

General Counsel

Exempt



Serves as the General Counsel to the Harris County Housing Authority (HCHA) in connection with the Authority's duties under Chapter 392 of the Texas Local Government Code, including activities to which the Housing Authority is authorized to engage under other Local, State and/or Federal laws and regulations. Provides legal advice and counsel to the Board of Commissioners, Chief Executive Officer, Executive Staff, and as needed, other employees and representatives of the Housing Authority on all legal matters involving or relating to HCHA. These legal matters include litigation, HUD rules and regulations, Housing Choice Voucher (HCV) Program, landlord and participant issues, Fair Housing, risk management, compliance, real estate transactions, development, contract, procurement, personnel, and employment labor relations. Provides legal advice and legal recommendations over all Housing Authority strategic and tactical legal initiatives, programs, and services; and assists with the management of the work of the Housing Authority's contracted external counsels.

POSITION SUMMARY

The General Counsel is an at-will staff position reporting directly to the Executive Director. This is a single position class performing complex and highly responsible work in providing legal advice with legal recommendations for the Housing Authority's operations, programs and affiliated entities/instrumentalities. The General Counsel is responsible for regularly exercising independent judgement, discretion and initiative within a general policy framework established by the Board of Commissioners and Chief Executive Officer.

ESSENTIAL JOB FUNCTIONS

Essential job functions and other important responsibilities and duties may include, but are not limited to the following:

- Serves as the Housing Authority's legal counsel and advisor on all legal matters relating to the Housing Authority's operations, programs and activities. This includes, but is not limited to, the Housing Authority's Housing Choice Voucher Program(s), real estate acquisition, HUD rules and regulations, landlord and tenant issues, Fair Housing, risk management, compliance, redevelopment activities, asset management, litigation management, contracting, procurement, personnel, employment, labor relations and public entity law and governance
- Drafts and reviews proposed resolutions to the Housing Authority's Board of Commissioners
- Provides legal advice and legal recommendations with assistance in general corporate governance, including but not limited to maintaining, updating and ensuring compliance with corporate formation documents and other related filings for the Housing Authority and its affiliated agencies; and providing counsel at Board of Commissioner meetings to provide legal analysis and advice on legal and procedural matters in conformance with the Texas Open Meetings Act and other applicable regulations
- Provides legal advice, legal opinions, interpretations and legal recommendations to ensure that the programs and activities of the Housing Authority are conducted in compliance with applicable laws, statutes, codes, and regulations
- Recognizes potential and actual conflicts of interest under local, state and federal laws, rules, regulations and programs and investigates the same up to and including resolution with appropriate sensitivity and use of external counsel and other resources where warranted
- Judges the merits of court cases, regulatory inquiries, and other legal actions filed against or on behalf of the Housing Authority; works with the appropriate executives to define strategic positions and/or defenses; recommends settlements of disputes where warranted

- Provides legal advice and legal recommendations for Housing Authority policies, procedures, and other related business documents. Advises the Board of Commissioners, Chief Executive Officer and Executive Staff on legal matters related to governance and the policies, programs, and projects of the Housing Authority
- Negotiates and drafts all contracts, amendments, addendums agreements, and settlements on behalf of the Housing Authority which are consistent with Housing Authority's interests, Procurement Policy, law, HUD regulations and requirements and relevant rules of professional responsibility
- Provides legal support on a broad variety of real estate and financing transactions
- Identifies, analyzes, and responds appropriately to risks which have legal implications that may adversely affect realization of the Housing Authority's business objectives; advises executives and managers regarding the legal aspects of their exposure to identified risks; liaises with the Housing Authority's Chief Executive Officer regarding risk management
- Provides legal advice and legal recommendations to executives and managers regarding the legal aspects of their compliance systems, exposure, and decisions
- Collaborates with Executive Staff, Managers, stakeholders and external legal counsel, as appropriate, to identify and mitigate against legal risks, comply with state and federal laws, rules and regulations
- Ensures that HCHA Board of Commissioners, Executives and all staff are informed of any modifications to laws and regulations that may impact the Housing Authority
- Develops a clearly understood framework for legal policies and practices within the Housing Authority
- Responsible for legal work performed in connection with the Authority's public agency administrative functions (e.g., public records requests, administrative hearings, etc.) and responds to all public information requests and ensures compliance with the Texas Public Information Act Law
- Assists in the selection, retention, management and evaluation of outside counsel in conformity with applicable state and federal procurement requirements and the Housing Authority Procurement Policy
- Functions as an integral partner within the Chief Executive Officer's senior leadership team
- Perform other duties assigned

ESSENTIAL SKILLS

Essential Skills

Ideal candidates will have demonstrated ability to:

- Accurately incorporate relevant transactional business terms and concepts into a set of implementing documents for complex real estate and finance deals
- Judge the relative importance of a document, contract provision, task or assignment and apply the appropriate level of scrutiny, detail or effort to the matter
- Appropriately prioritize workload and regularly reorder that prioritization in accord with frequent changes in client and agency needs
- Utilize existing knowledge of subject matter together with research and consultation as necessary to provide competent legal advice

- Form an opinion and provide advice, guidance and recommendations where the legal standards are not well defined or the law is not settled
- Communicate clearly and concisely. This skill must be exercised both orally and in writing, including the ability to explain the basis for legal advice and alternative legal strategies to varied audiences (e.g. client, judge, media, public, etc.)
- Regularly communicate the status of a task, the issues outstanding, and alternatives
- Ability to exercise good organizational skills
- Exercise independent judgment and decision-making in a variety of legal situations which have a substantial impact on the Housing Authority
- Develop and maintain amicable and effective working relationships with commissioners, department directors, project staff, opposing counsel, government agency staff and the general public
- Treat legal and business matters with discretion and confidentiality
- Work within culturally diverse teams
- Advance the social equity goals of the agency
- Administer legal services of the Housing Authority in a manner that is data and principle driven
- Successfully navigate and thrive in an environment with competing interests, both inter and intra Agency
- Read an audience or situation and be attuned to the needs and concerns of clients and stakeholders
- Prepare and present effective oral and written communications, presentations, and reports
- Effectively communicate highly technical information concisely and in understandable terms
- Project and exercise integrity, confidence, political acumen, and poise under pressure; maintain moral and ethical standards that reflect trust, honesty, credibility, and reliability

QUALIFICATIONS AND REQUIREMENTS

Education and Licensure

- A Juris Doctor degree from an accredited American Bar Association school of law
- License to practice law in the State of Texas and federal court
- Admission or eligibility for admission to practice in Texas's state and federal courts

Experience

A well-qualified candidate will have:

- Ten years of paid experience in the practice of law which includes experience performing highly complex and significant legal work on matters related low-income housing in a public entity setting with extensive knowledge of HUD regulations

- The preferred candidate will also have working knowledge in the following areas: public entity law and governance, reasonable accommodations, unlawful detainers, real estate acquisition, disposition and redevelopment, asset management, and more generally to civil, constitutional, contract, employment, administrative, and business law
- Experience in overseeing and directing litigation
- Experience in working directly with governing board members in a public entity setting
- Experience drafting complex contracts and agreements including real estate development agreements, ground and premises leases and related instruments, inter-agency agreements, financial agreements and securitized instruments
- Experience negotiating contracts and resolving contract disputes
- Ideal candidate will have expertise in the legal principles, best practices, and procedures related to housing in a public entity setting. The preferred candidate will also have working knowledge in the following areas: public entity law and governance, reasonable accommodations, unlawful detainers, real estate acquisition, disposition and redevelopment, asset management, and more generally to civil, constitutional, contract, employment, administrative, and business law
- Methods, procedures, and practices used in the conduct of civil litigation
- Methods of legal research
- Fact-finding methods and procedures
- Methods and techniques for evaluating legal risks and liabilities and the business and practical consequences of related legal strategies
- Provisions of federal, state, and local legislation, statutes, codes, procedures and court decisions related to public housing programs and operations

SELECTION PROCEDURE

Selection Procedure

Applications will be reviewed for relevant experience, education and training. The application must be detailed and complete for proper evaluation. Only the most qualified applicants will be referred for interview and considered for the position; however, only the best-qualified applicant(s) may be selected.

WORKING ENVIRONMENT AND PHYSICAL DEMANDS

- The employee's job is largely sedentary requiring up to eight hours in a seated position.
- The employee will experience some repetitive motion of the hand/wrist when using a computer.
- The employee must have a normal range of vision, hearing, and speech to complete paperwork, review documentation, and communicate with authority personnel and contacts on the telephone or in person on a regular basis.
- Work involves the normal risks or discomforts associated with an office environment.

Harris County Housing Authority is an Equal Opportunity Employer. If you are a person with a disability requiring assistance applying for this position, please contact hr@hchatexas.org. **Complete the application on the website and submit along with a resume and cover letter in PDF format to hr@hchatexas.org.**