



**DANE COUNTY
DISTRICT ATTORNEY
ISMAEL R. OZANNE**



August 04, 2023

Joe Parisi
County Executive
City County Building Room 421
210 Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd
Madison, WI 53703

Dear County Executive Parisi:

Today I submitted a *status quo*/cost to continue operating budget for 2024, but I write to highlight needed positions in the District Attorney's Office, as well as other county budgetary concerns.

Alert to Federal Funding Loss:

Crime Response Funding

- The Director and Deputy Director of Victim Witness Services alerted your office earlier this year to the outlook for the State budget cycle concerning Victim Witness and Crime Response funding. Although the news is good, in that a 60% reimbursement rate was set for the new budget for the Victim Witness program, we continue to have concerns about the longevity of the Victims of Crime Act (VOCA) funding which, as you know, funds a large portion of the Crime Response Program. There is a potential for a total loss of federal VOCA funding beginning October 1, 2024, as the relief funds disappear, and the federal VOCA funding problems resurface. As a result, the Crime Response Unit will likely face significant shortages going into the fourth quarter of 2024.
- Given this anticipated shortfall, I would like to directly ask that the funding for the Crime Response Program be modified beginning in 2024 by amending the contingency footnote on the VOCA grant funded positions to ensure the County will assume any and all staffing and programmatic fiscal shortfalls in the event VOCA is eliminated or significantly reduced.

Vital Systems Enhancements:

Digital Evidence Management System

- A capital request for \$100,000 to upgrade the office's digital management system was granted in the 2022 budget, but a new system has not been implemented yet as my team continues to research programs. The time-consuming nature of this involves considering the complex systems of the 26 law enforcement agencies in Dane County and their limitations. There is a wide scope of differences among the respective agencies' proprietary software for video playback of their squad cameras, interview rooms, and the increasing use of body worn camera systems, in addition to the thousands of proprietary surveillance video types that exist in the public. To add to this, on major cases, we also often receive extractions of cell phone data. Video files and cell phone data files are often large in size. Receiving, cataloguing, reviewing, and distributing the high volume of these large files is a time consuming task that can greatly benefit from a digital evidence management system. These systems are tailor-made for the criminal justice system with integrated features such as automated transcription, automatic conversion of hundreds of proprietary video formats, video editing tools for redaction and clipping, and document processing. These assist our attorneys and staff to quickly locate material that is critical for the successful prosecution of their cases.
- Additionally, since receiving those initial capital funds for this effort, technology has changed such that purchasing a proprietary system is no longer a readily available option: web-based systems are the new norm. While there will be start-up costs associated with contracting with a web-based platform, the need for an operating budget line for a yearly cost of maintaining this storage will be necessary. From talking with Chuck Hicklin at this year's budget meeting, it sounds like other county departments are dealing with this same issue.
- Below is a chart of projected costs based on anticipated data capacity needs.

	End of Year 1	End of Year 2	End of Year 3	End of Year 4	End of Year 5	End of Year 6	End of Year 7	End of Year 8	End of Year 9	End of Year 10
Historical Case Import	12,000									
Active Cases	8,913	9,233	9,233	9,233	9,233	9,233	9,233	9,233	9,233	9,233
Archived Cases	16,087	28,767	41,767	52,622	63,048	73,474	70,703	71,682	71,812	71,942
Deleted Cases	-	-	-	(2,360)	(2,574)	(9,386)	(9,995)	(11,844)	(12,870)	(12,870)
Total Managed Cases	25,000	38,000	51,000	61,855	72,281	82,707	79,937	80,915	81,045	81,175
1 YR Commitment	\$123,666	\$145,670	\$171,616	\$195,650	\$216,538	\$237,390	\$238,300	\$242,429	\$243,504	\$243,764
3 YR Commitment	\$111,299	\$131,103	\$154,455	\$176,085	\$194,884	\$213,651	\$214,470	\$218,186	\$219,153	\$219,387

Needed Positions:

IT Specialist (Approximately \$100,000)

- I anticipate the need for an annual review of IT staffing. The County's continued support for remote work, the ever increasing reliance on digital evidence in prosecution, and statutory mandates both in prosecuting criminal cases and delivering services to victims, requires that the office be appropriately staffed to cover all IT functions. The office currently has only the one FTE IT Specialist, which came from a reclassified Paralegal I position. The IT Specialist, along with the Systems Coordinator, field the vast requests for in-house IT support. Additionally, given the local court rule, which requires transcripts be prepared for most video evidence received in court, the current IT Specialist spends the majority of his time coordinating this effort.

Public Information Officer/Communication Coordinator (Approximately \$113,000)

- The District Attorney's Office does not currently have a position in which the incumbent serves as a liaison between the office and the public. I have highlighted the need for such a position during previous budget cycles. The Department of Public Health received a commensurate position in 2022, as did Public Safety Communications in 2023. In the wake of 36 officer involved incidents during my administration (compared to seven during Brian Blanchard's administration), and in a time when mass casualty events are unfortunately common, there is a continued need to have better communication between the District Attorney's Office and the public.

Paralegal I (Approximately \$94,800)

- Given remote work became a new reality during the Covid-19 pandemic, the need for an IT Specialist became imperative to the continued functioning of the office. To meet this need, I was forced in 2021 to reclassify a vacant Paralegal I position to an IT Specialist to ensure the office could provide the same level of services during the courthouse shutdown. While this position reclassification was necessary at the time, given that the courthouse is again fully operational, with jury trials having resumed, there is a need to replace the Paralegal I position, which was not granted in the 2023 budget cycle. Cases and crimes continue to become more complicated and paralegals are unable to support both complex trial litigation, draft criminal complaints from the increase in referrals from Law Enforcement, and perform their daily assignments. Additionally, increased paralegal responsibilities because of the District Attorney's statutory requirement to review all officer involved incidents, as well as continued increased obligations due to Marsy's Law, make the need to replace the lost paralegal position even greater.

Social Justice Director (\$142,000)

- The request for the creation of this position has been highlighted and explained in my last three budget memos. Issues of equity and inclusion within the criminal justice system continue to be one of my main focuses. I would anticipate that an office Public Information Officer/Communications Coordinator would work closely with the incumbent in this position.

Other Considerations:

Facility Dog

- For many years, Teddy, the facility dog at Safe Harbor, has perused the courthouse helping victims and witnesses who need extra support during their roles in traumatic child abuse cases. Teddy was forced to retire due to a medical condition, and Safe Harbor has decided they will not be obtaining another service dog.
- Therefore, the Victim Witness Unit hopes to obtain a facility dog to serve a wide range of traumatized victims and witnesses in the criminal justice system and have conducted research and assembled an estimated cost analysis into this endeavor. Both the research into the significant benefits for trauma survivors and estimated budget are available upon request.
- The Director of Victim Witness Services has identified a reputable organization from which to receive a trained facility dog. **This organization would maintain ownership of the dog, and when the dog retires, the organization re-assumes physical possession of the dog.**
- A \$5,000 - \$10,000 line item in the Victim Witness budget would be necessary to fund this needed resource as the county would be responsible for general care of the dog during its service to Dane County.
- The Director of Victim Witness Services plans to meet with Nick Bubb from Dane County Administration to formulate a proposal that considers potential Employee Group and Handbook issues prior to any commitments.

Sincerely,



Ismael R. Ozanne
District Attorney