



REQUEST FOR QUALIFICATIONS TO PROVIDE LEGAL SERVICES FOR THE CITY OF OJAI

The Ojai City Council is requesting interested law firms to submit Statements of Qualifications to provide legal services for the City of Ojai.

BACKGROUND

The City of Ojai (the “City”) is located in the Ojai Valley within Ventura County approximately 15 miles north of Ventura on State Highway 33/150. The City has a land area of 4.36 square miles and an active, diverse population of approximately 7,400.

The City was founded as the town of Nordhoff in 1874, re-named Ojai in 1917 and incorporated in 1921. The City operates under the Council-Manager form of government, with five total City Councilmembers including a directly elected Mayor. City Councilmembers are elected to four-year overlapping terms on a district-based basis and the Mayor is elected to a two-year term. The City Council is the legislative body responsible for overall policy development and direction of the City. In addition, the City has a variety of citizen committees, boards, and commissions that provide input and help conduct City business. The Council appoints the City Manager, who serves as the executive officer and is responsible for the day-to-day operations of the City. The Council appoints the City Attorney.

The City is a contract city, with some services provided by contract with outside agencies (both public and private) and City employees delivering some services. The City has approximately 35 full-time employees and numerous part-time and contract employees. Departments include Finance, Community Development, Public Works, Recreation and the City Manager’s Office. The City has a current General Fund budget of \$16.3 million and a Special Fund budget of \$40.1 million comprised of fourteen (14) special revenue/grant fund sources.

City Attorney Responsibilities

The City Attorney is expected to assist the City by:

- Providing clear and concise legal advice and consultation as requested, to the Council and staff. Response is required within a mutually-agreed upon timeframe.
- Attending regular and special City Council and Planning Commission meetings and advising the Council on agenda items and procedural matters. City Council regular meetings begin at 6:00 p.m. the second and fourth Tuesday of each month. Planning Commission regular meetings begin at 6:00 p.m. the first and third Wednesday of each month.

- Providing guidance and training with regard to the Brown Act, AB 1234, CEQA, Political Reform Act, Public Records Act, Redevelopment Law, Prop 218 noticing, Voter Initiatives and City Ballot Measures, and other legal requirements imposed by statute and common law.
- Providing designated office hours or times of availability, as agreed to with the City Manager and/or the City Council.
- Drafting, reviewing or revising documents such as legal memos, contracts, ordinances and resolutions.
- Representing the City in litigation.
- Providing legal advice and assistance to operating departments with regard to labor relations.
- Performing legal research and advising on issues related to land use, including interpretation of the California Environmental Quality Act (“CEQA”).
- Providing legal advice and assistance to Council and Staff with regard to interaction with state and federal agencies, county departments and special districts.
- Researching and advising on municipal and other legal matters as requested by the City Council or the City Manager.
- Recommend specialist legal firms as needed and provide management of same.
- Monitor pending and current legislation and case law as appropriate and inform City of items of interest; keep the City Council and City staff informed of significant developments.

REQUEST FOR STATEMENTS OF QUALIFICATIONS

(1) INTRODUCTION – AREAS OF LAW TO BE COVERED IN RFQ

The City requests interested law firms to submit a Statement of Qualifications to provide legal services for the City.

Please provide the information requested in this RFQ for each of the specialized practices area for which you would like to be considered. These practice areas include:

- General Municipal Specialty, including but not limited to:
 - General municipal law advisory
 - Labor/employment
 - Tax (federal, state, local)
 - Election procedures and law
 - Solid waste/recycling
 - Telecommunications (advisory and administrative proceedings)
 - Code enforcement
 - Disability issues/FEHA/ADA
 - Bidding and Procurement
 - California Public Records Act
 - Special Districts
 - Cannabis

- Short-term Rental Enforcement
- Criminal code enforcement
- Litigation Defense, including but not limited to:
 - Public entity tort claims
 - Labor and employment matters
 - Construction law/public works/prevaling wage matters
 - Writ litigation and appellate procedures
- Real Property, including but not limited to:
 - Condemnation/ eminent domain
 - Unlawful detainer/eviction (commercial)
 - Development/redevelopment
 - CEQA/land use/environmental/hazardous materials
 - Prop 218 issues
 - Real estate transaction/commercial document preparation
 - Foreclosure

(2) REQUIREMENTS FOR STATEMENTS OF QUALIFICATIONS

Identification of Attorneys. The response to this Request for Qualifications should include descriptions of the attorney or attorneys who would have primary responsibility for providing regular services under the proposal. For each attorney, the Statement of Qualifications should identify the qualifications, areas of expertise, and prior experience. References from comparable and representative public agency clients and the public agency’s teams should be included, with names and telephone numbers of three to five public agency clients which the firm is currently working with or has worked in the recent past.

Support Staff. The Statement of Qualifications should include information about the types of support staff, such as other attorneys, paralegals, and others in the firm who would be assigned to perform work for the City and whose time would be billed for such work. The response should include information about how the firm plans to utilize support staff within the City’s budget constraints.

Description of Services. The Statement of Qualifications should describe the services the firm proposes to provide, the firm’s overall experience with municipal law, any areas of specialty listed above, and any special qualifications that are believed to distinguish it from other law firms.

Rates and Charges. The proposed means of compensation, including hourly rates or fees to be charged for each individual named in the Statement of Qualifications, should be listed. A schedule of the rates or amounts for all fees, charges, and expenses to be billed by each attorney or staff member should also be included. An estimated range of anticipated monthly charges the City may expect to be billed is highly desirable. If a retainer is proposed, indicate the services that are included within the retainer.

Availability and Commitment to Provide Services. The Statement of Qualifications should include an indication of the commitment to provide the services by the attorney or attorneys with principal responsibility for providing services to the City. In this context, the words availability and commitment should be taken in their broadest meanings, incorporating time, flexibility in scheduling, office location of the attorney or attorneys, and firm or personal policies and practices with regard to returning calls and meeting deadlines. Any significant time period required before beginning services should be noted.

Knowledge of Ventura County Governmental Issues. The Statement of Qualifications should describe familiarity with unique issues facing local governments in Ventura County and the City in particular. Living experience in Ventura County, the Ojai Valley and in the City should be listed.

Actual or Perceived Conflicts.

- Please list any political contributions of money, in-kind services, or loans made to any member of the City of Ojai Council within the last five years by the applicant law firm and all of its attorneys (including the attorney being proposed as City Attorney).
- Please list all public clients for which your firm currently provides legal services.
- Please list all public clients for which your firm has provided services over the last five years.
- For the proposed City Attorney, please specify current or known future professional commitments in order that the City may evaluate your continuing availability for providing legal services to the City.

Reasonable diligence to identify and disclose potential conflicts is expected of all firms submitting a response to this Request for Qualifications. The proposal should also provide a statement or description of firm policy to address how conflicts of interest between two or more clients are avoided.

Additional Information. Statements submitted in response to the Request for Qualifications may, but are not required to, provide additional information to assist a proper evaluation of the proposal. Any discussions relating to suggested strategies to reduce costs for outside legal services are appropriate in this section.

Submission Requirements. **Proposals are due no later than Wednesday, July 2, 2025.** All submissions should be provided in digital format (.pdf or .docx) to kathy.holman@ojai.ca.gov.

(3) EVALUATION CRITERIA

The main criteria used to evaluate the Statement of Qualifications will concern the experience and qualifications of the firm's attorneys who would be assigned to the City. Ancillary information including the firm's fee structure and schedule of charges for ancillary services is important but will be given secondary weight.

(4) PROCESS FOR SELECTING LEGAL COUNSEL

The City Council will determine a procedure to review each Statement of Qualifications. Calls to submitting firms or attorneys and their references may be made to clarify material in the submittals. Based upon this review, the best qualified firms may be invited to a personal interview. Following the interviews, thorough background and reference interviews may be conducted. The City Council anticipates making a selection of a firm or firms that most closely addresses the City's needs and budget, following a careful evaluation of all relevant information.

(5) SPECIAL PROVISIONS

Contract Award

The City Council, in negotiation with the successful firm representative/candidate, will come to mutual agreement upon contract term and conditions.

Cost of Preparing and Submitting Statements. All costs incurred in preparing and submitting the Statements of Qualifications is to be borne by the submitter, and not the City. In no event shall the City be liable for any cost whatsoever for the preparation or submittal of a response to this Request for Qualifications.

Reservations and Options.

The City Council reserves the rights and options to:

- Reject any or all of the submittals
- Waive any of the provisions of the Request for Qualifications
- Issue subsequent Requests for Qualifications
- Cancel the Request for Qualifications process
- Waive technical error in the responses it receives
- Negotiate with any, all, or none of the respondents to this Request for Qualifications

(6) QUESTIONS

For questions, please contact Kathy Holman, Human Resources/Risk Manager
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805-646-5581 x.126