



PORTLAND CITY ATTORNEY'S OFFICE STRATEGIC PLAN

2015 - 2020

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WORK OF THE CITY ATTORNEY'S OFFICE

Introduction

The Office of the City Attorney is responsible for all of the City's legal work. The office provides legal services to the elected City Council and Auditor, City bureaus, boards, commissions, agencies, and City employees.

Under the City Charter, the City Attorney is appointed by and serves at the pleasure of the City Council, and is the only City officer appointed by the full Council. The City Attorney's deputies are appointed by and serve at the pleasure of the City Attorney.

The office's legal work is extremely varied and includes representation of the City in lawsuits; workers' compensation actions; personnel and labor matters; land use and planning appeals; public records matters; code enforcement actions; constitutional challenges and civil rights cases; collection of license fees and other amounts due to the City; foreclosures; lien actions; nuisance abatement actions; interpleaders and civil forfeitures; real property matters, construction and contract disputes; housing issues; pension and benefit matters; environmental, water and natural resources issues; park operations; business regulation, fiscal and taxation matters; public safety and policing issues; and a variety of other legal issues pertaining to City operations and services. The City Attorney also seeks to ensure that City employees comply with all legal and ethical requirements of public employment and seeks to prevent legal problems by training, directing and educating City employees about legal issues.

In addition, the office prepares legal opinions, drafts legislation, and reviews contracts and documents for the City Council, Auditor and all City bureaus. Virtually all City programs and operations entail some legal staff involvement.

Finally, the City Attorney administers the City's occasional use of outside legal counsel when those services are required.

VISION, MISSION AND GOALS

VISION

To be Oregon's model public service law office, known for its high quality of legal work, dedication to customer service, commitment to equity and stewardship of the public trust.

MISSION

To provide excellent, objective, timely and cost-effective legal advice and advocacy in support of the City's policy goals and to ensure that the official actions of the City, its elected officials and employees comply with the law.

STRATEGIC GOALS

- To provide the highest level of customer service to clients through legal advice that is timely, accurate and easy to access.
- To effectively and vigorously advocate for the City's interests.
- To advance the City's objective of achieving equity in all of its programs, services and activities.
- To ensure accountability for professional performance, effective stewardship of public resources and the City's compliance with applicable laws and regulations.

A MESSAGE FROM THE CITY ATTORNEY



A Message From Tracy Reeve, City Attorney

I am pleased to present the 2015 – 2020 Strategic Plan for the Portland City Attorney’s Office. My first undertaking when I became City Attorney was to establish four strategic goals to guide the work of our office. Those goals focus on providing excellent customer service and outstanding legal advocacy, advancing equity and ensuring accountability. In the adoption of this Strategic Plan, we now have a road map for furthering our vision, mission and goals. We are adopting specific strategies to achieve each goal as well as performance measures to assess our progress.

I am extremely proud of the work of the Portland City Attorney’s Office. We have dedicated attorneys and professional staff who provide outstanding legal services. We look forward to implementing this Strategic Plan to ensure that we are the best public law office in the state.

Tracy Reeve
City Attorney
July 1, 2015

GOALS AND PRIORITIES

GOAL 1: To Provide Outstanding Customer Service and Legal Advice

The City Attorney's Office provides outstanding customer service through helpful, accurate and timely legal work. Clients are encouraged to involve the City Attorney's Office at early levels of decision making, even if a significant legal issue has not yet been identified. City attorneys work with clients to provide solutions-oriented legal services to help achieve City policy objectives. The City Attorney's Office commits to an initial response time goal of one business day on any client inquiry. Clients are regularly surveyed, both formally and informally, to solicit feedback on the quality of legal services provided and how the City Attorney's Office can improve. Lawyers and staff regularly evaluate their own performance in this area.

PRIORITY 1

Assist clients with preventive legal advice

➤ Strategies

- Hire and retain highly qualified attorneys and support staff
- Enhance and expand the office's program to provide training on legal responsibilities, compliance and changes in law
- Review contracts and documents for approval as to form
- Review all proposed state legislation

✓ Measures

- Training hours provided
- Customer survey responses
- Contracts reviewed
- Proposed state legislation reviewed
- Post-training evaluations analysis

PRIORITY 2

Provide initial response to any client inquiry within one business day and review 80% of contracts within three business days

➤ Strategies

- Periodic reminders to attorneys and staff
- Keep clients informed of goal

✓ Measures

- Customer survey responses
- Attorney self-evaluations
- Percent of contracts reviewed within three business days

GOALS AND PRIORITIES

GOAL 1: To Provide Outstanding Customer Service and Legal Advice (cont'd)

PRIORITY 3

Keep clients informed on legal matters

➤ Strategies

- Frequent client communication
- Lessons learned memos
- Periodic reports to Council

✓ Measures

- Customer survey responses

PRIORITY 4

Provide consistent quality legal advice

➤ Strategies

- Schedule regular work group meetings with featured topics and agendas
- Share information between work groups
- Use Practice Manager to store opinions/legal advice to create extensive knowledge base and ability to provide consistent legal advice; train attorneys and staff

✓ Measures

- Monthly or quarterly work group meetings scheduled

PRIORITY 5

Ensure high levels of employee engagement, productivity and job satisfaction

➤ Strategies

- Support professional development through educational opportunities
- Provide innovative resources and technology support to enhance productivity, motivation and morale
- Increase employee recognition and appreciation efforts

✓ Measures

- Employee recognition
- Internal employee survey responses

PRIORITY 6

Develop legal records management program

➤ Strategies

- Facilitate legal records management work group meetings
- Develop software system to manage and track public records and e-discovery requests and legal holds (Gov Q&A)
- Provide City-wide training on legal records management issues and the use of Gov Q&A
- Collaborate with the Auditor's Office on issues surrounding preservation and retention

✓ Measures

- Create public records request manual for City-wide use
- Implement Gov Q&A
- Training hours provided

GOAL AND PRIORITIES

GOAL 2: To Provide Effective Advocacy

The City Attorney's Office handles cases in state and federal courts as well as contested proceedings before administrative bodies such as the Employment Relations Board and the Land Use Board of Appeals. Attorneys evaluate cases to determine how best to protect the City's interests, including early alternative dispute resolution when the City faces some legal risk, the strategic use of offers of judgment to minimize the risk of adverse outcomes at trial, and the vigorous defense or prosecution of cases through pretrial motions, trial and on appeal. The City does not settle claims on a nuisance basis. City attorneys are ready, willing and able to take cases to trial. The City Attorney's Office also initiates litigation on behalf of the City when appropriate to advance the City's interests (affirmative litigation). Because almost all litigation is handled in-house, the office is able to try cases extremely cost effectively. City attorneys also advocate for the City's interests externally in contract negotiations and otherwise.

PRIORITY 1

Provide high quality representation to the City in litigation and other contested proceedings

➤ Strategies

- Hire and retain highly qualified attorneys and support staff
- Provide sufficient staffing, equipment and technology to do excellent work on behalf of the City
- Use offers of judgment to reduce the risk of high attorney's fee awards
- Maintain at least 75% favorable results overall in litigation and contested proceedings

✓ Measures

- Employee longevity
- Employee satisfaction measured through internal survey
- Report litigation and contested case results

PRIORITY 2

Advance the City's interests through affirmative litigation

➤ Strategies

- Identify affirmative litigation opportunities throughout the City
- Establish City-wide processes and provide training and support to bureaus

✓ Measures

- Number of affirmative cases handled
- Dollars collected

GOALS AND PRIORITIES

GOAL 3: To Achieve Equity

The City Attorney's Office works with clients to ensure that all Portlanders have access to City services, benefits and programs free from discrimination, and that the civil rights of all Portlanders are legally recognized and protected by the City and its contractors and grantees. The office advises in programmatic areas such as the ADA and Title VI, the sick leave ordinance, fair contracting, hiring practices and implementation of the City's civil rights ordinance, and provides antidiscrimination training on civil rights and related issues to City employees. In addition, the office works to foster a professional atmosphere where members of a diverse work force are respected and valued, and equity is the norm. This is accomplished by broad outreach in hiring, and working with all attorneys and staff to uncover and eliminate individual conscious and unconscious biases through training, education, discussion and honest self-appraisal and through other cultural and diversity activities.

PRIORITY 1

Ensure office equity and diversity

➤ Strategies

- Promote participation in Oregon State Bar and other equity/diversity outreach programs
- Provide equity/diversity educational opportunities to employees
- Require a minimum number of equity/diversity events for each employee
- Broad outreach to diverse communities in recruiting and hiring processes

✓ Measures

- Workforce demographics
- Number of equity/diversity events and trainings
- Employees attend at least two equity/diversity events annually

PRIORITY 2

Advance the City's objective of achieving equity in all of its programs, services and activities

➤ Strategies

- Train attorneys to incorporate an equity lens into legal advice and ensure compliance with equity related laws and policies
- Develop a proposal for the investigation and possible enforcement of alleged violations of civil rights laws, ordinances, rules and policies
- Assist in the development and implementation of legislation and policies to achieve the City's goals to bolster economic opportunity for all Portlanders, livability in all neighborhoods and equity in service delivery
- Create community justice work group

✓ Measures

- Increase staffing for affirmative civil rights program
- Proposal developed

PRIORITIES AND GOALS

GOAL 4: To Ensure Accountability for Good Stewardship of Public Resources and Compliance with Law

Ensuring internal accountability is a major focus for the City Attorney's Office. The office is committed to being a steward of public resources. The City Attorney will continue to evaluate office policies and procedures and make improvements as needed so systems are clear, accurate and transparent. The City Attorney will ensure that work schedules fit clients' needs for access to accurate, prompt and reliable preventive legal advice. The City Attorney actively seeks to minimize costs for outside legal counsel as well as overhead and administration expenses. The City Attorney's Office also has a responsibility to ensure that the actions of City officials comply with the law, and will continue to do so through trainings, preventive legal advice and corrective action when warranted.

PRIORITY 1

Keep cost of City Attorney services low

➤ Strategies

- Actively seek to minimize costs through excellent procurement practices

✓ Measures

- Cost of service per hour of attorney time

PRIORITY 3

Minimize use of outside counsel

➤ Strategies

- Advocate for adequate staffing to provide in-house services
- Provide educational opportunities for staff to gain expertise in specific areas of law

✓ Measures

- Outside counsel costs

PRIORITY 2

Work to ensure City complies with the law

➤ Strategies

- Provide trainings on compliance with the law
- Develop proposal for neutral investigative capacity

✓ Measures

- Trainings provided
- Proposal developed



Contact Information

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