



Legislation Text

File #: 2020-1177, **Version:** 1

To: Board of Supervisors of Sonoma County
Department or Agency Name(s): Sonoma County Counsel
Staff Name and Phone Number: Robert Pittman, 565-2421
Vote Requirement: 4/5th
Supervisory District(s): Countywide

Title:

Legal Services Agreements with Gordon-Creed, Kelly, Holl & Sugerman, LLP and Renne Public Law Group, LLP

Recommended Action:

- A) Authorize the Sonoma County Counsel to execute a legal services agreement with the law firm of Gordon-Creed, Kelley, Holl & Sugerman, LLP for assistance with representation of the Human Services Department, Family Youth & Children's Division, in the Court of Appeal and Supreme Court in an amount not to exceed \$100,000 through June 30, 2022.
- B) Authorize the Sonoma County Counsel to execute a legal services agreement with the law firm of Renne Public Law Group, LLP for continuity of representation of the Human Services Department, Family Youth & Children's Division, in a single case before the Court of Appeal in an amount not to exceed \$30,000 through June 30, 2022.

(4/5th Vote Required)

Executive Summary:

The Office of the County Counsel advises and represents the Family, Youth and Children's Division of the Human Services Department in child abuse and neglect cases filed in the juvenile court under Welfare and Institutions Code sections 300 et seq. Since approximately 2014, due to County Counsel capacity limits, the appeals in these child welfare cases have been handled by two extra help attorneys working remotely. One of those attorneys, Amy Ackerman, has advised that she has joined the Renne Public Law Group and can no longer provide this service. Ms. Ackerman has, however, agreed to continue representation of the Department in her capacity as Of Counsel with the Renne Public Law Group in a single case that is still pending in the Court of Appeal. In order to ensure continuity of representation in a single case pending before the Court of Appeal, the County Counsel's Office requests authority to enter in a Legal Services Agreement with the Renne Public Law Group so that Ms. Ackerman can see that case through to completion.

In order to maintain the capacity needed to handle these appeals and replace the service provided by the departed extra help attorney, the County Counsel's Office requests authority to enter into a Legal Services Agreement with Jeremy Sugerman of the law firm of Gordon-Creed, Kelley, Holl & Sugerman, LLP. Mr. Sugerman comes highly recommended by other County Counsel Offices as an expert in juvenile dependency appellate work. County Counsel is asking the Board for authority to execute a legal services agreement with Mr. Sugerman's law firm in an amount not to exceed \$100,000 through June 30, 2022.

Discussion:

The Office of the County Counsel advises and represents the Family, Youth and Children's Division of the

Human Services Department (the “Department”) in child abuse and neglect cases filed in the juvenile court under Welfare and Institutions Code sections 300 et seq. The Department files an average of 450-500 cases each year. Due to the constitutional rights implicated in these cases, parents have numerous opportunities to appeal the juvenile court’s ruling during the life of the case. The children are also represented in court, and occasionally will file an appeal against the Department. On average, the Department is involved in eleven appeals per year, and some are filed as extraordinary writs which have a very short response time.

Since approximately 2014, the appeals in these child welfare cases have been handled by two extra help attorneys working remotely. One of those attorneys, Amy Ackerman, has joined the Renne Public Law Group, and is unable to continue her work with the County. She has, however, agreed to continue representing the Department in a single case pending before the Court of Appeal until that case is resolved.

To replace the services of the extra help attorney, the County Counsel’s Office requests authority to enter into a Legal Services Agreement with Jeremy Sugerman of the law firm of Gordon-Creed, Kelley, Holl & Sugerman, LLP. The County Counsel’s Office does not have the capacity to represent the Department both at the trial and the appellate level. The time and attention required to advise and represent the Department on cases in the juvenile court is all consuming for the three attorneys in the Office assigned to child welfare. Mr. Sugerman comes highly recommended by other County Counsel Offices as an expert in juvenile dependency appellate work. His firm offers a special rate to counties for this type of work (\$295 partner/\$280 associate). The County Counsel’s Office also requests authority to enter into a Legal Services Agreement with the Renne Public Law Group so that Ms. Ackerman can continue to represent the Department in a pending appeal. The Renne Public Law Group will charge \$295 per hour for Ms. Ackerman’s services.

Prior Board Actions:

None.

FISCAL SUMMARY

Expenditures	FY 20-21 Adopted	FY21-22 Projected	FY 22-23 Projected
Budgeted Expenses	\$130,000		
Additional Appropriation Requested			
Total Expenditures	\$130,000		
Funding Sources			
General Fund/WA GF	\$130,000		
State/Federal			
Fees/Other			
Use of Fund Balance			
Contingencies			
Total Sources	\$130,000		

Narrative Explanation of Fiscal Impacts:

Funding for legal services is included in the County Counsel and Human Services Department’s FY 20-21 budgets.

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

Narrative Explanation of Staffing Impacts (If Required):

N/A

Attachments:

Legal Services Agreement with Gordon-Creed, Kelley, Holl & Sugerman, LLP

Legal Services Agreement with Renne Public Law Group LLP

Related Items "On File" with the Clerk of the Board: