

Excessive Legal Fees

From fiscal year (FY) 2020 to FY22 prior to Supervisor Urso's tenure, Shields Township spent \$7,000 to \$12,000 in legal fees annually. Supervisor Urso, however, has spent between **\$136,000 to \$145,000** in legal fees over the past two years. Supervisor Urso chooses to blame the increase in legal fees on local citizens for making Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) requests. Here are several reasons for increased legal fees:

- 1.) **FOIA requests for existing documents such as contracts, invoices, and policies should not require legal review.** The largest legal costs are "**general legal matters**". What are general legal matters? We know that the Township lawyer prepares agendas and often scripts to run most of the meetings. *You read that right:* We are paying a lawyer at \$190/hour or more to prepare agendas and write scripts for Township meetings!
- 2.) In November of 2023, the Board of Trustees **approved the spend** of \$1500 to \$5000 for closing costs for property at 223 Broadway Ave to be donated to Shields Township. The legal fees for this land donation, now a land purchase and still not completed, now exceeds **\$11,030** as of December 2024. This is 2 to 7 times more than the amount approved by the Board.
- 3.) The attorney should be aware of what can and cannot be done for the Township. Per the Illinois Constitution (1970, Article 9, Section 1), a Township must be able to point to a law that shows it has the authority to exercise a power. There is no expressed authority in Township law to allow:
 - Fire District consolidation, yet Supervisor Urso spent **\$14,700** in legal fees to consider consolidating Arden Shore North and Arden Shore South into the Rockland Fire District.
 - We do know the Township attorney met with Dan Rogers, Jeff Urso, Kamila Urso (2025 candidate for Supervisor) and another candidate following the November 14, 2024. We can only guess what was discussed then. Legal fees for the two Township lawyers to oversee the objection to nomination petitions for candidates running against **Dan Rogers** slate for Shields Township, including Kamila Urso were **\$39,103** after the Township hearings. Legal costs this year may exceed last years. **At this time, fees for the County hearing have not yet been invoiced to the Township.**

The following table shows the breakdown in legal fees thus far in FY25 and FY24:

FY25 Airdo Werwas Law Fees		FY24 Airdo Werwas Law Firm	
General Matters	\$ 57,842.13	General Matters	\$ 52,628.25
FOIA Requests	\$ 9,942.38	FOIA Requests	\$ 26,646.89
Fire Districts Consolidation	\$ 14,705.50	Land Purchase	\$ 8,898.80
Petition Objector (Dan Rogers)	\$ 39,578.01	Kerr Litigation	\$ 4,075.36
Roads	\$ 7,920.15	Roads	\$ 1,630.78
Land Purchase	\$ 2,131.00	Assessor	\$ 1,368.80
Lease	\$ 2,534.00	Lease	\$ 901.87
Assessor	\$ 972.00	Tax Objection	\$ 733.00
Tax Objection	\$ 792.00		
Total Thru 2/10/25 only	\$ 136,417.17	Total Airdo Werwas	\$ 96,883.75
		Neal Zazova Law (Kerr)	\$ 30,380.00
		Hunt Law (Assessors)	\$ 17,630.80
		Total Legal	\$ 144,894.55