

City Attorney Office

Fiscal Year End 2024-25

LONG TERM FINANCIAL POLICY
AUDIT SUBCOMMITTEE

JANUARY 29, 2026

TERESA STRICKER, CITY ATTORNEY

SCOTT WAGNER, CHIEF FINANCIAL
OFFICER

City Attorney's Office (CAO)

By City Charter, the City Attorney is appointed by the City Council to serve as the chief legal advisor for the City of Santa Rosa.

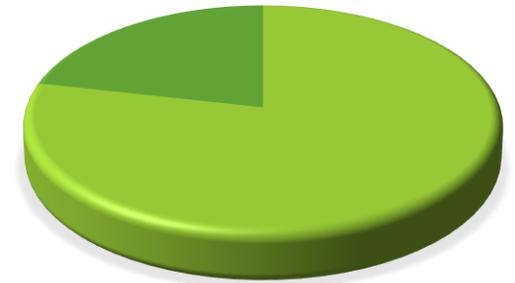
The City Attorney's Office (CAO):

- is a central service department
- represents the City in legal proceedings
- provides comprehensive legal advice and support to:
 - Council
 - Boards and Commissions
 - Departments and City staff
 - Housing Authority
 - Public Financing Authority

CAO FY 2024-25 Spending

Category	2024-25 Budget	2024-25 Actuals	(Over) Under Budget
Salaries & Benefits	3,645,454	3,353,343	292,111
Services & Supplies	1,405,684	1,325,718	79,966
Total	\$5,051,138	\$4,679,061	\$372,077

Service & Supplies



Salaries & Benefits

CAO Actual vs. Budget - At a Glance

(Four Year Lookback)

Actual vs. Budget	FY 2021-22 Actual vs. Budget	FY 2022-23 Actual vs. Budget	FY 2023-24 Actual vs. Budget	FY 2024-25 Actual vs. Budget
Actual	3,621,162.30	3,723,526.66	4,647,899.45	4,679,061.50
Budget	3,868,003.00	3,910,893.31	4,463,701.58	5,051,138.47
Budget Year (Over)/Under	\$ 246,840.70	\$ 187,366.65	\$ (184,197.87)	\$ 372,076.97

CAO FY 2024-25 Services & Supplies

Expenditure	2024-25 Actuals
Professional Services *	\$754,239
IT Cost	100,612
Subscriptions	30,825
Operational Supplies, Dues, Meetings	23,331
Other Outside Services	12,975
PC Replacement & Software	12,494
Conferences and Training	12,054
Copier Services	6,237
Total	\$952,767

* Professional Service Expense Detail Provided in Future Slides (discretionary amount plus special project carryover).

CAO FY 2024-25 Professional Services

Expenditure	2024-25 Actuals
Vannucci Litigation	232,994
Airport Business Center (Garage 5) Litigation	110,610
Real Estate Legal Services	182,482
Public Works/CIP	127,288
As needed General Municipal Advice including Planning	22,330
Housing Authority	15,086
Various legal services, training	21,435
Recruiter services for Two Attorneys	33,600
Temporary help due to vacant legal secretary position	8,414
Total	\$754,239

CAO FY 2025-26 FTE Count

Job Title	Sum of FTE
City Attorney	1.0
Chief Assistant City Attorney	1.0
Assistant City Attorney *	7.0
Law Office Supervisor	1.0
Paralegal	2.0
Legal Secretary	2.0
Administrative Secretary	1.0
Total	15.0

* Two Assistant City Attorney positions are currently underfilled at the less senior Deputy City Attorney Level.

CAO Budget - Staffing & Salary

(Five Year Lookback)

	FY 2021-22	FY 2022-23	FY 2023-24	FY 2024-25	FY 2025-26
	Actual vs. Budget	Actual vs. Budget	Actual vs. Budget	Actual vs. Budget	Actual vs. Budget
Staffing	15.9 FTE	15.9 FTE	15.9 FTE	15.9 FTE	15 FTE
Salaries					
Base Budget	\$ 2,200,828	\$ 2,261,266	\$ 2,335,668	\$ 2,518,884	N/A
Actuals	2,221,428	2,295,641	2,036,300	2,210,532	N/A
Benefits					
Base Budget	1,157,185	1,145,674	1,257,135	1,332,461	N/A
Actuals	\$ 1,100,365	\$ 1,166,273	\$ 1,052,580	\$ 1,142,811	N/A
Vacancies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ACA Apr 22-Jun 22 • ACA Mar 22-Jun 22 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chief ACA Jan 23-Jun 23 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CA Aug 23-Oct 23 • Chief ACA Jul 23-June 24 • ACA Aug 23-Jun 24 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chief ACA July 24-Sept 24; • Mar 25-Jun 25 • ACA Sep 24-Jan 25 • ACA Jun 24-Feb 25 • ACA Jul 24-Sep 24 • Legal Secy Aug 24-Oct 24 • Legal Secy Retired (Not Filled) Sep 24-June 25 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Paralegal Aug 25-Oct 25

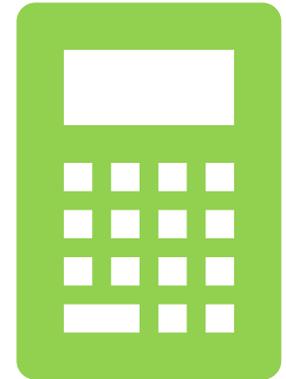
CAO General Fund Revenue

Revenue	FY 2024-25 Actuals
Cost Allocation Plan Recovery from CAO	
City Attorney Services Cost Recovered	\$966,277

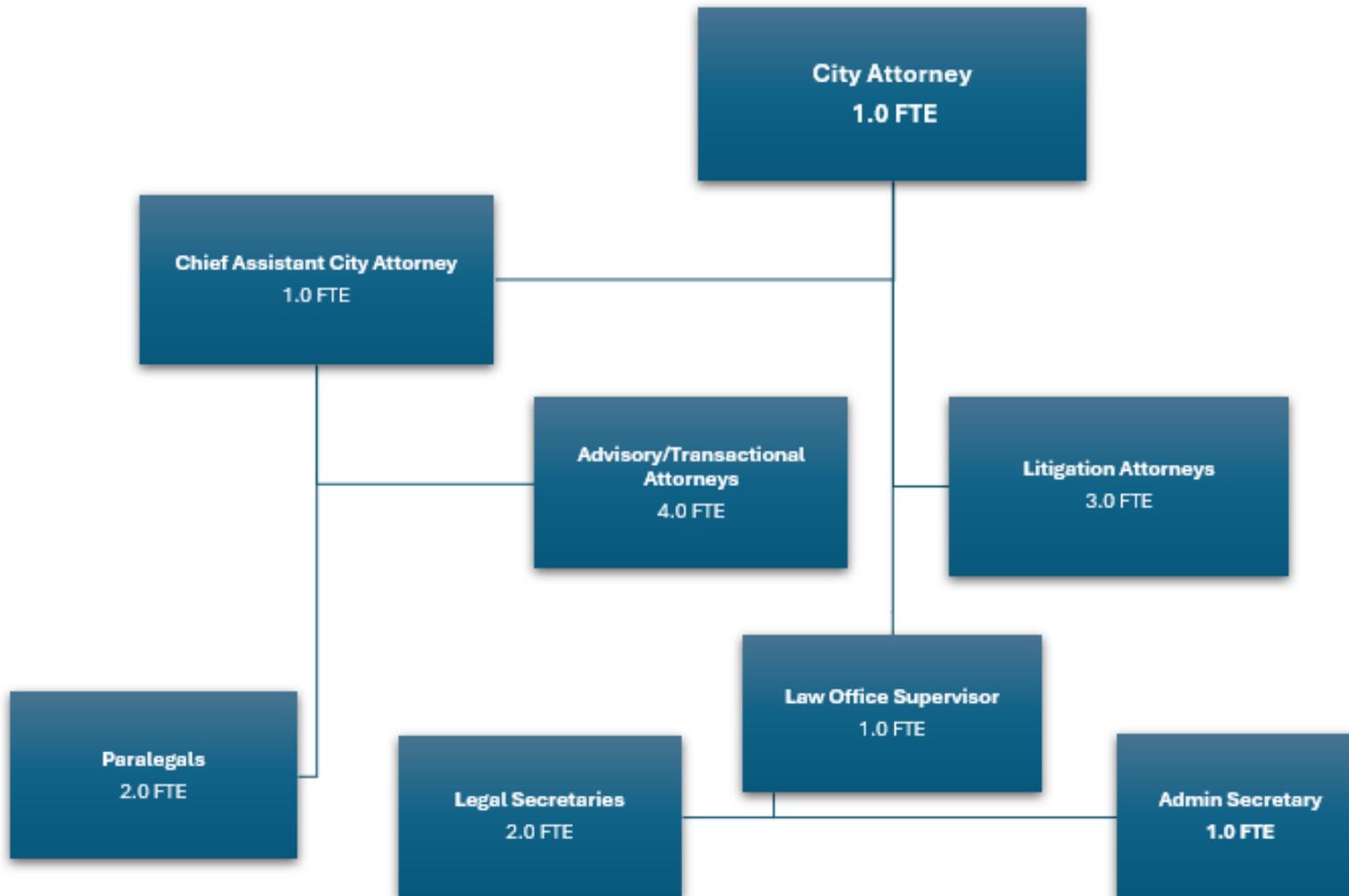
Recent CAO Budget Reductions & Savings

Reductions in FY 2025-26 Budget to meet an overall budget reduction of approximately \$321,000

- ❑ Reduction of 1.0 FTE Vacant Legal Secretary
- ❑ Annual Budgeted Professional Services were reduced by roughly 65% (\$175,550) from \$271,000 to \$85,519
- ❑ Increases in IT cost recovery share and rising costs in categories such as bar dues, office supplies, resulted in reductions across other categories in service and supplies including Conferences & Trainings.



CAO Organization Chart



CAO: Operational Highlights

Legislative Function

- Review agendas, staff reports and other items.
- Advise during meetings of the City Council, Planning Commission, Housing Authority, Board of Public Utilities and other Brown Act bodies.



CAO Primary Board & Commission Assignments:

The Big Four: 2,250 Estimated Attorney Hours 2025

	Board/Commission	Attorney
	City Council	Teresa Stricker City Attorney
	Board of Public Utilities	David Hobstetter Assistant City Attorney
	Planning Commission	Ashle Crocker Assistant City Attorney
	Housing Authority	Autumn Luna Chief Assistant City Attorney

CAO Primary Board & Commission Assignments

Other Brown Act Bodies: 250 Estimated Attorney Hours 2025

	Board/Commission	Attorney		Board/Commission	Attorney
	Art in Public Places Committee	Ashle Crocker Assistant City Attorney		Tourism Business Improvement Area Advisory Board	Hannah Ford-Stille Deputy City Attorney
	Bicycle and Pedestrian Advisory Board	Ashle Crocker Assistant City Attorney		Waterways Advisory Committee	Ashle Crocker Assistant City Attorney
	Board of Building Regulation Appeals	Varies		Zoning Administrator	Ashle Crocker Assistant City Attorney
	Board of Parks & Recreation	Hannah Ford-Stille Deputy City Attorney		City Council/ BPU Liaison Subcommittee	David Hobstetter Assistant City Attorney
	Community Advisory Board	Autumn Luna, Chief Assistant CA Kelly Leonhardt, Deputy CA		Climate Action Subcommittee	Hannah Ford-Stille Deputy City Attorney
	Design Review and Preservation Board	Ashle Crocker Assistant City Attorney		Economic Development Subcommittee	Ashle Crocker Assistant City Attorney
	Personnel Board (subject to due process wall)	(outside counsel)		Long Term Financial Policy and Audit Subcommittee	Teresa Stricker City Attorney
	Public Finance Authority	Teresa Stricker City Attorney		OGTF Implementation Subcommittee	Autumn Luna Chief Assistant City Attorney
	Public Safety and Prevention Tax COC	Jenica Hepler Assistant City Attorney		Public Safety Subcommittee	Jenica Hepler Assistant City Attorney
	Subdivision Committee	Ashle Crocker Assistant City Attorney		Violence Prevention Partnership Subcommittee	Jenica Hepler Assistant City Attorney

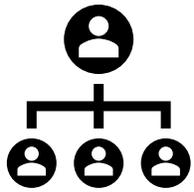
CAO: Operational Highlights

Advisory/Transactional Function

- Regularly advise departments on all areas of general municipal law
- Draft/review ordinances, resolutions, policies and procedures.
- Review – and at times negotiate and draft – all contracts citywide and other legal instruments.
- Provide risk analysis and options to minimize legal risk.
- Provide trainings to City staff and officials.



CAO Primary Assignments (Advice) – by Department



CMO
Teresa Stricker,
City Attorney



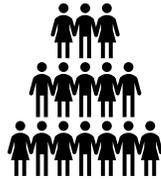
HCS
Autumn Luna,
Chief Asst City Attorney



POLICE
Jenica Hepler,
Assistant City Attorney



CIRO
Teresa Stricker,
City Attorney
Autumn Luna,
Chief Asst City Attorney



HR
Jenica Hepler,
Assistant City Attorney



TPW
David Hobstetter,
Assistant City Attorney
Hannah Ford-Stille,
Deputy City Attorney



FIN
Teresa Stricker,
City Attorney



IT
Hannah Ford-Stille,
Deputy City Attorney



WATER
David Hobstetter,
Assistant City Attorney



FIRE
Adam Abel,
Assistant City Attorney



PED
Ashle Crocker,
Assistant City Attorney

CAO Primary Assignments (Advice) – by Division



CITY CLERK
Teresa Stricker,
City Attorney



PARKING
Hannah Ford-Stille,
Assistant City Attorney



REAL ESTATE
Autumn Luna,
Chief Asst City Attorney



RECREATION
Hannah Ford-Stille,
Assistant City Attorney



PURCHASING/CONTRACTS
Hannah Ford-Stille,
Assistant City Attorney



PARKS
Hannah Ford-Stille,
Assistant City Attorney

CAO: Operational Highlights

Litigation Function

- Represent the City in civil litigation, administrative hearings, Pitchess motions and in connection with third-party subpoenas.
- Prosecute code enforcement matters, weapons confiscation petitions, gun violence restraining orders, dangerous animal petitions, as well as environmental and HazMat violations.
- Advise code enforcement staff during administrative proceedings.



CAO Primary Assignments (Litigation)



CAO LITIGATION TEAM

Adam Abel, Assistant City Attorney
Nate Putney, Assistant City Attorney
Kelly Leonhardt, Deputy City Attorney



CLAIMS & CIVIL LITIGATION

- FEDERAL – USDC
- STATE SUPERIOR COURT
- FEDERAL AND STATE APPELLATE COURTS
- PITCHES MOTIONS
- THIRD PARTY SUBPOENAS



OTHER MATTERS

- DRUG ABATEMENT
- RECEIVERSHIPS
- WEAPONS CONFISCATION
- GUN VIOLENCE RESTRAINING ORDERS
- DANGEROUS ANIMAL
- ENVIRONMENTAL & HAZMAT
- ADMINISTRATIVE HEARINGS

Litigation Case Load by Fiscal Year

	FY 21-22	FY 22-23	FY 23-24	FY 24-25	FY 25-26*
New Litigation Matters	17	23	23	13	9*
Claims Assigned to the CAO	26	26	36	46	25*
Short Cause/Miscellaneous					
• Pitchess motions	24	21	24	28	24*
• Weapons	33	16	24	24	14*
• Animal petitions	Averages 15	Averages 15	Averages 15	Averages 15	12*

* Numbers reflect matters in the first half of the Fiscal Year

Litigation Disposition by Fiscal Year

	FY 21-22	FY 22-23	FY 23-24	FY 24-25	FY 25-26*
Litigation Matters Dismissed or Adjudicated – No Money Paid by the City	11	17	12	7	6
Litigation Matters Settled \$50k or Less	4	7	2	6	2
Litigation Matters Settled More than \$50k	4	3	3	2	4

* FY To Date

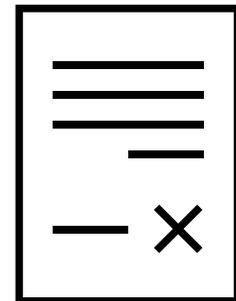
Outside Counsel

The City Attorney's Office may retain outside counsel when City initiatives or certain matters require:

- specialized legal expertise
- additional resources
- independent perspective.

Can be a cost-effective solution for handling temporary workload spikes, vacancies or high-stake cases.

The City Attorney's Office also manages all contracts with outside counsel utilized by other departments.



CAO Budget – Outside Counsel (5320 – Professional Services)

	FY 2021-22	FY 2022-23	FY 2023-24 *	FY 2024-25 *	FY 2025-26 **
CAO Base Budget	271,000	271,000	271,000	271,000	85,519
Carryover & Council Appropriations	5,000	5,603	425,445	931,300	372,952
Actual Spending	113,275	68,108	1,118,519	754,239	182,573
Less Encumbrance	5,603	445	258,872	372,952	215,159
(Over)/Under Budget	157,122	208,050	(680,946)	75,109	60,739

*City Council Approved Mid-Year Appropriations

**FY 2025-26 is through 01/20/2026

CAO’s Professional Services Budget was reduced to \$85,519 in FY 2025-26 from \$271,000 over the previous four fiscal years due to budget cuts.

Current Strategies

Continuing to modernize operations to improve service delivery with existing resources.

Changes implemented or being implemented:

- Brought in house day-to-day real estate and personnel legal work. Reduces professional services in CAO and HR.
- Strategic assignments of litigation matters.
- Moving nonlegal work done for years in CAO out of CAO and back to the departments.
 - Improved efficiency in both CAO and departments; creates more bandwidth for legal work.
 - Eg, Insurance compliance checks and Parking Hearing Officer services.

Current Strategies (cont'd)

- Worked with CMO/Clerk's office to streamline agenda process and eliminate unnecessary resolutions. Creates efficiency in all departments.
- Collaborating with CMO/Clerk/Mayor on number of Brown Act bodies and any room for adjustments.
- Strategic use of training resources to decrease reliance on outside counsel.
- Cross training to enhance internal expertise, promote professional development and enhance retention/morale.

Next Steps

- Implement software solutions to improve efficiency.
- Eliminate unnecessary or archaic processes.
- Continue to align CAO resources with organizational priorities.
- Onboard Center for Organizational Effectiveness to undertake departmental assessment to recommend additional ways to achieve efficiency in processes, staffing and allocation of resources.
- Collaborate with CMO in budget formation process on strategic, targeted expenditures to promote efficiencies.

Questions?