

# City Attorney's Office (LAW)

## 2025 – 2026 Proposed Budget Policy Considerations

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Select Budget Committee | October 21, 2024

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# Budget Summary: LAW Department

	2024 Adopted	2025 Proposed	% Change	2026 Proposed	% Change
Operating Appropriations by BSL					
Civil Division	\$16.5M	\$18.2M	10.3%	\$19.1M	4.8%
Criminal Division	\$10.6M	\$11.7M	10.5%	\$12.2M	4.6%
Leadership and Administration	\$12.9M	\$14.8M	14.6%	\$15.7M	6.1%
Precinct Liaison	\$0.7M	\$0.8M	12.3%	\$0.9M	4.8%
Total Appropriations	\$40.8M	\$45.6M	11.7%	\$47.9M	5.2%
Total FTE	210	210	-	210	-

# Policy Consideration

## 1. Civil Division Attorney Staffing Reductions

- LAW's 2025-2026 Proposed Budget unfunds 2.0 FTE Assistant City Attorneys in the Employment and Contracts/Utilities Sections of the Civil Division.
- This proposed staffing reduction would save \$434,000 in 2025 and \$458,000 in 2026.
- The proposed staffing reduction may result in additional costs to City departments, potentially eclipsing projected savings, through the need to hire outside counsel for legal services currently provided by the Civil Division.

### Options:

- A. Fully restore Civil Division staffing to current levels by adding \$434,000 in 2025 and \$458,000 in 2026.
- B. Restore funding for one of the two positions at a cost of \$217,000 in 2025 and \$229,000 in 2026.
- C. No change.

# Policy Consideration

## 2. Specialty Court Unit Prosecutor Reduction

- LAW's 2025-2026 Proposed Budget unfunds 1.0 FTE Prosecutor in the Specialty Court Unit of the Criminal Division.
- This proposed staffing reduction would save \$182,000 in 2025 and \$192,000 in 2026.
- LAW has stated that staff reductions to Prosecutors will reduce timely response to criminal referrals and may reduce the ability to implement recently passed criminal justice legislation to the extent that it involves potential diversion opportunities in a Specialty Court.

### Options:

- A. Restore funding to for this position by adding \$182,000 in 2025 and \$192,000 in 2026.
- B. No change.

# Policy Consideration

## 3. Implementation of Public Safety Policies

- There may be additional costs, not included in the 2025-2026 Proposed Budget, associated with implementation by LAW and the Seattle Municipal Court (SMC) of recent public safety legislation and Executive policy decisions.
- Costs of this kind realized in 2025, but not included in this Proposed Budget, may be brought as mid-year supplemental budget requests.
- LAW has stated that staff reductions to Prosecutors will reduce timely response to criminal referrals and may reduce the ability to implement recently passed criminal justice legislation to the extent that it involves potential diversion opportunities in a Specialty Court.

# Policy Consideration

## 3. Implementation of Public Safety Policies (cont.)

### a. Prosecutor Staffing

- Recent City legislation creating new crimes & expanding prosecutorial authority is likely to increase referrals from SPD to LAW
- Without additional staffing, increased caseloads from new laws may create delays in prosecution or reduced resources for other types of cases
- LAW has stated the addition of 1.0 FTE “Floating Prosecutor” at a cost of \$182,000 in 2025, in addition to restoration of the Specialty Court Prosecutor, would improve workloads anticipated related to recent policy changes.

# Policy Consideration

## 3. Implementation of Public Safety Policies (cont.)

### b. Court Costs for Jail Expansion

- Implementation of the SCORE Jail agreement is likely to have additional costs for SMC in 2025-on, which are not included in the 2025-2026 Proposed Budget
- SMC has developed preliminary cost estimates based on two scenarios:
  1. Transport to SMC: \$196,000 in 2025, \$520,000 in 2026
    - Additional staffing and other costs to transport defendants from SCORE for hearings
  2. New Judicial Department: \$584,000 in 2025, \$1.7M in 2026
    - Additional staffing and other costs to create new judicial department at SMC to handle virtual hearings with in-custody defendants at SCORE
    - Would require additional authorizing legislation and labor agreement changes

# Policy Consideration

## 3. Implementation of Public Safety Policies (cont.)

### Options:

- A. Increase appropriations in the 2025-26 Proposed Budgets for LAW and/or SMC.
- B. No change in 2025-2026 Proposed Budget for LAW and/or SMC. Additional costs may be addressed during a future supplemental budget request.



# Questions?