

Office of School Board Attorney
JulieAnn Rico, Board Attorney

SUBJECT: SCHOOL BOARD ATTORNEY'S OFFICE STAFFING AND BUDGET

COMMITTEE: INNOVATION, EFFICIENCY AND GOVERNMENTAL RELATIONS

This Board item is requesting certain School Board authorizations necessary for the continued effective and efficient operation of the School Board Attorney's office and delivery of legal services in light of the serious budget constraints for the 2009 fiscal year.

The School Board Attorney's office was restructured in November, 2005. As a result, a zero based budgeting review took place within the department, and a general budget reduction of \$900,000 was made. Additionally, over the last two (2) years, additional operating budget cuts have been made with additional savings of \$791,000 for a total cumulative reduction of \$1,691,000 over three years. Controls and spending limits were placed on supplies, travel, periodicals/research materials, and equipment. With respect to salaries and positions, a number of functions were combined in order to eliminate positions and extract efficiencies and costs savings.

The main goal of the department restructuring was to reduce expenditures of legal fees. A District-wide savings in excess of \$667,476 has been realized. Litigation which was handled previously by outside counsel, is being handled by in-house attorney staff. We have reported these trends to the Board over the past two (2) years.

In order to continue these costs savings, while providing the efficient and effective delivery of legal services, we are proposing a further reduction to our budget for the 2009 fiscal year. The budget below has assumed a number of anticipated factors:

1. A likelihood of increased litigation.¹
2. A likelihood of increased costs of materials, in-County travel, court reporters and Division of Administrative Hearing Administrative Law Judges' fees.

G-1

¹ This budget does not assume the likelihood of future catastrophic claims or suits.

In order to achieve the budget reduction of 19% overall with a monetary savings of \$595,000, in the proposed FY 09 budget, the following adjustments are recommended:

1. Reduce Senior Personnel Attorney position to an entry level position.
2. Reduce Associate Attorney for Academic position to an entry level position.
3. Eliminate all out-of-county travel, with the exception of any travel necessary for litigation or case-related representation.
4. Eliminate all hourly expenditures for law clerks, interns, or outside counsel paid by the School Board Attorney budget.
5. Reduce overtime expenditures for support staff. Maintain strict controls on utilization of overtime.
6. Paralegal, Secretary to the School Board Attorney and Budget Specialist were eliminated from last year's budget.
7. Do not fund, in fiscal year 08-09, the raises for attorneys that were approved by the Board at its November 20, 2007 meeting.
8. Reduce contracted attorney's contract by \$150,000 to conclude December 31, 2008.

The above adjustments would result in an overall operating budget savings of 19%, in the total amount of \$595,000.

RECOMMENDED: That The School Board of Miami-Dade County, Florida:

- (1) Convert Senior Personnel Attorney to Associate Personnel Attorney I, approve job description, and authorize execution of contract;
- (2) Convert Associate Academic Programs to Associate Academic Programs I, approve job description, and authorize execution of contract; and
- (3) Amend the contract between Dr. Randall Burks and The School Board of Miami-Dade County, Florida to limit the contract to an amount not to exceed \$50,000, with an expiration date of December 31, 2008.