



**OFFICE OF THE PUBLIC DEFENDER**  
**CHAMPAIGN COUNTY, ILLINOIS**

**MEMO**

To: Honorable Members of the Champaign County Board

From: Elisabeth Pollock  
Champaign Co. Public Defender

Date: 4/29/2024

Re: Future Budgetary Needs at the Public Defender's Office

I attended the Study Session on Tuesday, April 23, 2024, and one of the themes I heard during discussion was that members wished to see a more defined list of needs in each department to be able to justify supporting an increase to the Public Safety Sales Tax. As I have said before, I support the increase because I know that our future needs are going to exceed our current budget substantially, as follows:

1. Three current full-time employees are being paid via grant funds
  - a. Madisyn Welsh and Linda Jancola (mitigation specialists) and Andrea Fuentes (paralegal).
  - b. All three make \$50,000 annually, not including fringe benefits.
  - c. Although Andrea is currently supported by the AOIC grant and Linda and Maddie are currently supported by the PFJ grant, grants by definition are not secure funding sources. There is always the possibility that the AOIC does not renew the grant on an annual basis, and the PFJ grant is limited in scope to a maximum of six years. At some point in the future, these salary expenses will need to be absorbed by the Public Defender's budget.
  - d. **Total cost to personnel budget: \$150,000.00 + fringe**
  
2. Currently, I am one attorney short of a full staff, but I do not have the funds in my personnel budget to pay for that last attorney's salary. Full staff is as follows:
  - a. 15 attorneys (out of 16 attorney positions)
  - b. 1 executive assistant (out of 1 position)
  - c. 3 legal secretaries (out of 3 secretarial positions. Each legal secretary should be moving to administrative legal secretaries once the compression study is complete, to create parity with the secretarial staff at the State's Attorney's Office)
  - d. 1 investigator (out of 1 position).

- e. I have made an offer to fill the 16<sup>th</sup> attorney position with a new graduate effective 9/3/24. In order to effectuate this hire, I need an additional **\$63,000.00** in my personnel budget – I currently have only \$3,170 unspent. I plan to spend AOIC grant funds to accomplish this for the end of FY24 and for FY25, but that is contingent upon the grant being renewed at current funding levels.
3. If allowed, I need a minimum of **3** additional attorneys. The increased workload necessitated by the SAFE-T/Pretrial Fairness Acts is requiring at least two, sometimes, three attorneys each day to be dedicated solely to arraignment court and detention hearings. This means less time for my attorneys to work on their own cases and contact clients, which has been quite problematic. At a median rate of \$75,000.00 per FTE (which incidentally is *not* enough to compete in this legal market), this would add a total of **\$225,000.00** to my personnel budget plus fringe benefits. It would also require a modification of the space allocation at the County Plaza Building. After County Executive Summers determined that the PD's Office would share the 5<sup>th</sup> floor with IT, we only have 23 offices available – and we *currently* have all 23 offices allocated. The cost of additional office space and/or modifications to the space is unknown.
4. Last year I obtained an ARPA grant of \$35,000 to fund expert witnesses. We have been very judicious with spending this money due to the low amount, but we have obtained significant results in cases by utilizing expert services. It is essential for us to be able to hire experts. If able, I would request a minimum of **\$50,000.00** in expert funds to be included in my annual budget.
5. Our training budget is insufficient. Many conferences that are relevant are out of town and require investment in plane/train tickets or mileage reimbursement, hotels, meals, etc. If allowed, I would request an increase of **\$25,000.00** in training annually.

Based on the foregoing, to ensure a fully-functioning office and adequate representation for my clients without my staff burning out physically and emotionally, I anticipate an additional **\$513,000.00** in budgetary needs, not including the unknown costs of fringe benefits, the results of the compression study, or the need for additional space at the County Plaza Building.



ELISABETH POLLOCK  
Public Defender