



HOPP NEUMANN HUMKE^{LLP}

March 1, 2024

Honorable Members of the Sheboygan County Board and County Administrator Alayne Krause,

Please find enclosed the 2023 Annual Report of the Sheboygan County Corporation Counsel.

Wis. Stat. § 59.42(3) offers counties considerable flexibility in how they handle their civil legal needs, including the option to contract for services with private counsel. Sheboygan County has taken advantage of this flexibility and has had legal counsel provided through a contract with Alex Hopp and his law firm since 1955. As a member of Alex Hopp's successor law firm, I am privileged to have been designated to act as lead attorney in providing legal services to Sheboygan County.

In 2023, I completed my fifth year as lead Corporation Counsel. I am grateful for the cooperation and assistance of the other members of my firm – Attorneys Michael J. Bauer, J. Phil Mueller, Paul Dirkse, Herb Humke III, Oliver Bauer, and Kelly L. Del Ponte and our principal staff person Diamond Braeger – in serving as Corporation Counsel.

We look forward to continuing to work for the benefit of the citizens of Sheboygan County, the County Administrator, and the County Board in 2024 and beyond.

Very truly yours,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Crystal H. Fieber', written in a cursive style.

Crystal H. Fieber
Corporation Counsel

www.hopplaw.com

Michael J. Bauer • J. Phil Mueller • Herbert C. Humke • Paul A. Dirkse • Crystal H. Fieber • Oliver M. Bauer • Kelly L. Del Ponte
Alexander Hopp 1955-1999 • H.C. Humke 1963-2009 • Roland M. Neumann 1986-2008

2124 Kohler Memorial Drive | Suite 310 | Sheboygan, WI 53081 | PH 920-457-8400 | FX 920-457-8411

Mission Statement and Summary of Responsibilities

As the civil legal advisor for the County Board and its Committees, the County Administrator and the Departments, the mission of the Corporation Counsel is to provide policy-makers and administrators with counsel of the highest caliber with integrity, respect, courtesy, and adherence to professional ethics.

The responsibility of the Corporation Counsel is set forth in Wis. Stat. § 59.42 and Chapter 42 of the Code of General Ordinances of Sheboygan County. The responsibility is to provide all civil legal services that the County may require on any matter that is not covered by County insurance. The categories of such services include:

- Advise, counsel, and represent the County Board, Committees, Boards, commissions, officers, County Administrator, and Department Heads, and where appropriate, other County employees and agents.
- Prepare and review Resolutions, Ordinances, directives, and other legal documents, providing direction regarding completeness and correctness.
- Attend all County Board meetings and Committee Meetings as requested, and serve as parliamentarian, providing interpretation and explanation of County Board rules.
- Interpret the powers and duties of the Board, County officers, and Committees.
- Function as liaison between the judicial, legislative, and administrative branches of County government.
- Draft and approve contracts and leases executed by the County and review construction bids, contracts, and bonds.
- Prosecute and defend civil actions not covered by County insurance and in which the County is a party in interest.
- Provide representation before the Equal Rights Division, the Equal Employment Opportunities Commission, and other state and federal agencies as directed by the County Board.
- Meet periodically with the Human Resources Committee to review pending claims and litigation and summarize legal services provided since the previous reporting period.
- Review policies and procedures of the County to ensure compliance with federal, state, and County directives.
- Assist the County Treasurer in preparing, instituting, and completing annual litigation for *in rem*. foreclosure of tax liens.
- Represent the County's interest in Wis. Stat. ch. 51, 54, 55, and 980 matters.
- Represent the public in termination of parental rights (TPR), children in need of protection or services (CHIPS), and guardianship matters.

Goals and Objectives Achieved in 2023

- Served as a member of the interview panel and provided guidance in the hiring of the new County Administrator. Sheboygan County engaged a professional recruitment firm, GOVHRUSA, to assist in identifying and evaluating candidates for the County Administrator position with the new County Administrator assuming the position in February 2023. We also assisted the County Administrator in the hiring of the new Finance Director, Human Resources Director, and Transportation Director.
- Assisted the County in purchasing the assets of Burrows Aviation, LLC and starting a county-owned and operated Fixed Base Operator (FBO) service at Sheboygan Memorial Airport. As part of the process, we worked with County staff to update Chapters 61-65 of the Sheboygan County Code.
- Worked with the Human Resources Department to review and revise the Sheboygan County Human Resources Policy Manual.
- Worked with the Planning and Conservation Department to update Code Chapters 70, 71 and 72.
- Implemented a goal to review and revise 20 chapters of the County Code chapter-by-chapter for consistency, completeness, and accuracy. Of the 20 chapters, we completed 15.

Budget

	2023 Budget	2023 Results	Variance
Revenues	\$597,008	\$606,718	\$9,710
Expenses	\$597,008	\$583,912	\$13,096
Total	\$0	\$22,806	\$22,806

The Corporation Counsel Department was budgeted to spend \$597,008 in 2023, \$313,655 of which was tax levy. We finished the year with a positive variance of \$22,806. The 2024 adopted budget is \$645,530, and the property tax levy total is \$332,455.

Issues and Challenges Ahead

I primarily handle the duties of the Corporation Counsel but other firm members assist with County business including Attorney Phil Mueller who provides guidance to the County Treasurer, particularly in the evolving area of tax foreclosures. Attorney Mueller plans to retire at the end of 2024, and we are working to transition these *in rem* duties to Attorney Kelly Del Ponte.

Rising wage costs remain a challenge for the Department, as experienced by other employers, and we are also encountering rapidly rising costs related to information technology services. We are undergoing several significant software changes in 2024 including moving to a cloud-based service.

Goals and Objectives for 2024

In addition to the general legal services our firm provides, I also plan to work on the following:

- Complete 10 chapters of the Sheboygan County Code, reviewing for consistency, completeness, and accuracy.
- Continue to work with County staff to implement and respond to growing and changing needs at the Sheboygan County Memorial Airport.