

## BUDGET SUMMARY

Category	2023 Actual	2024 Actual	2025 Budget	2026 Adopted Budget	2025/2026 Variance
<b>Expenditures</b>					
Personnel Costs	2,278,785	2,906,328	2,747,107	2,941,881	194,774
Operations Costs	144,505	130,523	107,534	107,534	0
Debt & Depreciation	0	0	0	0	0
Interdepartmental Charges	(906,933)	(998,769)	0	0	0
<b>Total Expenditures</b>	<b>\$1,516,357</b>	<b>\$2,038,082</b>	<b>\$2,854,641</b>	<b>\$3,049,415</b>	<b>\$194,774</b>
<b>Revenues</b>					
Other Direct Revenue	291,791	204,740	294,184	344,000	49,816
<b>Total Revenues</b>	<b>\$291,791</b>	<b>\$204,740</b>	<b>\$294,184</b>	<b>\$344,000</b>	<b>\$49,816</b>
<b>Tax Levy</b>	<b>\$1,224,566</b>	<b>\$1,833,341</b>	<b>\$2,560,457</b>	<b>\$2,705,415</b>	<b>\$144,958</b>
<b>Personnel</b>					
<b>Full Time Pos (FTE)</b>	25.00	26.00	26.00	26.00	0.00
Overtime \$	5,883	79,086	0	0	0
Seasonal/Hourly/Pool	0	0	0	0	0

**Department Mission:**

The Milwaukee County Office of Corporation Counsel (OCC) strengthens the Milwaukee County community through highly competent, creative, compassionate, and responsive legal services provided in strategic partnership with County stakeholders to optimize decision-making, reduce risks, and maximize public resources, and serve our shared community.

**Department Vision:**

By becoming the best government law office in Wisconsin, OCC increases equity and wellness in Milwaukee County.

**Department Description:**

OCC serves as chief legal counsel to Milwaukee County, including all of its departments, boards, committees, employees, and elected officials. The Chief Corporation Counsel leads OCC with the support of Deputy Corporation Counsels. Assistant Corporation Counsels report to Deputy Corporation Counsels. OCC staff includes one senior office coordinator, several paralegals, and one administrative assistant.

OCC provides advisory, transactional, dispute and litigation legal services concerning a wide range of civil issues that impact its clients, the County community, and the public. OCC’s attorneys, with the support and assistance of non-attorney staff, provide comprehensive legal advice, guidance, and representation in the following areas:

Mental health-related matters and proceedings on behalf of the County and the public, including guardianships, protective placements, and civil commitments. Also, OCC represents the board responsible for sexually violent person placement under state law. Given its representation in these matters, the OCC also provides significant advisory services to the Milwaukee County Department of Health and Human Services.

Labor and employment matters including labor relations, HR consulting, employment benefits, and representation of the Milwaukee County Employees Retirement System.

Real estate, land use, and property issues, including representation of Milwaukee Mitchell International Airport and Timmerman Airport. Also, contract drafting and review, public procurement-related issues, public records and open meetings, including the investigation and prosecution of reported violations of the same, government ethics, Milwaukee County and Board governance, election law and data privacy. Risk management advice and counseling including internal policy and procedure guidance.

OCC Prosecutes and defends Milwaukee County, its officials and employees in all manner of lawsuits and other proceedings, in state and federal court, before administrative agencies, and in labor arbitration. OCC serves as panel counsel for one of the County's insurers, Wisconsin County Mutual Insurance Corporation (WCMIC), and WCMIC pays OCC for the defense of certain administrative and litigation matters, which also reduces dollar for dollar the County's insurance deductible on a year over year basis.

Areas of the OCC's litigation practice include:

Employment discrimination proceedings including disability, age, race, and sex discrimination, before the United States Equal Employment Opportunity Commission and State of Wisconsin Department of Workforce Development Equal Rights Division. As well as employee benefits litigation, prosecution of wage claims on behalf of the State of Wisconsin Department of Workforce Development, labor negotiations and interest arbitration, and civil constitutional rights defense litigation arising under 42 U.S. Code § 1983 and other federal laws.

In addition, OCC litigation practice includes personal injury and property damage, construction, tax foreclosure prosecution, procurement protests, the False Claims Act, Mandamus actions including public record disputes, actions to enforce provisions of Wisconsin's Open Meetings Law, breach of contract, alternative dispute resolution including mediation and arbitration, prosecution of temporary restraining orders and injunctions on behalf of Milwaukee County, its officials and employees in their formal capacities.

Litigation management (internal and outside counsel) including prosecution of class actions concerning public health impacting Milwaukee County related to opioid and diabetes medication sales and marketing and per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS) or "forever chemicals."

### **Major Changes**

- 1.0 FTE Public Records Analyst was created to enable OCC to be more responsive to departments on these issues. OCC and other departments will benefit from less staff time being spent on these issues should the request be granted.

**OFFICE OF CORPORATION COUNSEL STRATEGIC GOALS**

Off-boarding checklist is created to ease transfer of institutional knowledge.  
 Goal target completion date  
**1/1/2026**

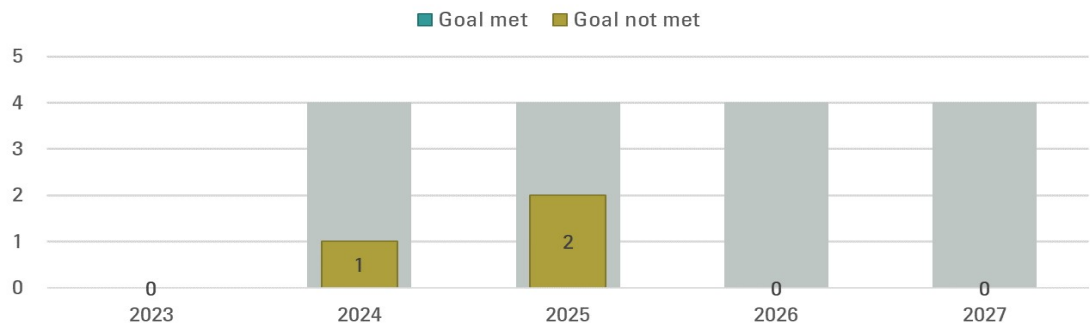
Each OCC team will develop a racial equity lens checklist to be applied to relevant practice areas.  
 Goal target completion date  
**1/1/2026**

New case management system is identified and implemented.  
 Goal target completion date  
**1/1/2026**

OCC advances health and housing goals by participating in high impact litigation.  
 Goal target completion date  
**1/1/2026**

Process for position posting and evaluating and interviewing applicants is established  
 Goal target completion date  
**7/1/2025**

**Increase internal "Lunch and Learn" sessions to four annually**



**Strategic Program Area: Corporation Counsel**

**Service Provision:** Mandated

**How We Do It: Program Budget Summary**

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Full Time Pos (FTE)	25.00	26.00	26.00	26.00	0.00

**Strategic Overview:**

As set forth above, the OCC, as chief legal counsel to the County, provides advisory, transactional, and dispute and litigation legal services on a wide and varied range of civil legal issues. OCC’s values align to those of the County as a whole:

**Inclusion:** We actively seek diverse perspectives when making decisions.

**Influence:** We collectively use our authorities and expertise to positively impact the County community.

**Integrity:** We do the right thing even when no one is looking.

More specifically, the OCC’s overall goals include “bridging the gap” by (1) determining what, where, and how we deliver services to advance health equity; (2) breaking down silos across County departments to increase access to and quality of legal services offered; and (3) intentionally applying a racial equity lens to all of our decision-making.

**Strategic Implementation:**

OCC is in the process of reviewing RFPs for a modern case management system. The new platform shall enhance our practice in many ways aligning our administrative practices within OCC with the best practices of our profession. Additionally, this new system will allow us to compile data and improve the services that we provide our clients. For example, by analyzing time spent on matters we can more efficiently allocate resources as needed. Further, this system will enhance our capability to identify risk factors across the County and implement mitigation strategies that will ultimately reduce liability costs by preventing incidents ahead of time.

OCC has updated its recruitment, hiring, and onboarding processes to emphasize equity and consistency.

OCC continues to provide legal training and professional development opportunities for its employees on an ongoing basis.

OCC continues to provide to County departments, boards, and elected officials relevant substantive training to equip all County officials and employees to reduce risk and liability and to better serve the public and County stakeholders.

OCC continues to build robust succession planning infrastructure that ensures historical knowledge is accessible and its transfer is seamless.

**Additional Program Details:**

To align with the department’s levy allocation, the Assistant Corporation Counsel NR position is unfunded in the 2026 Budget allowing for the role to exist structurally without incurring budgetary impact.

Milwaukee Transport Services, Inc. (MTS) is the quasi-governmental entity responsible for managing and operating Milwaukee County's public transportation system (MCTS). The Office of Corporation Counsel, in collaboration with the Department of Transportation (MCDOT) and transit officials, shall provide a report on MTS's current governance structure no later than the March 2026 meeting cycle of the County Board of Supervisors. The Office of the Comptroller's Audit Services Division is conducting an audit of MTS's governance model, with findings expected later in 2026.

Milwaukee County established the Omnibus Budget Reconciliation Act of 1990 (OBRA) Pension Plan in 1991 to provide retirement coverage for part-time, seasonal, and temporary employees who are not eligible for the County's main pension system. Administered by the Employee's Retirement System (ERS), the OBRA Plan is fully funded by the County, which also precludes paying the employer portion of FICA, offsetting its contribution. Employees likewise do not pay the 6.2% Social Security payroll tax.

Most OBRA participants do not accrue sufficient service to vest in a defined benefit, typically receiving small cash payouts after five years of inactivity or having funds escheated to the State if unclaimed. This structure often results in minimal retirement benefits for covered employees.

To improve long-term retirement security, the Department of Human Resources, working with the Offices of Corporation Counsel, Strategy, Budget and Performance, and the Comptroller, is requested to develop a proposal for a "soft close" of the OBRA Plan. This approach would avoid the complexities associated with fully terminating the OBRA Pension Plan to eligible participants. The Plan should explore enrolling new hires in Social Security while preserving obligations to current members. A report outlining recommendations, fiscal impact, and implementation steps is requested to be submitted to the County Board no later than the July 2026 meeting cycle.

To expand opportunities for civic engagement and community investment, the Office of Corporation Counsel, working in collaboration with the Department of Administrative Services - Information Management Services Division (DAS - IMSD) and the Office of the Comptroller, is requested to explore the development of an online donation portal. The purpose of the portal is to provide a user-friendly and accessible platform through which members of the public can contribute financial support for County programs, initiatives, and projects.

The platform should also support civic crowdfunding for small-scale, quality-of-life improvements that may otherwise go unfunded due to budget limitations. Potential projects could include park amenities, public art installations, trail enhancements, or beautification efforts identified by County departments or through community input. The system should incorporate safeguards to ensure financial accountability, transparency for donors, and equitable criteria for project selection.

A report detailing the feasibility, implementation considerations, and estimated cost of developing such a platform is requested for submission to the County Board no later than the July 2026 meeting cycle.

The Office of Corporation Counsel and the Office of the County Clerk are requested to evaluate the independent redistricting process used to apportion county supervisory districts for the 2022 elections and to prepare for the next cycle following the 2030 census for the 2032 elections. As part of this review, the offices shall examine Milwaukee County General Ordinance § 3.01 - Apportionment of County Board and recommend amendments, if warranted, based on feedback from participants in the 2022 process. This shall include, but is not limited to, staff of the Southeastern Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission (SEWRPC) and the retired judges who served on the Independent Redistricting Committee. The purpose of this effort is to assess what worked well, identify deficiencies, and propose improvements well in advance of next redistricting cycle. A written report summarizing the process, lessons learned, and any recommended ordinance revisions shall be submitted to the County Board for consideration no later than the September 2026 meeting cycle.

The Office of Corporation Counsel (OCC) and the Department of Human Resources are requested to develop a Code of Conduct for the County Board review and approval, based on the principles outlined in Milwaukee County General Ordinance (MCGO) § 1.29, Decorum of supervisors in committee meetings.

The Code of Conduct shall define prohibited conduct for County Board Supervisors and establish a fair and transparent process for receiving and resolving complaints. The Code of Conduct shall propose proportionate sanctions with associated voting requirements and align with state law, County Board rules, and existing ethics, harassment, and workplace policies. OCC and the Department of Human Resources are requested to provide a report and draft ordinance to the County Board no later than the March 2026 meeting cycle.

Since housing is a critical community need and is one of the key social determinants of health, it is imperative for Milwaukee County to explore all possible options to increase access to housing. The barriers for developing affordable housing are increasing, which causes difficulty in closing funding gaps for affordable housing projects. For this reason, the Milwaukee County Housing Division, the Economic Development and Real Estate Division, Office of Corporation Counsel, and the Office of the Comptroller are requested to evaluate the efficacy of creating a revolving loan fund to support affordable housing projects in Milwaukee County. A report summarizing the findings shall be submitted to the County Board for consideration no later than the May 2026 meeting cycle.