



Office of the County Attorney

Fiscal Year 2023 Annual Report

July 1, 2022 – June 30, 2023

Matthew Bracken
County Attorney

OFFICE OF THE COUNTY ATTORNEY

I. MISSION STATEMENT

To diligently render proficient legal services ethically and honorably; and to act as an advisor and advocate to the various county entities which comprise the County of Kaua'i on behalf of the people.

II. DEPARTMENT GOALS

The Department's goal is to provide timely competent legal advice and representation to the County Council, the Mayor, all Departments, Commissions, Boards, and Agencies. Competent representation requires the legal knowledge, skill, thoroughness, and preparation reasonably necessary for the representation.

Powers, Duties, and Function

1. The county attorney shall be the chief legal adviser and legal representative of the county administration, all county agencies, the county council, and all county officers and employees in matters relating to their official powers and duties. The county attorney shall also perform all other services incident to the county attorney's office as may be required by law. (Article VIII, Section 8.04, Kaua'i County Charter)
2. The county attorney shall have the power to appoint such deputy county attorneys and necessary staff authorized by the council, within the appropriation made therefor. Such deputies shall serve at the pleasure of the county attorney. (Article VIII, Section 8.05, Kaua'i County Charter)
3. The council may, by vote of five members, authorize the employment of special counsel for any matter necessitating such employment. Any such authorization shall specify the compensation, if any, to be paid for said services. (Article VIII, Section 8.06, Kaua'i County Charter)
4. Legal process against the county shall be served upon the county attorney or any of the deputies. (Article VIII, Section 8.07, Kaua'i County Charter)
5. Legal adviser of the council.
 - a. Attend their meetings when required.
 - b. Oppose all claims and accounts against the county when the county attorney deems them unjust and illegal.
6. Legal adviser of the county administration. Render opinions to county officers and employees on matters relating to the duties of their respective offices.

7. Defend county officers, acting within their official capacities, in civil actions. The county attorney is not required to defend any officer in any matter or case out of which criminal proceedings against such officer may arise.
8. Counsel for police officers as provided in sections 52D-8 and 52D-9, Hawai'i Revised Statutes ("HRS").

Section 52D-8 "Police officers; counsel for. Whenever a police officer is prosecuted for a crime or sued in a civil action for acts undertaken in the performance of the officer's duty as a police officer, the police officer shall be represented and defended:

- (1) In criminal proceedings by an attorney to be employed and paid by the county in which the officer is serving; and
- (2) In civil cases by the...county attorney ..."

"Section 52D-9 Determination of scope of duty. The determination of whether an act, for which the police officer is being prosecuted or sued, was undertaken in the performance of the officer's duty, so as to entitle the officer to representation by county-provided counsel, shall be made by the county police commission. Before making a determination, the police commission shall consult the county attorney or the corporation counsel, who may make a recommendation to the police commission with respect thereto. The determination of the police commission shall be conclusive for the purpose of this section and section 52D-8."

9. Legal adviser of the Board of Water Supply. (Section 54-16, HRS)

Prosecute and defend any and all actions and proceedings involving matters under the jurisdiction of the Board of Water Supply.

10. Legal adviser of the Liquor Control Commission. (Chapter 281, HRS, as amended)

Defender of investigators and employees.

- a. Section 281-104. "Whenever any investigator or other employee of the liquor commission shall be...sued in any civil cause for acts done in the performance of the investigator's or employee's duty as such investigator or employee, the investigator or employee shall be represented and defended...(2) in any such civil cause by the...county attorney, of the county in which the investigator or employee is serving..."
- b. Section 281-105. Determination whether acts were in scope of duty shall be made by the liquor commission after consultation with the county attorney who may make a recommendation to the commission. Such determination shall be conclusive for such purpose only.

11. Act as counsel for appointing authority under Chapter 76, HRS, (Civil Service Law). (Section 76-47, HRS)

12. Duty under Chapter 480, HRS: Monopolies; Restraint of Trade.

Section 480-20: “(a) . . . The county attorney . . . shall investigate and report suspected violations of this chapter to the attorney general. (b) Whenever this chapter authorizes or requires the attorney general to commence any action or proceeding, including proceedings under Section 480-18, the attorney general may require the county attorney . . . holding office in the circuit where the action or proceeding is to be commenced or maintained, to maintain the action or proceeding under the direction of the attorney general. “

13. Legal assistance to Chief of Police in enforcement of Automobile Safety Regulations. (Section 287-2, HRS)

14. Prosecute violations of Food, Drug and Cosmetic Act. (Section 328-28, HRS)

15. Legal assistance for real property tax collections.

16. Other duties.

Provide legal advice and advocacy upon request for meetings, commissions, boards, and hearings including:

- Charter Review Commission
- Arborist Advisory Committee
- Historic Preservation Review Commission
- Board of Ethics
- Land Use Commission
- Committee on the Status of Women
- Fire Commission
- Public Access, Open Spaces Natural Resources Preservation Fund Committee
- Planning Commission
- Building Board of Appeals
- Housing Agency
- Police Commission
- Liquor Commission
- Board of Water Supply
- Civil Service Commission
- Board of Review
- Cost Control Commission
- Salary Commission
- Council’s Subcommittee on Housing
- Collective Bargaining
- Hawai’i Labor Relations Board
- Workers' Compensation Appeals

III. PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

The county attorney is the legal advisor and representative to the Council, the Mayor, all departments and agencies, all boards and commissions, and all officers and employees in matters relating to their official powers and duties.

a. Program Objectives

1. Assess all claims filed against the County, efficiently process those which this office determines to be valid, and vigorously defend against all others.
2. Produce and review all documents generated for the purpose of facilitating the delivery of governmental services by the County of Kaua'i to its citizens.
3. To provide such continuing legal education to the Mayor, the County Council, Departments, Commissions, Boards, and Agencies, as shall keep them current on changes in the law which affect the efficient and fair discharge of the duties of the County to its citizens.

b. RISE Initiative Alignment

1. Our Mobility – Continued support of Public Works' completion of Ke Ala Hele Makalae and the Transportation Agency's e-bus initiative which serve the public and ensure alternatives to traditional modes of transportation..
2. Our Home – Continued support of all branches of government, to ensure health and safety laws are in place to protect residents and our public spaces.
3. Our Connections – Working to continually improve the customer service we deliver to the client by periodically reviewing our internal processes to ensure we efficiently address requests for legal review.
4. Our Money – Proactively pursue delinquent accounts receivables as all public funds need to be protected so that the funds can be invested wisely in our future.
5. Our Freedom – We will continually work to engage our clients with empathy and respect enabling them to serve the broader community.
6. Our Heart – Continue to work on attorney retention through the use of flexible schedules and alternative workplace solutions; and engage in team bonding to bring better group alignment and ensure consistent legal advice.

IV. BUDGET

Resources (General Fund)

Expense Type	FY 2023 Appropriation	FY 2023 Actual
Equivalent Personnel (E/P)	19	19
Salaries and Wages	\$ 2,925,149	\$ 2,986,294
Operations	\$ 548,652	\$ 357,103
Equipment	\$ 0	\$ 0
Total	\$ 3,473,801	\$ 3,343,396

V. ACCOMPLISHMENTS/EVALUATION

1. The advice and counsel division (A&C) handled over 900 requests including more than 250 contract reviews and issued nearly 100 legal opinions.
2. The litigation division closed and processed 38 claims, represented departments in 4 employment grievance cases, collected or established payment plans on numerous delinquent account receivables, and closed 13 civil litigation cases with varying degrees of complexity. The litigation division continues to reduce the County reliance on special counsel by handling the majority of the cases in-house.