

**If I have a legal problem or question can the City Attorney's Office provide any answers or assistance?**

The City Attorney does not represent individuals in private legal matters and cannot give any legal advice unless the matter involves the City directly or is in violation of a local ordinance. The City Attorney represents the City itself, City Commission, the City Manager, the City's boards, commissions and various committees, its departments and staff.

**What is the difference between the City Attorney and County Prosecutor?**

The City Attorney is the lawyer for the City of Traverse City. When the City is sued, the City Attorney represents the City in court as the defense counsel. When the City's interests are infringed upon, the City Attorney files suit to protect the City. The City Attorney also serves as legal counsel to the City Commission, the City Manager, the City's boards, commissions and various committees, its departments and staff by drafting ordinances, regulations and policies, reviewing all contracts and providing other legal assistance including criminal prosecution of City ordinances and traffic matters. The County Prosecuting Attorney investigates and prosecutes criminal activity in violation of state laws, occurring in the city and the county.

**How is the City Attorney selected?**

The City Attorney is appointed by the City Commission.

**Someone made a complaint about a code violation on my property and I want to find out who made the complaint. Do I have a right to that information?**

No. The City takes the position that such information is exempt from the disclosure requirements of the Michigan Freedom of Information Act. Therefore, the City will not release such information without a valid court order directing it to do so or through court proceedings. Such information could be used to harass citizens who report code violations in their neighborhoods.

**I need to do legal research regarding a private matter. Can I use the law books in the City Attorney's Office for research?**

No. The legal research materials in the City Attorney's Office are for the use of the City Attorney and its staff only. However, some legal research materials are available at the public library.

**My neighbor's tree limbs and branches hang over my property. Can I trim them without my neighbor's permission?**

This is a private civil matter. The City cannot intervene unless the City Forester or Zoning Code Enforcement Officer determines that the tree or its limbs present a danger to life or property. To obtain specific legal advice about this situation you need to contact a private attorney.

**If my neighbor's tree limbs and branches fall onto my property can I make my neighbor clean them up or pay for any damage incurred?**

This is a private civil matter. The City cannot intervene unless the City Forester or Zoning Code Enforcement Officer determines that the tree or its limbs present a danger to life or property. To obtain specific legal advice about this situation you need to contact a private attorney.