



UTILIZATION OF CONTRACTED LEGAL SERVICES POLICY NO: 245-P

- Applies To: All municipal staff requesting legal services in connection with municipal duties.
- Effective Date: 07/20/2026
- Associated References: None

Purpose:

The City of Traverse City retains qualified external legal counsel to protect the City's interests, manage risk, and ensure compliance with local, state, and federal laws. This policy establishes a standardized internal procedure for municipal staff to request, utilize, and manage contracted legal services. The primary objective is to optimize fiscal responsibility, ensure consistent legal strategy, and maintain centralized oversight through the City Manager.

Scope:

This policy applies to all City of Traverse City departments, directors, managers, and staff members. No employee has the authority to engage, consult, or rack up billable hours with contracted legal firms without adhering to the protocols outlined herein.

Policy Statement:

All requests for legal opinions, document reviews, litigation support, or general legal consultation must receive prior written approval from the City Manager (or their designated representative) before any contact is made with an approved legal firm.

Procedure for Requesting Legal Services

Staff members requiring legal assistance must follow these steps sequentially:

Step 1: Internal Review and Documentation

Before seeking external legal counsel, the requesting Department Head must define the scope of the legal issue. Staff are required to complete the [Legal Services Request \(LSR\) Form](#), detailing:

- Complex Legal Issues: The specific legal question or issue anticipated to require more than 30 minutes of counsel. (For brief inquiries, staff should utilize the legal team's posted office hours).
- Background and Context: Relevant background information and supporting documentation (e.g., contracts, agreements, correspondence).
- Organizational Impact: The potential financial or operational impact on the City of Traverse City.

- **Projected Timeline:** The anticipated timeframe for a response.

Step 2: Submission to the City Manager

The completed LSR Form must be submitted to the City Manager's office.

Step 3: Evaluation and Authorization

The City Manager will review the request based on necessity, budget availability, and strategic alignment.

- **Approval:** If approved, the City Manager will sign the LSR Form, designating which approved legal firm/attorney to contact and any caps on billable hours.
- **Denial/Alternative:** The City Manager may deny the request, handle the matter internally, or suggest alternative administrative resolutions within 48 hours of the request.

Step 4: Engagement with Legal Counsel

Upon receiving written authorization, the designated staff member may contact the assigned legal firm. The authorized LSR Form must be cc'd to the legal firm upon initial contact to verify authorization.

Emergency Exceptions

In rare circumstances where immediate legal counsel is required to prevent imminent harm, financial loss, or critical liability to the City, and the City Manager is unreachable:

1. The Department Head may contact the City's designated primary legal firm for emergency guidance only.
2. The Department Head must notify the City Manager via email/phone immediately during or after the incident.
3. A formal LSR Form must be submitted retroactively within three (3) business days of the engagement.

Roles and Responsibilities

Role	Responsibility
City Manager's Office	Sole authority to authorize external legal expenditures; monitors overall legal budget; assigns specific firms to specific matters.
Department Heads	Screen internal staff requests; ensure no unauthorized contact occurs; monitor department-specific legal spend.
City Staff	Prepare accurate LSR forms; limit communications with attorneys strictly to the approved scope to avoid unnecessary billing.

Invoice Review and Budgeting

- All legal invoices will be routed through the City Manager's office and finance department monthly.
- Invoices will be cross-referenced with approved LSR Forms.
- Any unauthorized billings generated by staff members acting outside this policy may result in the expense being charged back to that department's operational budget and may subject the employee to disciplinary review.

Policy Sanctions

Failure to comply with the prior-approval requirements of this policy compromises the City's budgetary controls and may result in unauthorized financial commitments. Non-compliance may result in administrative action, up to and including disciplinary measures.

Approved By: Benjamin Marentette on 07/20/2026 Signature: 	HISTORY: Created: 07/20/2026
---	---

City of Traverse City

Legal Services Request Form

Instructions

This form creates a standardized intake process that helps ensure legal requests are complete, prioritized, documented, and assigned appropriately while allowing the City to track legal workload and outside counsel costs.

Submit this form with all supporting documentation to the Manager's Office for assignment to the City Attorney, unless otherwise directed.

Departments should consolidate related legal questions into a single request whenever practical to improve efficiency and reduce legal costs.

Requests involving imminent litigation, emergency injunctions, or immediate public safety concerns should be identified as Emergency and communicated by telephone in addition to submitting this form.

Employment matters, personnel investigations, labor relations, and collective bargaining issues should be coordinated through the Human Resources Department before submission

To be completed by Department Heads or their designee.

REQUEST INFORMATION

Date Submitted: _____

Department: _____

Requested By: _____

Phone: _____ Email: _____

REQUEST PRIORITY

- ☐ Emergency (Immediate response required)
- ☐ High (Response requested within 24 hours)
- ☐ Medium (Response requested within 3–5 business days)
- ☐ Routine (Response requested within 10 business days)

Date response needed: _____

REQUEST TYPE: Select the primary reason for legal review.

- ☐ Contract Review
- ☐ Contract Drafting
- ☐ Election/Clerk Matter
- ☐ Employment/Labor Matter (Coordinate with Human Resources)
- ☐ FOIA/Open Meetings Act (OMA)
- ☐ Litigation or Claim
- ☐ Ordinance Review/Drafting
- ☐ Personnel Investigation (Coordinate with Human Resources)
- ☐ Policy Review
- ☐ Public Safety Matter
- ☐ Purchasing/Bid/RFP Review
- ☐ Real Estate/Property Matter (Coordinate with Assessing)
- ☐ Regulatory Compliance
- ☐ Risk Management/Liability Question
- ☐ Utility/Infrastructure Matter
- ☐ Other: _____

DESCRIPTION OF LEGAL REQUEST

Provide a detailed description of the issue, including background information, facts, and the legal assistance requested.

SPECIFIC QUESTIONS FOR LEGAL COUNSEL

Please list the specific legal questions or advice being requested.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

DEADLINES: Is there a statutory, contractual, court, grant, or Commission deadline?

☐ Yes ☐ No If yes, explain: _____

Required completion date: _____

RELATED DOCUMENTS: Please attach all applicable supporting documentation.

- | | |
|---|--|
| ☐ Contract/Agreement | ☐ Proposed Ordinance/Resolution |
| ☐ RFP/Bid Documents | ☐ Correspondence |
| ☐ Policies | ☐ Reports |
| ☐ Photographs | ☐ Other: |

PARTIES INVOLVED

Internal Departments: _____

External Agencies/Organizations: _____

Individuals Involved:

HAS THIS ISSUE BEEN PREVIOUSLY REVIEWED?

- ☐ No
☐ Yes

If yes: By Whom: _____ Date: _____

Outcome: _____

CONFIDENTIALITY

Does this request involve confidential personnel, litigation, attorney-client privileged, or sensitive information?

- ☐ Yes
☐ No

If yes, briefly describe:

Department Head Signature: _____ Date: _____

CITY MANAGER REVIEW

- ☐ Review Approved ☐ Review Denied

Comment: _____