



COUNTY OF SONOMA

575 ADMINISTRATION
DRIVE, ROOM 102A
SANTA ROSA, CA 95403

SUMMARY REPORT

Agenda Date: 12/9/2025

To: Board of Supervisors of the County of Sonoma, Board of Directors of the Sonoma County Water Agency, Board of Directors of the Sonoma County Agricultural Preservation and Open Space District, and Board of Commission of the Community Development Commission

Department or Agency Name(s): County Counsel's Office, Human Resources Department

Staff Name and Phone Number: Joshua A. Myers, 707-565-3737; Janell Crane, 707-565-2885; Christopher Meza, 707-565-3521

Vote Requirement: 4/5th

Supervisory District(s): Countywide

Title:

Amendment to Outside Liability Counsel Legal Services Agreement

Recommended Action:

Authorize County Counsel to execute a Second Amendment to outside liability counsel legal services agreement to increase the contract maximum amount by \$100,000 to \$550,000 to ensure uninterrupted access to qualified legal defense services through the end of the amended contract period with the Porter Scott law firm.

Executive Summary:

Staff requests Board approval for a Second Amendment to the Agreement with the Porter Scott law firm, increasing the contract amount by \$100,000 from \$450,000 to \$550,000 to ensure uninterrupted access to qualified legal defense services through the end of the contract period of December 31, 2025.

Discussion:

The County of Sonoma has been self-insured for general liability since 1986. County Counsel is statutorily mandated to defend civil lawsuits brought against the County and its officers and employees. From time to time, the County has retained various outside defense firms to represent the County in tort claims (legal actions that seek financial compensation for harm) and civil litigation (a legal process to resolve non-criminal

disputes) filed in state and federal courts.

Outside law firms are retained only when County Counsel either does not have the capacity, lacks the expertise to handle these lawsuits in-house, or has an ethical conflict. These law firms are assigned cases based upon their ability and specific experience with public entity defense. Board Resolution Number 85-2577 delegates responsibility for the oversight and management of civil litigation to County Counsel in consultation with the Risk Manager, and both departments are responsible for the coordination and oversight of the work performed by outside counsel. Human Resources-Risk Management is responsible for the administration of all tort claims and litigation, and County Counsel provides legal oversight and advice.

In February 2024, Porter Scott was originally selected through Request for Qualifications (RFQ) processes due to the specialized nature of their work and need at the County. County Counsel and Human Resources-Risk Management solicited proposals from several law firms located in the greater Bay Area and the Sacramento area. Porter Scott was selected in February 2024 with a contract term through December 2025 based on their expertise in law enforcement litigation.

This item seeks to amend the agreement with Porter Scott, to add \$100,000 to the current agreement, to provide legal services, as needed, to represent the County in tort claims and civil litigation. The initial agreement was executed under the County Counsel's delegated purchasing authority of \$50,000 per contract. On March 11, 2025, the Board approved an action authorizing County Counsel and Human Resources-Risk Management to execute a first amendment to the existing legal services agreement to increase the contract not-to-exceed amount of \$450,000.

The firm currently represents the County in several high-profile and complex matters, including civil rights claims, and other high-risk tort cases. Human Resources-Risk Management, County Counsel, and the department clients are satisfied with the firm's work. Given the increasing volume and scope of cases, the County is on track to exceed the existing \$450,000 amended contract limit before the end of the current term.

As such, staff recommends amending the Second Amendment to increase the contract maximum by an additional \$100,000, bringing the revised not-to-exceed amount to \$550,000 for the contract term ending December 31, 2025. This increase ensures the County can continue to receive necessary and uninterrupted legal defense services without delay or risk of exceeding contract authority.

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Strategic Plan:

N/A

Racial Equity:

Was this item identified as an opportunity to apply the Racial Equity Toolkit?

No

Prior Board Actions:

March 11, 2025 ([item 14; File Number 2025-0131](#)) Board authorized a First Amendment to the Legal Services Agreement with Porter Scott.

FISCAL SUMMARY

Expenditures	FY25-26 Adopted	FY26-27 Projected	FY27-28 Projected
Budgeted Expenses	\$393,000		
Additional Appropriation Requested			
Total Expenditures	\$393,000		
Funding Sources			
General Fund/WA GF			
State/Federal			
Fees/Other	\$393,000		
Use of Fund Balance			
General Fund Contingencies			
Total Sources	\$393,000		

Narrative Explanation of Fiscal Impacts:

The Human Resources department budgets expenditures for legal services in the Liability internal services fund 51230, funded by internal services rates paid by all county departments/agencies.

No additional budgetary appropriations are requested and costs incurred under the second amendment will be absorbed using existing appropriations.

Staffing Impacts:			
Position Title (Payroll Classification)	Monthly Salary Range (A-I Step)	Additions (Number)	Deletions (Number)
N/A			

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Narrative Explanation of Staffing Impacts (If Required):

N/A

Attachments:

1. Legal Services Agreement with Porter Scott
2. First Amended Legal Services Agreement with Porter Scott
3. Draft Second Amendment to the Legal Services Agreement with Porter Scott

Related Items “On File” with the Clerk of the Board:

None.