

San Miguel County, Colorado
COUNTY ATTORNEY





SAN MIGUEL COUNTY

Located in spectacular southwest Colorado, San Miguel County (pop. 8,082, 1,289 sq. mi.) has stunning scenic beauty and a rich, colorful history. From the dramatic San Juan Mountains and Telluride’s world-class skiing in the east to the mesas, farms, and high-desert ranches to the west, the county is geographically and socio-economically diverse, a state and national treasure. Public lands (U.S. Forest Service, Bureau of Land Management) account for about 64% of all land within the county. The San Miguel River flows from the mountains east of Telluride and gives the county its name.

Sheltered in an iconic box canyon, Telluride (elev. 8,750 ft.), the county seat, started as a mining town and reinvented itself as a world-class ski destination. Its close neighbor, Mountain Village, is seven miles or a free 13-minute gondola ride away. The mountain hamlet of Ophir is ten miles to the south. Heading down

valley to the west, one finds the communities of Sawpit and Placerville. To the northwest, high mountain peaks yield to Wright’s Mesa and Norwood (elev. 7,011 ft.), where ranching and farming predominate. San Miguel County runs all the way to the Utah border, where residents tend to prefer the individual freedoms and relative solitude of the traditional American West.

The lands that now make up San Miguel County were once home to Ute tribes, explored by the Spanish, and later settled by miners, farmers, and homesteaders. Today, residents and visitors are attracted to the area’s majestic scenery, abundant recreational amenities, cultural events and relaxed lifestyle.

Even though its location is remote and its winters long, the county boasts of exceptional schools, excellent healthcare, and quality municipal services. Both the Telluride and Norwood School Districts are highly regarded. Outdoor activities are unparalleled and include camping, high-country hiking, horseback riding, cycling and mountain biking, four-wheeling, golfing, rock climbing, rafting, fly-fishing and hunting, plus Nordic and alpine skiing and snowshoeing in winter.

State highways 145 and 141 are the major routes through the county. Montrose Regional Airport (68

miles from Telluride and Norwood) offers daily commercial flights throughout the year, which increase during ski season. In 2016, voters approved the San Miguel Authority for Regional Transportation (SMART), which connects neighboring communities via bus and shuttle. Recreation, tourism, real estate, construction, retail, and agriculture anchor San Miguel County’s strong economy.

For more information visit: www.sanmiguelcountyco.gov

COUNTY GOVERNMENT

Incorporated in 1883, San Miguel County is governed by a three-member board of commissioners (Board) elected to four-year, staggered terms. Since 2016, commissioners are limited to two consecutive terms. The other county elected officials are: assessor, clerk and recorder, coroner, sheriff, surveyor, and treasurer/public trustee. An elected district attorney prosecutes crimes in the Seventh Judicial District including San Miguel and five other counties. The commissioners hire the county manager and the county attorney, both of whom report directly to the Board.

Committed to annual strategic planning, the Board identified three goal areas for 2024-25: housing, behavioral health, and climate action and resiliency.

QUICK FACTS

- Population: 8,082
- Size: 1,289 sq. mi.
- Elevation (Telluride): 8,750 ft.
- Elevation (Norwood): 7,011 ft.
- FY 2024 Budget: ... \$36.2M (GF \$17.1M)
- FTE: 133

The adopted FY 2024 Budget of \$36.2 million (GF \$17.1 million) supports 133 FTE. The county's administrative departments include road and bridge, planning and building, public health, human services, parks and open space, the county manager, core administration (finance, human resources, information technology), and others. The county manager has worked hard to build a well-functioning organization and a supportive, collaborative team.

San Miguel County actively engages with multiple state agencies (CDOT, CDHS, CDPHE, DOLA, etc.), regional partners, and the municipalities within its boundaries. Other stakeholders and large landowners include state and federal land managers, the Telluride Ski and Golf Resort (Telski), the San Miguel Valley Corporation, the Idarado Mining Company, the Telluride Regional Airport Authority, Telluride Foundation, and many more.

Issues facing the county include affordable and workforce housing, environmental stewardship, land use and development, and multiple major projects, including a wastewater treatment plant expansion, the replacement and future operations of the gondola, and a regional medical center. Some community members have raised trust as an issue, related to a perceived lack of transparency in decision-making.



THE COUNTY ATTORNEY'S OFFICE AND POSITION

Appointed by and reporting directly to the board of commissioners, the county attorney is San Miguel County's chief legal officer and provides concise, clear, and timely legal advice and counsel to the Board, elected officials, the county manager, and the county's departments. An effective, collaborative professional relationship with the county manager is essential, as are positive working relationships with all elected officials and departments heads.

San Miguel County has enjoyed great stability and high-quality, professional legal representation in the county attorney position, with only two persons serving in the role in the last 30 years. The county attorney supervises a trusting, close-knit team: an assistant county attorney, a paralegal, and various contract legal counsel. The FY 2024 departmental budget is \$535,953. To ensure a seamless transition, the incumbent will be available to the new county attorney for as long as reasonably necessary.

QUALIFICATIONS

This position requires demonstrated excellent legal skills and a minimum of five years of experience, the majority of which were spent practicing Colorado local government law, preferably on behalf of a county. A juris doctor from an accredited law school is required. A candidate licensed to practice law in the State of Colorado, who is active and in good standing with the Colorado Supreme Court, is strongly preferred, but the Board will also accept applications from candidates able to obtain admission to the Colorado Bar quickly (on motion) from a reciprocal jurisdiction. Residency within the county is preferred and in-person attendance in the office and at public meetings will be required.

IDEAL CANDIDATE

The next county attorney is a confident, experienced local government attorney with high integrity, unassailable character, unquestionable ethics, and sound legal judgment. Technically competent in all respects, she

WHAT HAPPENS WHEN

Absent unforeseen circumstances, the recruitment will follow the schedule below. Be mindful of the filing deadline and final interview dates, which are unlikely to change.

SCHEDULE

Filing Deadline:	August 11, 2024	Recommendation of Candidates: ...	August 27, 2024
Preliminary Interviews:	August 19-20, 2024	Finalist Interview Process:	September 5-6, 2024

or he is experienced in the practice areas customary to local government, with specific expertise in land use, planning, development and related fees, the quasi-judicial nature of land use approvals, open meetings, and public records. The ideal candidate is intellectually curious, prepared, and proactive, always thinking and working ahead to protect the county's interests.

The preferred candidate has a strong foundation in as many of the following practice areas as possible: affordable housing (development, covenants, deed restrictions, etc.), contracts (including development agreements), elected officials (constitutional and statutory authority, and limits), elections, employment, environmental law (including solar), litigation, local budget and audit laws, mining, property taxes, public health, real property, road law, TABOR, water

law, and zoning code (drafting, interpretation, and enforcement), among others. The next county attorney will effectively manage all contract legal counsel.

The desired candidate will be a clear and concise writer and speaker (no "legalese"), who can communicate complex legal topics succinctly and simply. The successful candidate must be diplomatic and politically astute, but apolitical, with strong situational awareness. She or he is committed to providing the Board with legal options consistent with their policy priorities. The Board wants someone whose default answer is not "no," a creative problem-solver to provide lawful choices and explain the attendant risks.

Similarly, the next county attorney is an expert in building and maintaining relationships. She or he is comfortable communicating with persons from all walks of life and navigating successfully

within the socioeconomic and cultural diversity within the county. This includes the relaxed, but nuanced way of life in a Colorado resort mountain community, the traditional values tied to the county's agricultural heritage, and everything in between.

The successful candidate is intelligent, both intellectually and emotionally, with grit, common sense, and good judgment. She or he is an active listener, who is positive, approachable, and collaborative. The preferred candidate values diversity, equity, and inclusion and is able to demonstrate this commitment through prior professional history.

The ideal candidate is excited about living and working in San Miguel County as a lifestyle choice and looks forward to being a part of the positive, professional, and genuinely collegial culture here. She or he intends to have an impact and leave a legacy.

TOTAL COMPENSATION

The annual hiring range for this position is \$165,000 to \$195,000, and appointment will be made depending on the qualifications of the selected candidate. In addition, the county provides an attractive benefits package, including: medical (multiple deductible options); dental; vision; life (\$20,000), supplemental life, long-term disability (no cost to employee); eight weeks paid parental leave (after one year); down payment assistance (after two years) supplemental insurances (Masa, AFLAC) available; flexible spending accounts (medical, dependent care, and eligible transit); and an Employee Assistance Program (Triad). Retirement benefits through the

Colorado Retirement Association are offered, 401(a) mandatory (5% employee, county matches 100%), 457(b) optional (county matches up to 1.5%). This position enjoys paid vacation and sick time earned at 3.7 hours/pay period (96.2/year for each), 14 paid holidays, four personal days (32 hours), tuition and education reimbursement. Benefits include attorney registration fees, bar association memberships, continuing legal education, conferences, professional development customary to the position, and reasonably related travel expenses. Relocation assistance and a county-owned housing unit (two-bedroom) are available and subject to negotiation.

APPLY

To be considered for this excellent professional opportunity, please email only your cover letter and resume to apply@columbialtd.com, naming your files Last.First.CL and Last.First.Resume. Receipt of your submittal will be acknowledged within two business days. All applicants will be updated on their status following the Recommendation of Candidates.

If you have any questions regarding the recruitment process, or this opportunity, please feel free to call Andrew Gorgey directly at (970) 987-1238. For more information, visit the Columbia Ltd website: <https://columbialtd.com>.