

# County Counselor

**Mission:** Provide high quality, non-partisan legal services to the County Commissioners, elected and appointed officials, divisions, and advisory boards.

**Justin Waggoner**  
County Counselor

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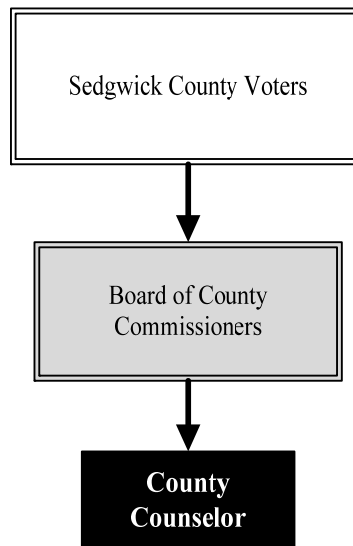
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## Overview

The County Counselor provides legal advice and representation to the Board of County Commissioners (BOCC), County elected and appointed officials, County management, and advisory boards on civil matters affecting the County and Fire District 1. These services include drafting and reviewing resolutions, contracts, and other legal documents, giving advice and rendering opinions as requested, and prosecuting and defending the County's interests before State and Federal courts and administrative agencies, including the Board of Tax Appeals (BOTA).

In Sedgwick County Court, the County Counselor prosecutes violations of County codes committed within the unincorporated area of Sedgwick County.



## Strategic Goals:

- Assist County divisions and leadership by prevention and avoidance of legal claims
- Render sound legal advice in a prompt and responsive manner
- Provide training to the County's elected officials, managers, and employees

## Highlights

- In 2024, the attorneys collectively responded to 105 Kansas Open Records Act (KORA) requests, drafted 248 resolutions, and rendered more than 479 legal opinions
- In 2024, the County Counselor's Office successfully prosecuted 461 County cases in County Court
- The County Counselor's Office is tasked with drafting, reviewing, negotiating, and approving contracts, agreements, and grants entered into by Sedgwick County. During 2024, the County Counselor's Office provided these services for 980 contracts and grants



# Accomplishments and Strategic Results

## Accomplishments

The County Counselor's Office is responsible for providing sound legal advice in a prompt and responsive manner to all County departments to reduce legal exposure and ensure compliance with State and Federal laws to enable County officials to make informed, legally sound decisions in real-time and to mitigate legal risks, which mitigate potential litigation and save the County substantial legal costs. In 2024, this was accomplished by the attorneys of the Office collectively accomplishing 242.5 continuing legal education hours, demonstrating commitment to professional development, maintaining and enhancing expertise, and staying current on evolving laws and legislation affecting County government.

In 2024, the County Counselor's Office worked on 528 total cases and claims (excluding bankruptcy and County Court cases). These were comprised of 45 lawsuits; 17 employment related complaints involving Kansas Human Rights Commission/Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (KHRC/EEOC), Department of Labor (DOL) or Department of Justice (DOJ); 440 economic units before the BOTa; and 20 claims for damages, 16 of which were K.S.A. 12-105b claims. Also, the County Counselor's Office has handled several matters on behalf of Risk Management.

## Strategic Results

Strategic results for the Counselor's Office included the following measures in 2024:

- The County Counselor's Office defends the County Appraiser's valuations in commercial property appeals docket with the Kansas BOTa. The County Counselor's Office strives to maintain an annual successful defense percentage of 85.0 percent of appraised value appealed to the Kansas BOTa and the courts. In 2024, out of approximately \$1.7 billion, the County Counselor's Office preserved 95.0 percent of appraised value appealed to the Kansas BOTa. This amount is equivalent to over \$1.5 billion of property taxes in appraised value preserved.
- County Court administers and prosecutes cases that are in violation of Sedgwick County Code. Time to disposition is the courts' assessment of how long it should take to resolve each case type. The average time to disposition of County Court parking cases is 35 days. In 2024, there were 299 parking tickets written. Of that amount, 170 cases met the established time to disposition goal, which is equivalent to a clearance rate of 56.9 percent. The average time to disposition goal of County Court Animal Control, Code Enforcement, Fire, Parks, and Sheriff Cases is 60 days. In 2024, 211 tickets were written and of that amount, 153 cases met the established time to disposition goal, which is equivalent to a clearance rate of 72.5 percent.

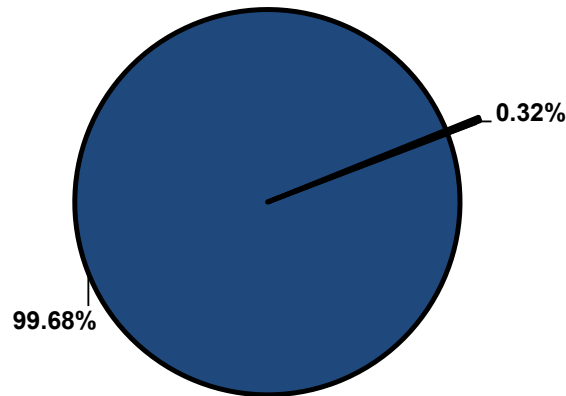


## Significant Budget Adjustments

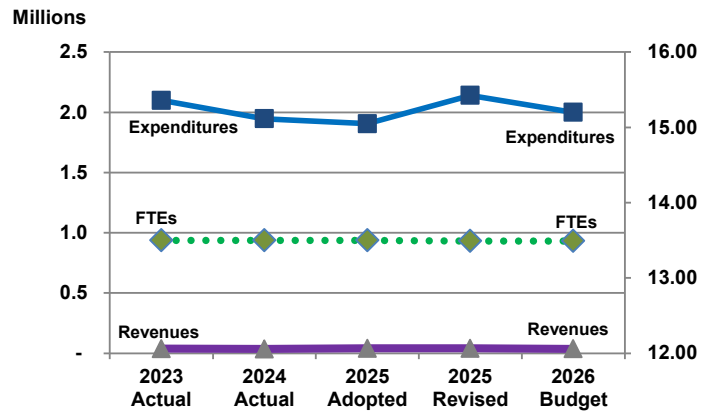
Significant adjustments to the County Counselor's 2026 budget include a \$235,000 decrease in contractuals due to a one-time transfer for external legal counsel services in 2025.

## Departmental Graphical Summary

**County Counselor**  
Percent of Total County Operating Budget



**Expenditures, Program Revenue & FTEs**  
All Operating Funds



## Budget Summary by Category

|                                     | 2023<br>Actual   | 2024<br>Actual   | 2025<br>Adopted  | 2025<br>Revised  | 2026<br>Budget   | Amount Chg<br>'25 Rev.-'26 | % Chg<br>'25 Rev.-'26 |
|-------------------------------------|------------------|------------------|------------------|------------------|------------------|----------------------------|-----------------------|
| <b>Expenditures</b>                 |                  |                  |                  |                  |                  |                            |                       |
| Personnel                           | 1,268,078        | 1,357,840        | 1,528,735        | 1,528,735        | 1,623,408        | 94,673                     | 6.19%                 |
| Contractual Services                | 815,785          | 554,110          | 350,548          | 585,548          | 350,198          | (235,350)                  | -40.19%               |
| Debt Service                        | -                | -                | -                | -                | -                | -                          | -                     |
| Commodities                         | 14,814           | 34,000           | 25,650           | 25,650           | 26,000           | 350                        | 1.36%                 |
| Capital Improvements                | -                | -                | -                | -                | -                | -                          | -                     |
| Capital Equipment                   | -                | -                | -                | -                | -                | -                          | -                     |
| Interfund Transfers                 | -                | -                | -                | -                | -                | -                          | -                     |
| <b>Total Expenditures</b>           | <b>2,098,677</b> | <b>1,945,950</b> | <b>1,904,933</b> | <b>2,139,933</b> | <b>1,999,606</b> | <b>(140,327)</b>           | <b>-6.56%</b>         |
| <b>Revenues</b>                     |                  |                  |                  |                  |                  |                            |                       |
| Tax Revenues                        | -                | -                | -                | -                | -                | -                          | -                     |
| Licenses and Permits                | -                | -                | -                | -                | -                | -                          | -                     |
| Intergovernmental                   | -                | -                | -                | -                | -                | -                          | -                     |
| Charges for Services                | -                | -                | 1,000            | 1,000            | -                | (1,000)                    | -100.00%              |
| All Other Revenue                   | 37,845           | 34,921           | 39,374           | 39,374           | 36,331           | (3,043)                    | -7.73%                |
| <b>Total Revenues</b>               | <b>37,845</b>    | <b>34,921</b>    | <b>40,374</b>    | <b>40,374</b>    | <b>36,331</b>    | <b>(4,043)</b>             | <b>-10.01%</b>        |
| <b>Full-Time Equivalents (FTEs)</b> |                  |                  |                  |                  |                  |                            |                       |
| Property Tax Funded                 | 13.50            | 13.50            | 13.50            | 13.49            | 13.49            | -                          | 0.00%                 |
| Non-Property Tax Funded             | -                | -                | -                | -                | -                | -                          | -                     |
| <b>Total FTEs</b>                   | <b>13.50</b>     | <b>13.50</b>     | <b>13.50</b>     | <b>13.49</b>     | <b>13.49</b>     | <b>-</b>                   | <b>0.00%</b>          |

## Budget Summary by Fund

| Fund                      | 2023<br>Actual   | 2024<br>Actual   | 2025<br>Adopted  | 2025<br>Revised  | 2026<br>Budget   | Amount Chg<br>'25 Rev.-'26 | % Chg<br>'25 Rev.-'26 |
|---------------------------|------------------|------------------|------------------|------------------|------------------|----------------------------|-----------------------|
| General Fund              | 2,098,677        | 1,945,950        | 1,904,933        | 2,139,933        | 1,999,606        | (140,327)                  | -6.56%                |
| <b>Total Expenditures</b> | <b>2,098,677</b> | <b>1,945,950</b> | <b>1,904,933</b> | <b>2,139,933</b> | <b>1,999,606</b> | <b>(140,327)</b>           | <b>-6.56%</b>         |

**Significant Budget Adjustments from Prior Year Revised Budget**

|                                                                                                | Expenditures | Revenues | FTEs |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------|----------|------|
| Decrease in contractals due to a one-time transfer for external legal counsel services in 2025 | (235,000)    |          |      |

**Total** (235,000) - -

**Budget Summary by Program**

| Program                   | Fund | 2023<br>Actual   | 2024<br>Actual   | 2025<br>Adopted  | 2025<br>Revised  | 2026<br>Budget   | % Chg<br>'25 Rev.-'26 | 25-'26'<br>FTEs |
|---------------------------|------|------------------|------------------|------------------|------------------|------------------|-----------------------|-----------------|
| Counselor's Office        | 110  | 172,405          | 201,303          | 209,389          | 209,389          | 222,966          | 6.48%                 | 1.90            |
| General Legal Services    | 110  | 1,084,118        | 1,126,098        | 1,288,663        | 1,288,663        | 1,362,696        | 5.74%                 | 9.70            |
| Sedgwick County Court     | 110  | 126,292          | 141,337          | 156,881          | 156,881          | 163,944          | 4.50%                 | 1.89            |
| Ext. Counsel & Legal Exp. | 110  | 715,862          | 477,212          | 250,000          | 485,000          | 250,000          | -48.45%               | -               |
| <b>Total</b>              |      | <b>2,098,677</b> | <b>1,945,950</b> | <b>1,904,933</b> | <b>2,139,933</b> | <b>1,999,606</b> | <b>-6.56%</b>         | <b>13.49</b>    |



### • Counselor's Office

Administration in the County Counselor's Office is responsible for all aspects of the Office's operations shared in common, such as management, budgeting, and purchasing.

#### Fund(s): County General Fund 110

| Expenditures                        | 2023<br>Actual | 2024<br>Actual | 2025<br>Adopted | 2025<br>Revised | 2026<br>Budget | Amnt. Chg.<br>'25 - '26 | % Chg.<br>'25 - '26 |
|-------------------------------------|----------------|----------------|-----------------|-----------------|----------------|-------------------------|---------------------|
| Personnel                           | 172,220        | 182,831        | 206,289         | 206,289         | 219,866        | 13,578                  | 6.6%                |
| Contractual Services                | 185            | 18,473         | 3,000           | 3,000           | 3,000          | -                       | 0.0%                |
| Debt Service                        | -              | -              | -               | -               | -              | -                       | 0.0%                |
| Commodities                         | -              | -              | 100             | 100             | 100            | -                       | 0.0%                |
| Capital Improvements                | -              | -              | -               | -               | -              | -                       | 0.0%                |
| Capital Equipment                   | -              | -              | -               | -               | -              | -                       | 0.0%                |
| Interfund Transfers                 | -              | -              | -               | -               | -              | -                       | 0.0%                |
| <b>Total Expenditures</b>           | <b>172,405</b> | <b>201,303</b> | <b>209,389</b>  | <b>209,389</b>  | <b>222,966</b> | <b>13,578</b>           | <b>6.5%</b>         |
| <b>Revenues</b>                     |                |                |                 |                 |                |                         |                     |
| Taxes                               | -              | -              | -               | -               | -              | -                       | 0.0%                |
| Intergovernmental                   | -              | -              | -               | -               | -              | -                       | 0.0%                |
| Charges For Service                 | -              | -              | 1,000           | 1,000           | -              | (1,000)                 | -100.0%             |
| All Other Revenue                   | -              | -              | -               | -               | -              | -                       | 0.0%                |
| <b>Total Revenues</b>               | <b>-</b>       | <b>-</b>       | <b>1,000</b>    | <b>1,000</b>    | <b>-</b>       | <b>(1,000)</b>          | <b>-100.0%</b>      |
| <b>Full-Time Equivalents (FTEs)</b> | <b>1.90</b>    | <b>1.90</b>    | <b>1.90</b>     | <b>1.90</b>     | <b>1.90</b>    | <b>-</b>                | <b>0.0%</b>         |

### • General Legal Services

The County Counselor provides in-house legal services to the Board of County Commissioners (BOCC), elected and appointed officials, departments, and advisory boards. Services include advising with oral and written legal opinions, representation in legal proceedings, and the review and preparation of contracts, resolutions, policies and procedures, and mitigation of all cases of liability against the County, including claims originating from the Sedgewick County Adult Detention Facility. The budget authority includes funding for case settlement.

#### Fund(s): County General Fund 110

| Expenditures                        | 2023<br>Actual   | 2024<br>Actual   | 2025<br>Adopted  | 2025<br>Revised  | 2026<br>Budget   | Amnt. Chg.<br>'25 - '26 | % Chg.<br>'25 - '26 |
|-------------------------------------|------------------|------------------|------------------|------------------|------------------|-------------------------|---------------------|
| Personnel                           | 970,015          | 1,034,250        | 1,168,765        | 1,168,765        | 1,242,798        | 74,032                  | 6.3%                |
| Contractual Services                | 99,443           | 57,848           | 94,598           | 94,598           | 94,248           | (350)                   | -0.4%               |
| Debt Service                        | -                | -                | -                | -                | -                | -                       | 0.0%                |
| Commodities                         | 14,660           | 34,000           | 25,300           | 25,300           | 25,650           | 350                     | 1.4%                |
| Capital Improvements                | -                | -                | -                | -                | -                | -                       | 0.0%                |
| Capital Equipment                   | -                | -                | -                | -                | -                | -                       | 0.0%                |
| Interfund Transfers                 | -                | -                | -                | -                | -                | -                       | 0.0%                |
| <b>Total Expenditures</b>           | <b>1,084,118</b> | <b>1,126,098</b> | <b>1,288,663</b> | <b>1,288,663</b> | <b>1,362,696</b> | <b>74,032</b>           | <b>5.7%</b>         |
| <b>Revenues</b>                     |                  |                  |                  |                  |                  |                         |                     |
| Taxes                               | -                | -                | -                | -                | -                | -                       | 0.0%                |
| Intergovernmental                   | -                | -                | -                | -                | -                | -                       | 0.0%                |
| Charges For Service                 | -                | -                | -                | -                | -                | -                       | 0.0%                |
| All Other Revenue                   | 38               | 12               | 39               | 39               | 12               | (27)                    | -68.0%              |
| <b>Total Revenues</b>               | <b>38</b>        | <b>12</b>        | <b>39</b>        | <b>39</b>        | <b>12</b>        | <b>(27)</b>             | <b>-68.0%</b>       |
| <b>Full-Time Equivalents (FTEs)</b> | <b>9.70</b>      | <b>9.70</b>      | <b>9.70</b>      | <b>9.70</b>      | <b>9.70</b>      | <b>-</b>                | <b>0.0%</b>         |

### • Sedgwick County Court

County Court is authorized by K.S.A. 19-101d and was created to enforce County codes and resolutions through the criminal prosecution of violators. It was created by BOCC resolution in 1990, when it handled only Animal Control cases. Since its creation, more “enforcing” departments have become aware of its functional authority and have begun to seek prosecution for violations of County codes. The County Counselor is responsible for prosecution of all cases filed in County Court.

#### Fund(s): County General Fund 110

| Expenditures                        | 2023<br>Actual | 2024<br>Actual | 2025<br>Adopted | 2025<br>Revised | 2026<br>Budget | Amnt. Chg.<br>'25 - '26 | % Chg.<br>'25 - '26 |
|-------------------------------------|----------------|----------------|-----------------|-----------------|----------------|-------------------------|---------------------|
| Personnel                           | 125,843        | 140,759        | 153,681         | 153,681         | 160,744        | 7,063                   | 4.6%                |
| Contractual Services                | 295            | 578            | 2,950           | 2,950           | 2,950          | -                       | 0.0%                |
| Debt Service                        | -              | -              | -               | -               | -              | -                       | 0.0%                |
| Commodities                         | 154            | -              | 250             | 250             | 250            | -                       | 0.0%                |
| Capital Improvements                | -              | -              | -               | -               | -              | -                       | 0.0%                |
| Capital Equipment                   | -              | -              | -               | -               | -              | -                       | 0.0%                |
| Interfund Transfers                 | -              | -              | -               | -               | -              | -                       | 0.0%                |
| <b>Total Expenditures</b>           | <b>126,292</b> | <b>141,337</b> | <b>156,881</b>  | <b>156,881</b>  | <b>163,944</b> | <b>7,063</b>            | <b>4.5%</b>         |
| Revenues                            |                |                |                 |                 |                |                         |                     |
| Taxes                               | -              | -              | -               | -               | -              | -                       | 0.0%                |
| Intergovernmental                   | -              | -              | -               | -               | -              | -                       | 0.0%                |
| Charges For Service                 | -              | -              | -               | -               | -              | -                       | 0.0%                |
| All Other Revenue                   | 25,723         | 34,909         | 26,762          | 26,762          | 36,319         | 9,557                   | 35.7%               |
| <b>Total Revenues</b>               | <b>25,723</b>  | <b>34,909</b>  | <b>26,762</b>   | <b>26,762</b>   | <b>36,319</b>  | <b>9,557</b>            | <b>35.7%</b>        |
| <b>Full-Time Equivalents (FTEs)</b> | <b>1.90</b>    | <b>1.90</b>    | <b>1.90</b>     | <b>1.89</b>     | <b>1.89</b>    | <b>-</b>                | <b>0.0%</b>         |

### • External Counsel & Legal Expense

The External Counsel and Legal Expense fund center provides budget authority for legal professional services. This fund center is used exclusively for payment of fees and authorized expenses incurred by attorneys who have been engaged to represent the County in lawsuits and situations requiring special expertise.

#### Fund(s): County General Fund 110

| Expenditures                        | 2023<br>Actual | 2024<br>Actual | 2025<br>Adopted | 2025<br>Revised | 2026<br>Budget | Amnt. Chg.<br>'25 - '26 | % Chg.<br>'25 - '26 |
|-------------------------------------|----------------|----------------|-----------------|-----------------|----------------|-------------------------|---------------------|
| Personnel                           | -              | -              | -               | -               | -              | -                       | 0.0%                |
| Contractual Services                | 715,862        | 477,212        | 250,000         | 485,000         | 250,000        | (235,000)               | -48.5%              |
| Debt Service                        | -              | -              | -               | -               | -              | -                       | 0.0%                |
| Commodities                         | -              | -              | -               | -               | -              | -                       | 0.0%                |
| Capital Improvements                | -              | -              | -               | -               | -              | -                       | 0.0%                |
| Capital Equipment                   | -              | -              | -               | -               | -              | -                       | 0.0%                |
| Interfund Transfers                 | -              | -              | -               | -               | -              | -                       | 0.0%                |
| <b>Total Expenditures</b>           | <b>715,862</b> | <b>477,212</b> | <b>250,000</b>  | <b>485,000</b>  | <b>250,000</b> | <b>(235,000)</b>        | <b>-48.5%</b>       |
| Revenues                            |                |                |                 |                 |                |                         |                     |
| Taxes                               | -              | -              | -               | -               | -              | -                       | 0.0%                |
| Intergovernmental                   | -              | -              | -               | -               | -              | -                       | 0.0%                |
| Charges For Service                 | -              | -              | -               | -               | -              | -                       | 0.0%                |
| All Other Revenue                   | 12,085         | -              | 12,573          | 12,573          | -              | (12,573)                | -100.0%             |
| <b>Total Revenues</b>               | <b>12,085</b>  | <b>-</b>       | <b>12,573</b>   | <b>12,573</b>   | <b>-</b>       | <b>(12,573)</b>         | <b>-100.0%</b>      |
| <b>Full-Time Equivalents (FTEs)</b> | <b>-</b>       | <b>-</b>       | <b>-</b>        | <b>-</b>        | <b>-</b>       | <b>-</b>                | <b>0.0%</b>         |