




BOARD OF SUPERVISORS
AGENDA LETTER

Agenda Number:

Clerk of the Board of Supervisors
105 E. Anapamu Street, Suite 407
Santa Barbara, CA 93101
(805) 568-2240

Department Name: District Attorney
Department No.: 021
For Agenda Of: January 7, 2025
Placement: Administrative
Estimated Time:
Continued Item: No
If Yes, date from:
Vote Required: 4/5

TO: Board of Supervisors
FROM: Department Director John T. Savrnoch, District Attorney (805) 568-2308 
Contact Info: Michael Soderman, Chief Financial & Administrative Officer
(805) 568-2303
SUBJECT: Allocation for Paralegal Position within the Office of the District Attorney

County Counsel Concurrence

As to form: Yes

Auditor-Controller Concurrence

As to form: Yes

Other Concurrence: Risk Management, Human Resources, CEO Budget

As to form: Yes

Recommended Actions:

That the Board of Supervisors:

- a) Adopt a Resolution (Attachment A) amending the Salary Resolution to allocate one (1) additional full-time equivalent (1.0 FTE) position to the Office of the District Attorney, effective January 6, 2025; and
- b) Approve Budget Revision Request No. 0010185 (Attachment B) to increase appropriations of \$61,500 in District Attorney General Fund for Salaries & Benefits, funded by the release of Restricted Consumer Environmental Fund Balance; and
- c) Determine that the above actions are government fiscal activities or funding mechanisms which do not involve any commitment to any specific project which may result in a potentially significant physical impact on the environment and are therefore not a project under the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) pursuant to Section 15378(b)(4) of the CEQA guidelines.

Summary Text:

The recommended action is to allocate a paralegal position within the Office of the District Attorney, specifically for the Consumer and Environmental Protection Unit. As the Unit has grown to two full-time Deputy District Attorneys and a full-time District Attorney Investigator—the associated caseload has grown, and lack of a civil paralegal is hindering the ability to effectively investigate, file, and litigate civil cases. According to BPC § 17206, the funds mentioned above are designated exclusively for enforcing consumer protection laws.

Background:

The Santa Barbara District Attorney plays a critical role in the local criminal justice system by helping to ensure public safety, upholding the law, and prosecuting offenders. One of the District Attorney’s key responsibilities is prosecuting violations of consumer and environmental protection laws, and the majority of these cases are handled as civil, rather than criminal, cases. Since January 2017, when a full-time Deputy District Attorney (DDA) was assigned to the Consumer and Environmental Protection Unit, the Unit has investigated approximately 150 potential cases. Since another full-time DDA joined the Unit in mid-2020 and a full-time District Attorney Investigator joined in early 2022, the Unit’s case capacity has grown significantly. The Unit has filed and resolved over 85 civil cases, including more than 35 cases prosecuted jointly with other district attorneys and city attorneys throughout California, and it is currently investigating and/or prosecuting approximately 50 more cases. The Unit also handles criminal referrals, including cases from the Department of Fish and Wildlife, California Coastal Commission, Santa Barbara County Certified Unified Program Agency, and the Department of Motor Vehicles.

The District Attorney’s Civil and Environmental Unit has a part-time Legal Office Professional who assists with case filings and some administrative duties, but the DDAs themselves currently perform many of the administrative and clerical tasks of a paralegal. For example, the DDA often issues investigative subpoenas and informal requests for information in civil cases. With supervision, a paralegal trained in civil discovery could assist in drafting and serving these subpoenas, and managing the information produced in response to them. A paralegal would be particularly useful assisting with discovery in litigated civil cases, which bear little resemblance to criminal litigation. Paralegals are trained to draft and serve a wide variety of civil court filings, such as complaints, petitions, motions, and demurrers. Similarly, paralegals are trained to draft and serve civil discovery documents, such as requests for information, deposition subpoenas, interrogatories, and requests for admission. Paralegals are also accustomed to managing the documents and evidence produced in these cases, which must be handled differently than the discovery in criminal cases. In addition, paralegals are trained to perform legal research on Westlaw, and other electronic platforms, and can provide research support to the DDAs.

In addition, the Civil Environmental Unit currently has a significant number of open cases and a backlog of cases it would like to investigate. By supervising and delegating legal work to a paralegal, DDA time can be freed up to process investigations and cases more quickly, and to litigate more efficiently. The Unit works to prevent and mitigate environmental harm, stop unfair competition, and obtain justice for victims of consumer fraud and deception—including restitution where appropriate. The Unit’s work would be greatly enhanced by having a paralegal on the team so that the Unit could operate more effectively and efficiently.

Performance Measures:

The District Attorney’s Office will track the number of pleadings and petitions drafted by the paralegal along with the number of discovery requests served.

Fiscal and Facilities Impacts:

Budgeted: No. Recommend approval of BJE No. 0010185 attached.

Fiscal Analysis:

Funding Sources	Current FY Cost:	Annual Ongoing Cost:
General Fund	\$ -	\$ -
State		
Federal		
Fees	\$ 61,500.00	\$ 133,200.00
Prop 172		
Total	\$ 61,500.00	\$ 133,200.00

The District Attorney’s Office is requesting to add 1.0 FTE paralegal position at a total cost of approximately \$133,200. Funding for the position will come from Civil and Environmental penalties collected pursuant to BPC § 17206. There is currently \$2.4 million in the Civil and Environmental Unit’s fund balance, \$61,500 of which will cover the cost of the position over the remainder of FY 2024-25. The fund balance has grown considerably over the past few years, and the District Attorney’s Office expects that future penalties collected by the Unit will be sufficient to sustain existing positions as well as the newly added paralegal position ongoing. In the event that incoming revenues fall below the Unit’s expenditure obligations, the department will evaluate how to align expenditures with available revenues within the Unit, or otherwise remove or reassign the position if necessary.

Staffing Impacts:

Paralegal Positions:	FTEs:
Add 1.0 new	Add 1.0

Adoption of the attached Salary Resolution will allocate the following one (1) paralegal position to the District Attorney’s Office:

- One (1) 1.0 FTE Paralegal

Special Instructions:

- a) Please return the following items to John DeAlba, DA Department Business Specialist:
 - a. One (1) Minute Order
- b) Please email the following items to Stefan Brewer, Senior Workforce Planning Analyst, Human Resources Department at sbrewer@countyofsb.org:
 - a. One (1) Minute Order
 - b. One (1) copy of the fully-executed Salary Resolution

Attachments:

- Attachment A: Salary Resolution
- Attachment B: Budget Revision Request No. 0010185

Authored by:

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