crisis intervention team, communications officers, police officers, deputy sheriffs, employees in Community Revitalization, Building Inspections, the Division of Fire, HCPS division leadership team members, school administrators, and school nurses. Attorneys in the office have also trained members of the community who serve court-involved children including Court Appointed Special Advocates (CASA).

The office also represents the County, HCPS, and their officials and employees in a wide variety of civil actions. Forty-six new lawsuits seeking a minimum of \$25,000 were filed against the County, HCPS, or their employees in FY23. At present, 56 cases are pending in state and federal courts of record, including appellate courts. In FY23, the office made 59 appearances in these courts. In addition, the office handled 827 cases in courts not of record: 182 cases in the Henrico County General District Court, and 645 cases in the Henrico County Juvenile and Domestic Relations District Court. The office also handled 28 administrative hearings.

The office provided a wide array of legal services to its clients in FY23:

- Promoted permanency and stability for dozens of children by assisting the Department of Social Services (DSS) with reunifying families and, where necessary, terminating parental rights and supporting adoption. The office represented DSS in 19 termination of parental rights hearings and assisted in finalizing 17 adoptions.
- Represented DSS in numerous appeals, in both state court and administrative hearings, to defend the conclusions of local judges and hearing officers who have made findings of abuse and neglect of children.
- Represented Adult Protective Services and Henrico Area Mental Health and Developmental Services (HAMHDS) in court proceedings for vulnerable adults, securing guardians and conservators when needed.
- Assisted the Registrar with merging precincts and relocating polling places to ensure access to first-class facilities for residents during election season.
- Guided the County through the formation of the GreenCity Community Development Authority and the Virginia Center Commons Lighting District.
- Represented the County and the EDA during negotiations of a development agreement and closing of the sale of the former Best Products Property to the GreenCity developer.
- Closed a multi-million-dollar land sale at White Oak Technology Park, further positioning the County at the forefront of the digital transformation of data and communications.
- Collaborated with Finance to create the Henrico RECAP tax relief program, which caps real estate tax bills for qualifying homeowners.

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- Assisted Community Revitalization in establishing the Home Purchase Assistance Program, which provides homeownership grants in the form of forgivable loans to qualifying employees of the County, School Board, and constitutional officers.
- Expanded options available to County departments for construction procurement by drafting procedures for Design-Build Contracts and Construction Management Contracts, which paved the way for design-build procurement by the County for Fire Station 6 and construction management procurement by the School Board for the Environmental Education Living Building at Wilton Farm.
- Analyzed legislation proposed by the General Assembly for potential impact on County operations and, for legislation signed into law, determined whether changes to County ordinances, policy or procedures were required.
- Collaborated with County agencies (including Police, the Department of Social Services, and HCPS) to strengthen and clarify agency roles in the investigation of allegations of harm to students, including allegations of peer-on-peer sexual assault.
- Developed an employee non-resident variance policy to benefit HCPS employees by allowing children of non-resident employees to attend County schools.
- Promoted student safety by reviewing HCPS policies concerning student searches and provided guidance regarding the use of weapon detectors.