



# COUNTY OF SONOMA

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

## SUMMARY REPORT

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**Agenda Date:** 12/9/2025

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**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:**

Liability Counsel Legal Services Agreements

**Recommended Action:**

Authorize the County Counsel to execute legal services agreements for tort defense legal services with BDG Law Group; Bluestone Faircloth & Olson LLP; McNamara, Ambacher, Wheeler, Hirsig & Gray LLP; Porter Scott; Richards, Watson & Gershon; and Rivera Hewitt Paul LLP, with initial contract maximum limits not to exceed \$1,500,000, and with Bertrand, Fox, Elliot, Osman + Wenzel with initial contract maximum limit not to exceed \$1,750,000, All legal services agreements have three (3) year terms from January 1, 2026 to December 31, 2028, with the possibility of a one-time two (2) year extension at the option of County Counsel and Human Resources-Risk Management, based on satisfactory performance and with additional contract maximum limits not to exceed \$1,000,000 for the two (2) year extension period.

**Executive Summary:**

This requested Board action authorizes the County Counsel to execute agreements for legal services with seven law firms who were selected through a Request for Proposal (RFP) process completed in September 2025.

**Discussion:**

The County of Sonoma has been self-insured for general and automobile liability since 1986. The Human

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Resources (HR)-Risk Management is responsible for the administration of the County's self-insured General Liability Program providing coverage for personal injury and property damage claims to all County departments, agencies, and special districts under the direction of the Board of Supervisors.

From time to time, HR-Risk Management and County Counsel retain outside defense firms to represent the County in tort claims and/or civil litigation. These law firms are assigned cases by the County based upon their ability and specific experience with public entity defense. Board Resolution No. 22-0418 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. HR-Risk Management is responsible for the administration of all tort claims and litigation, and County Counsel provides legal oversight and advice.

In early 2025, Human Resources completed a Request for Proposal (RFP) for tort claim, liability, and employment litigation, and other legal services. Eighteen (18) firms responded to the RFP. Following the initial evaluation, eleven (11) firms were invited to an interview, and from those interviewed, seven (7) firms were selected to award contracts. A committee with representatives from County Counsel, HR-Risk Management, Sonoma Public Infrastructure, and the Sheriff's Office participated in the review process. The committee was pleased with the selected law firms' high level of qualifications and experience in public entity tort and liability defense.

The proposed hourly rate for general liability attorneys with more than 15 years of public entity experience is \$292.00, up from the prior rate of \$265.00. The proposed Lead Partner attorney hourly rate for employment matters, class actions, and other complex litigation is \$400, up from the prior rate of \$300.00. Each of the firms selected through this RFP process has the same hourly rate structure.

The selected firms are 1) BDG Law Group, 2) Bertrand, Fox, Elliott, Osman + Wenzel, 3) Bluestone Faircloth & Olson LLP, 4) McNamara, Ambacher, Wheeler, Hirsig & Gray LLP, 5) Porter Scott, 6) Richards, Watson & Gershon, and 7) Rivera Hewitt Paul LLP. Five (5) out of seven (7) of these firms have existing contracts with the County. Information about each of the selected firms is outlined in Attachment 1. The hourly rate structure includes a rate increase at years four and five of the contract extension period.

The agreements proposed in this report are all fee for service contracts with no minimum or maximum amount of work guaranteed to the firms. The agreements also contain a termination clause that allows the

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County to terminate the agreements at any time. Actual costs will depend on future litigation or specific projects assigned to each firm. All assignments are reviewed by County Counsel and HR-Risk Management, and all legal services invoices are approved by HR-Risk Management, which tracks all work and expenses of each firm. The initial contract term is recommended for a 3-year term with contract maximum limits not to exceed \$1,500,000, for the following firms: BDG Law Group; Bluestone Faircloth & Olson LLP; McNamara, Ambacher, Wheeler, Hirsig & Gray LLP; Porter Scott; Richards, Watson & Gershon; and Rivera Hewitt Paul LLP, and a contract maximum limit to not exceed \$1,750,000 for Bertrand, Fox, Elliot, Osman + Wenzel, all with the possibility of a one-time two (2) year contract renewal, with an extension contract maximum limits not to exceed \$1,000,000, at the option of the HR Director and County Counsel based on satisfactory performance. Depending upon the number of case assignments to each firm and the size and scope of each case assigned, this limit may never be reached, or may require a contract amendment, which would be presented to your Board for authorization.

**Strategic Plan:**

N/A

**Racial Equity:**

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

No

**Prior Board Actions:**

October 7, 2025 ([item 11; File Number 2025-0879](#)) - Authorized an extension of agreement terms and/or increased contract limits.

December 8, 2020 ([item 10; File Number 2020-1183](#)) - Authorized award of agreements following an RFP process.

May 19, 2020 ([item 16; File Number 2020-0404](#)) - Authorized an extension of agreement terms and/or increased contract limits.

May 22, 2018 (item 1) - Authorized extension of agreement terms and/or increased contract limits.

June 6, 2017 (item 13) - Authorized an additional contract resulting from RFP process.

September 22, 2015 (item 10) - Authorized scope of work amendment.

June 15, 2015 (item 11) - Authorized award of agreements following an RFP process.

**FISCAL SUMMARY**

<b>Expenditures</b>	<b>FY25-26 Adopted</b>	<b>FY26-27 Projected</b>	<b>FY27-28 Projected</b>
Budgeted Expenses	\$2,270,385	\$2,270,385	\$2,270,385
Additional Appropriation Requested			
<b>Total Expenditures</b>	\$2,270,385	\$2,270,385	\$2,270,385
<b>Funding Sources</b>			
General Fund/WA GF			
State/Federal			
Fees/Other	\$2,270,385	\$2,270,385	\$2,270,385
Use of Fund Balance			
General Fund Contingencies			
<b>Total Sources</b>	\$2,270,385	\$2,270,385	\$2,270,385

**Narrative Explanation of Fiscal Impacts:**

Costs for legal services are budgeted in the Liability internal services fund and are funded by internal services charges paid by all county departments/ agencies.

No additional appropriations are requested and costs of services provided under the two year optional extension will be absorbed using existing appropriations.

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

**Narrative Explanation of Staffing Impacts (If Required):**

None.

**Attachments:**

1. Outline of Selected Firms
2. Legal Services Agreement – BDG Law Group
3. Legal Services Agreement – Bertrand, Fox, Elliot, Osman + Wenzel

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4. Legal Services Agreement – Bluestone Faircloth & Olson, LLP
5. Legal Services Agreement – McNamara, Ambacher, Wheeler, Hirsig & Gray LLP
6. Legal Services Agreement – Porter Scott
7. Legal Services Agreement – Richards, Watson & Gershon
8. Legal Services Agreement – Rivera Hewitt Paul LLP

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

None.