

**City of Alexandria, Virginia
FY 2026 Proposed Operating Budget & CIP
Budget Questions & Answers**

March 20, 2026

Question:

What has been the cost for outside counsel since January of last year?

Response:

The Alexandria Sheriff's Office is an independent constitutional office established under Virginia law and operates in coordination with—but not under the direction of—the City of Alexandria. As such, it is not represented by the City Attorney's Office.

From time to time, the Sheriff's Office encounters matters that require legal advice to represent and protect the interests of the agency and its staff, similar to the role the City Attorney's Office provides for City government. The Sheriff's Office does not have funding for a staff attorney (as is the case in some larger jurisdictions, such as Fairfax County), nor does it maintain outside counsel on retainer. Instead, outside legal counsel is retained on an as-needed basis.

Since January of last year, the Sheriff's Office has expended **\$7,547.50** on outside counsel. Of that total, **\$4,537** was related to legal assistance in responding to four complex Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) requests involving immigration-related matters.

Virginia's FOIA requirements can be complex and given the sensitive nature of some records maintained by the Sheriff's Office, it is important that each request is carefully reviewed to ensure compliance with applicable law.