



MICHAEL N. FEUER
CITY ATTORNEY

April 23, 2019

19-0114
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Honorable Members
Budget and Finance Committee
City Hall
Los Angeles, CA 90012
via Novus

SUBJECT: 2019-20 PROPOSED BUDGET

Honorable Members:

We appreciate the opportunity to provide input into the 2019-20 Proposed Budget. The resources your Council and the Mayor provided the last several years have allowed this office to strengthen our core, both in our civil and criminal practices; enhance our support of the City's new priorities through the drafting of legislation, the support of program implementation, and training; and, develop innovative programs of our own, including those focused on restorative justice and landmark consumer protection work, as well as many initiatives aimed at protecting our most vulnerable residents – homeless individuals, victims of domestic violence and child abuse, the elderly, and children exposed to violence.

We have vigorously defended the City in liability cases, taking dozens of cases to trial last year, while continuing a leadership role in the City's expanding risk management efforts and aggressively pursuing affirmative litigation that has yielded substantial results for our residents. We have worked with City agencies to expedite Prop HHH projects and strengthen the environmental review process and defense for development projects throughout the City. Working closely with law enforcement, we have continued a neighborhood-based approach, as demonstrated by the impact that our neighborhood prosecutor, nuisance abatement and gun violence prevention programs have had on the quality of life in our communities.

We believe that your previous investments have yielded great results thanks to the hard work of the talented attorneys and support staff in our office, who work tirelessly on behalf of our City's residents. Over the past several months, we have worked closely with the Mayor's budget team to build on these past investments and we appreciate the resources included in the 2019-20 Proposed Budget.

Your committee requested that we submit information relative to areas of concern in the budget proposal. Of greatest concern is the **impact of a \$1.3 million salary account cut in the proposed budget**, on top of our existing salary savings rate. The combination of these salary account reductions (\$1.3 million cut plus \$2.36 million for salary savings) would significantly impact our core operations, **requiring the office to hold 17 attorney or 40 support staff positions vacant**, in order to meet our budget goals. In the current Fiscal Year, a similar cut has required holding as many as 40 positions vacant at one time, including in units handling both criminal prosecution and civil litigation. As a result, **we request that the \$1.3 million salary cut be restored.**

In addition, we encourage you to consider the City Attorney budget proposal for four new Neighborhood Prosecutors (NPs), one based in each LAPD bureau, dedicated to targeted intensive problem solving. The new bureau-based NPs would complement the work of existing NPs and our branch prosecutors, reinforcing safety around schools and addressing other complex community challenges and *hot spots*.

Finally, as discussed previously, litigation expenses associated with defending the City continue to exceed the budgeted amount. This is caused by many factors, including a reduced reliance of Outside Counsel, which has generated more litigation-related expenses in-house; rates for expert witnesses have risen; and, the increased need for and expense of e-discovery tools.

As always, we thank you for the opportunity to provide input and look forward to working together to make the budget process as productive as possible. If you require any information, please feel free to contact me at 213-978-8100.

Sincerely,


Leela Kapur
Chief of Staff

cc: Sharon Tso, Chief Legislative Analyst
Rich Llewelyn, City Administrative Officer