

TO: HONORABLE BOARD OF LEGISLATORS
COUNTY OF WESTCHESTER

Your Committee is in receipt of “A LOCAL LAW amending Section 158.11 of the Laws of Westchester County to clarify the retention of outside counsel.”

Your Committee is advised that Section 158.11 of the Laws of Westchester County establishes the powers and duties of the County Attorney. Section 158.11(2) provides that the County Attorney:

shall be legal advisor to the County Board and to each and every board, body, commission or officer of the County of Westchester and to each and every employee of the County of Westchester as may be required by section 297.31 of the Westchester County Administrative Code. It shall be the County Attorney’s duty to furnish to such county board, body, commission officer or employee all such advice and legal assistance as counsel and attorney in and out of court as may be required by them, or either of them. No such officer, employee, board, body, commission or department of the county shall have or employ any attorney or counsel at the expense of the county unless specifically authorized to do so by the County Board.

Historically, the County Attorney has interpreted this section to mean that no board, body, commission, officer, or employee could have representation in its official capacity other than the County Attorney’s Office, unless outside counsel was retained by Act of the Board of Legislators.

Your Committee is informed that, in recent analysis, a question has arisen as to the meaning of the phrase “at the expense of the county” in this section. It is possible to interpret this phrase to mean that county officers or employees could obtain *pro bono* legal services without seeking approval from the County Board. This would then conflict with the first sentence of the provision, which provides that the County Attorney *shall* be the legal advisor for the County.

Your Committee is further informed that the County Attorney recommends amending this section to remove the phrase “at the expense of the county” so as to ensure a consistent interpretation

of this section. The County Attorney further advises that, without making such a change, situations could arise where persons or bodies obtain outside legal opinions, without the knowledge of the County Attorney, act on those opinions, and expose the County to potential liability as a result. This could also result in situations where persons or bodies act against the advice of the County Attorney based on a separate opinion by an outside attorney, create legal liability for the County, and a conflict with the County Attorney's Office which necessitates the hiring of outside counsel. In order to reduce these risks, the County Attorney recommends the amendment so that all requests for outside legal assistance come through this Board.

Additionally, and as you know, your Honorable Board must comply with the requirements of the State Environmental Quality Review Act ("SEQRA"). The proposed project does not meet the definition of an action under New York State Environmental Quality Review Act and its implementing regulations 6 NYCRR Part 617. Please refer to the memorandum from the Department of Planning dated January 14, 2022, which is on file with the Clerk of the Board of Legislators

The Committee, after careful consideration, recommends the adoption of this local law.

Dated: March 28, 2022

White Plains, New York

~~Benjamin Boykoff~~

Vedat J. Li
Colin O. Smith

Margaret A. Cysio
Margaret A. Cysio

Legislation

~~Benjamin Boykoff~~ BJA

Vedat J. Li
Margaret A. Cysio
Colin O. Smith

COMMITTEE ON

Law & Government Contracts

Dated: March 28, 2022
White Plains, New York

The following members attended the meeting remotely pursuant to Chapter 1 of New York State Laws of 2022, and approved this item out of Committee with an affirmative vote. Their electronic signature was authorized and is below.

COMMITTEES ON

<i>Catherine Boyi</i>	<i>Catherine Boyi</i>
<i>Catherine F. Parker</i>	<i>Nancy E. Pan</i>
<i>Nancy E. Pan</i>	

Law & Major Contracts

Legislation

FISCAL IMPACT STATEMENT

SUBJECT: Outside Counsel Amend

NO FISCAL IMPACT PROJECTED

OPERATING BUDGET IMPACT

To Be Completed by Submitting Department and Reviewed by Budget

SECTION A - FUND

GENERAL FUND

AIRPORT FUND

SPECIAL DISTRICTS FUND

SECTION B - EXPENSES AND REVENUES

Total Current Year Expense \$ -

Total Current Year Revenue \$ -

Source of Funds (check one): Current Appropriations Transfer of Existing Appropriations

Additional Appropriations

Other (explain)

Identify Accounts: _____

Potential Related Operating Budget Expenses: Annual Amount \$ -

Describe: _____

Potential Related Operating Budget Revenues: Annual Amount \$ -

Describe: _____

Anticipated Savings to County and/or Impact on Department Operations:

Current Year: _____

Next Four Years: _____

Prepared by: Gideon Grande

Title: Deputy Director

Department: Budget

Date: March 24, 2022

Reviewed By: 

Budget Director

Date: 1/24/22

LOCAL LAW^{JRA} NO. 93 - 2022

A LOCAL LAW amending Section 158.11 of the Laws of Westchester County to clarify the retention of outside counsel.

Be it enacted by the Board of Legislators of the County of Westchester, as follows:

SECTION 1.

Subdivision 2 of Section 158.11 of the Laws of Westchester County is hereby amended to read as follows:

[He]The County Attorney shall be legal advisor to the County Board and to each and every board, body, commission or officer of the County of Westchester and to each and every employee of the County of Westchester as may be required by section 297.31 of the Westchester County Administrative Code. It shall be [his] the County Attorney's duty to furnish to such county board, body, commission, officer, or employee all such advice and legal assistance as counsel and attorney in and out of court as may be required by them, or either of them. No such officer, employee, board, body, commission, or department of the county shall have or employ any attorney or counsel [at the expense of the county] unless specifically authorized to do so by the County Board.

SECTION 2. Effective date.

This Local Law shall take effect immediately.

STATE OF NEW YORK)
) ss.
COUNTY OF WESTCHESTER)

I HEREBY CERTIFY that I have compared the foregoing Local Law, Local Law Intro No. 93 - 2022, with the original on file in my office, and that the same is a correct transcript therefrom, and of the whole, of the said original Local Law, which was duly adopted by the County Board of Legislators, of the County of Westchester on April 11, 2022, and approved by the County Executive on April 12, 2022.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have hereunto set my hand and affixed the Corporate Seal of said County Board of Legislators on this 13th day of April, 2022.



Malika Vanderberg

The Clerk of the Westchester County
Board of Legislators

County of Westchester, New York

