

ANNUAL REPORT

CORPORATION COUNSEL



PRESENTED TO:

**OTTAWA COUNTY BOARD OF
COMMISSIONERS**

June 2019

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OTTAWA COUNTY CORPORATION COUNSEL OFFICE

This is the 2018 annual report to the Ottawa County Board of Commissioners of the Ottawa County Office of Corporation Counsel.

I. Introduction: Corporation Counsel is among the few County offices that exclusively serve other County operations. That is to say that all of Corporation Counsel's activities are designed to promote the efficient and effective operation of Ottawa County government and the County's funding units, such as the courts. Much of Corporation Counsel's activities are confidential and do not lend themselves to public reporting, such as in an Annual Report. That having been said, the following are the results of Corporation Counsel's activities in the last year that are not confidential.

II. Accomplishments:

1. Guided the County to a voted, ten-year fixed allocation in constitutional millages that will eliminate the uncertainties in the County's property tax allocation, rollback the County's historical millage rate to its pre-Headlee state, and avoid the work of the tax allocation board until at least 2028.
2. Guided the County to a codification of its existing ordinances that will bring modernity, clarity, standardization of format and publication of the Board's legislative enactments, thereby promoting their implementation, enforcement and effectiveness.

3. Prepared draft groundwater, parking and solid waste ordinances for the Board's consideration in the upcoming year.
4. Organized the County's formal opinions to avoid duplication in future years and promote understanding of legal matters.
5. Researched and drafted a half dozen formal legal opinions for the Health Department, Community Mental Health Department, Sheriff's Department, and Courts.
6. Participated with the Fiscal Department in creating a new purchasing and contracting system that will promote more efficient and effective county contracting to ensure that the County's legal and financial interests are fully protected.
7. Counseled the Human Resources Department, Courts and various departments on difficult personnel issues.
8. Coordinated the County's FOIA responses, including processing general corporate FOIA's and assisting the Sheriff's Department in process its FOIA's.
9. Reviewed county and court contracts to maximize the County's interests and minimize risk.
10. Drafted a variety of contracts and contract forms and releases for the county operations.
11. Drafted a number of deeds and easements to promote the County's interests.
12. Assisted County Departments in contract enforcement and debt collection.
13. Assisted the Public Health Department in addressing several individual vaccination and disease incidents.

14. Coordinated with the County Public Administrator on handling the estates and disposing of the remains and assets of 3 residents who died without heirs or family members willing to attend to the residents' affairs.
15. Provided guidance to the Community Mental Health Department regarding Medicaid funding and the illegality of risk shifting the county regional entities.
16. Regularly met with Kent County's Corporation Counsel to coordinate and network regarding common legal issues and interests.

III. Goals for the Upcoming Year:

1. Initiate internal meetings with the judges, elected officials and department heads to establish relationships, build the credibility of the Office and solicit areas in which the Office could better serve their operations.
2. Improve communications with corporation counsel in counties beyond Kent to coordinate activities in response to the CMH Medicaid funding crisis and make that a new model for enhancing county coordination in pressuring the legislature to advance county interests.
3. Complete a new Job Description for Corporation Counsel in anticipation of my replacement in a few years. See attached draft changes.
4. Provide some in house Q & A sessions for department leaders on legal topics of their interest.
5. Document some of my historical knowledge about the evolution of Ottawa County government during the 38 years I have served it.

IV. Conclusion

I greatly appreciate working with the Commissioners and the trust and confidence you have shown in my work. In the autumn of my career, I am enjoying this unique opportunity to deploy the knowledge I have gained in representing 80 of Michigan's 83 counties over the years and to serve Ottawa County's elected officials, officers, employees and departments on a more personal basis, before problems surface, instead of only after a claim has arisen or a lawsuit filed. I enjoy the character, capabilities and commitment of my co-workers and the elected officials of Ottawa County, and am proud to contribute in this new, more meaningful way to one of the most respected county operations in Michigan.

I also firmly believe that by fulfilling the Office's many roles, I am providing value to the great residents and taxpayers who make this corporation possible and inspire our mutual service.

Respectfully,



Ottawa County[®]

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