

CITY OF SAVANNAH
OFFICE OF THE CITY ATTORNEY

Status Report
February 2020

Mission of City Attorney's Office:

- To provide legal advice and counsel to the Mayor, Alderwomen, Aldermen, City Manager, and Staff of the City of Savannah
- To represent the City in all legal proceedings
- To provide legal support to all City departments

Staffing: City Employees

- Jennifer Herman, Deputy City Attorney
 - Handle all claims, petitions, and ante litem notices
 - Draft ordinances
 - Review and negotiate contracts for entire organization
 - Provide advice and counsel to all staff
 - Defense of all employees in non-party litigation matters
- Denise Cooper, Assistant City Attorney
 - Recorder's Court Prosecutor
 - Show Cause Hearings at Council
 - Eminent Domain Presentations at Council

Principal Areas of Practice

- Litigation
- Advice to Council, City Manager, and Staff
- Code Enforcement
- Real Estate/Infrastructure Development
- Employment
- Intergovernmental Agreements
- Zoning and Land-Use
- Administrative Hearings

Estimated Allocation of Law Department Staff Time

- Litigation Management: 20% / 35%
- Advice to Council, CM, and departments 20% / 30%
- Police Department investigation and claims 15% / 5%
- Open Records Responses 15% / 10%
- Real estate / capital projects 15% / 10%
- Employment issues 10% / 5%
- Intergovernmental Agreements 5% / 5%

Litigation Areas

- Employee accidents in City-owned vehicles
- General liability (alleged nuisances, slip & falls)
- Civil Rights (alleged wrongful arrest, excessive force)
- Employment (alleged discrimination, pay issues)
- Workers' Compensation
- Property and Zoning Enforcement
- Bankruptcy and Real Estate Claims

Claims/Litigation Process

- Claim is made either informally or by formal petition/ ante litem notice → processed by Risk Management & evaluated by City Attorney's Office
- Investigated and settled by Risk Management and/or referred to City Attorney's Office
- Ante litem filed with Clerk of Council → answered by City Attorney's Office
- If lawsuit is filed, it is handled by City Attorney's Office

Active Civil Lawsuits against The City of Savannah

- May 1, 2019: 87
- New lawsuits since May 1: 11
- Won: 30
- Settled: 13*
- Active lawsuits as of today: 55

*includes 3 lawsuits filed and resolved since May 1, 2019

Staffing: Outside Counsel

- Assistant City Attorneys:
 - Lester B. Johnson
 - Recorder's Court and matters originating from the Court
 - Jay Blackburn
 - Real Estate Litigation and Bankruptcy Matters
 - Bill Shearouse
 - Real Estate counsel

Staffing: Outside Counsel

- Ellis Painter (Quentin Marlin)
- Goodman McDuffy (Charlie Barrow)
- HunterMaclean (multiple attorneys)
- Jenkins & Bowen (Frank Jenkins)
- Law Office of Shalena Cook Jones
- Law Office of Stephanie Burgess
- Oliver Maner (multiple attorneys)
- Panzitta Law (Lenny Panzitta)
- Weiner Shearouse (multiple attorneys)

Outside Legal Fees by Year

- 2019: \$ 1,657,116.24
- 2018: \$ 1,321,335.34
- 2017: \$ 1,418,725.34
- 2016: \$ 1,574,463.01

Total Payouts by Year

- 2019: \$ 12,170,758.00
- 2018: \$ 445,426.00
- 2017: \$ 1,082,748.27
- 2016: \$ 2,102,107.00
- 2015: \$ 766,123.00