



DeKalb County Government

178 Sams Street
Decatur, Georgia 30030

Agenda Item

File #: 2025-1534

Substitute

11/18/2025

File Status: Action

Public Hearing: YES ☐ NO ☒

Department: Board of Commissioners

SUBJECT:

Commission District(s): All Districts

To Amend the FY25 Budget to Establish the Office of Policy Counsel and Authorize the Hiring of Policy Counsel

Information Contact: Commissioner Michelle Long Spears

Phone Number: 404-371-2863

PURPOSE:

To Amend the FY25 Budget to Establish the Office of Policy Counsel and Authorize the Hiring of Policy Counsel

NEED/IMPACT:

The proposed budget amendment to establish the Office of Policy Counsel is intended to strengthen the DeKalb County Board of Commissioners' capacity for informed, legally sound policymaking. By creating a dedicated Office of Policy Counsel, the legislation ensures that the Board has independent, nonpartisan expertise in legislative drafting, legal interpretation, and analysis of state and federal policies that impact the County. This office will enhance the Board's ability to craft precise ordinances and resolutions, safeguard home rule authority, and advocate effectively for county interests before the Georgia General Assembly. The financial impact is modest but represents a strategic investment in transparency, legal compliance, and professional governance that will improve the quality and efficiency of policy work across DeKalb County.

FISCAL IMPACT:

An amount not to exceed \$85,000 from the FY25 general fund.

RECOMMENDATION:

To approve the budget amendment and authorize the chief executive officer or her designee to execute all necessary documents.

**RESOLUTION OF THE DEKALB COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS TO AMEND
THE FY25 BUDGET TO ESTABLISH THE OFFICE OF POLICY COUNSEL AND
AUTHORIZE THE HIRING OF POLICY COUNSEL**

WHEREAS, the DeKalb County Board of Commissioners (the “Board”) recognizes the need for dedicated legal and policy expertise to assist with legislative research, ordinance and resolution drafting, and analysis of proposed state and federal legislation affecting DeKalb County as undertaken by the Office of the County Attorney; and

WHEREAS, the Board desires to supplement and assist in the work of the Office of the County Attorney to ensure that the Board’s legislative initiatives, county code amendments, and policy actions are legally sound, consistent with Georgia law, and effectively advanced before the Georgia General Assembly and other relevant bodies; and

WHEREAS, the establishment of an Office of Policy Counsel will supplement the work of the Office of the County Attorney to provide additional legal and policy support to the Board of Commissioners; and

WHEREAS, pursuant to Sections 9(a)(2) and 17 of the DeKalb County Organizational Act, the Board may amend the adopted budget to provide for necessary operational functions; and

WHEREAS, the Board finds it in the best interest of DeKalb County to allocate funding for one (1) full-time Policy Counsel position, legal and administrative support position(s) as determined by Counsel, and associated office setup and operating costs within the Board of Commissioners’ budget;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED by the DeKalb County Board of Commissioners that:

Section 1. Establishment of Office

The Office of Policy Counsel is hereby established under the direct supervision of the DeKalb County Board of Commissioners to assist in legal drafting, policy analysis, and legislative monitoring services as provided by the Office of the County Attorney.

Section 2. Position Authorization

One (1) Policy Counsel position is authorized and funded for the remainder of Fiscal Year 2025. Funding will continue in 2026 for the full year and will be ongoing into future years. The Policy Counsel shall:

- Provide drafts of ordinances, resolutions, and amendments for review and approval by the County Attorney as directed by the Board.
- Provide legal analysis of proposed or pending state and federal legislation affecting DeKalb County to the Board and the Office of the County Attorney.

- Advise Commissioners and staff on matters of statutory interpretation and home rule authority in consultation with the Office of the County Attorney.
- Conduct initial policy and legal research as requested and needed by the Board.
- Coordinate with the County Attorney’s Office, BOC Central Staff, DeKalb Administration, Legislative Delegation, and other relevant stakeholders as necessary.

Section 3. Budget Amendment

To fund the Policy Counsel position and office operations, the following adjustments shall be made to the current fiscal year budget:

Fund	Department	Account	Description	Amount
General Fund	Board of Commissioners	Personal Services	Policy Counsel (salary & benefits)	\$30,000 (Nov + Dec 2025)
General Fund	Board of Commissioners	Operations	Office setup, technology, and supplies	\$25,000
General Fund	Board of Commissioners	Professional Services	Legislative research tools & subscriptions	\$10,000

Total 2025 Amendment: \$65,000* (based on salary & benefits \$180,000 annually)

* Policy Counsel may appropriate up to \$20,000 in 2025 for additional support

* Budget for 2026 and beyond will be reviewed during the annual budget planning process and funding included in the annual budget

Funds shall be reallocated from the General Fund’s unassigned fund balance or savings within the Board of Commissioners’ existing operational budget, as determined by the Presiding Officer and BOC Chief of Staff.

Section 4. Implementation

The Finance and Budget Directors are hereby authorized to make the necessary accounting and budget entries to effectuate this amendment

Recruitment for the Policy Counsel shall begin immediately upon adoption of this resolution, with the goal of office establishment as soon as possible.

Section 5. Effective Date

This resolution shall become effective immediately upon approval by majority vote of the DeKalb County Board of Commissioners.

ADOPTED by the DeKalb County Board of Commissioners, this ____ day of _____, 2025

Michelle Long Spears
Presiding Officer-Board of Commissioners
DeKalb County, Georgia

APPROVED by the Chief Executive Officer, this ____ day of _____, 2025

Lorraine Cochran-Johnson
Chief Executive Officer
DeKalb County, Georgia

ATTEST:

APPROVED AS TO SUBSTANCE:

BARBARA SANDERS-NORWOOD
County Clerk
Board of Commissioners

ZACHARY L. WILLIAMS
Chief Operating Officer
DeKalb County, Georgia

APPROVED AS TO FORM:

County Attorney
DeKalb County, Georgia

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Presiding Officer-Board of Commissioners
DeKalb County, Georgia

APPROVED by the Chief Executive Officer, this ____ day of _____, 2025

Lorraine Cochran-Johnson
Chief Executive Officer
DeKalb County, Georgia

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APPROVED AS TO SUBSTANCE:

BARBARA SANDERS-NORWOOD
County Clerk
Board of Commissioners

ZACHARY L. WILLIAMS
Chief Operating Officer
DeKalb County, Georgia

APPROVED AS TO FORM:

County Attorney
DeKalb County, Georgia

ATTEST:

APPROVED AS TO SUBSTANCE: