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City of Traverse City

GOVERNMENTAL CENTER  
400 Boardman Avenue  
Traverse City, MI 49684  
(231) 922-4440  
(231) 922-4476 fax  
tcmanage@traversecitymi.gov



Office of the City Manager

May 5, 2026

Bidder:

The City of Traverse City will receive sealed bids in the Office of the City Manager, Second floor, Governmental Center, 400 Boardman Avenue, Traverse City, Michigan, 49684, until **Tuesday, May 26, 2026, at 2:00PM** for the following:

**City Attorney Legal Services  
Including Services for Michigan Tax Tribunal and/or Labor and Employment Matters**

**Please note that if you recently responded to the RFP for Legal Services for Michigan Tax Tribunal and/or Labor and Employment Matters you may supplement your previous response in lieu of providing a new comprehensive response to this RFP.**

If the specifications are obtained from the City's website link at: [City of Traverse City Bid Tab](#), it is the sole responsibility of the Bidder to check the website for updates and addenda prior to the bid being submitted. Bidder may also sign up to receive notifications when bids are posted by sending an e-mail requesting same to [ksheridan@traversecitymi.gov](mailto:ksheridan@traversecitymi.gov)

The City of Traverse City reserves the right to accept or reject any or all bids, waive irregularities, and to accept the bids either on an entire or individual basis that is in the best interest of the City. The City accepts no responsibility for any expense incurred by the Bidder in the preparation and presentation of a bid. Such expenses shall be borne exclusively by the Bidder. Only the successful Bidder will be notified.

All bid responses must be emailed. Please indicate in the subject line of your email that you are submitting a "Sealed Bid" together with the project description, "**City Attorney Legal Services Request,**" and submit your emailed bid to [tcmanage@traversecitymi.gov](mailto:tcmanage@traversecitymi.gov) **before Tuesday, May 26, 2026, at 2:00PM.**

Please note that if you have previously submitted an informal quote, you will still need to submit a sealed bid prior to the date and time specified above in order to be considered. Please ensure that all requirements listed in the specifications are met. If you have any questions, please submit them to [tcmanage@traversecitymi.gov](mailto:tcmanage@traversecitymi.gov) **before Monday, May 18, 2026.** Answers will be posted as an addendum by Thursday, May 21, 2026.

PLEASE SUBMIT EMAILED BID TO: [tcmanage@traversecitymi.gov](mailto:tcmanage@traversecitymi.gov)

**REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS  
CITY ATTORNEY LEGAL SERVICES  
CITY OF TRAVERSE CITY, MICHIGAN**

**OVERVIEW**

The City of Traverse City is requesting proposals from qualified legal counsel to provide comprehensive City Attorney legal services for the City of Traverse City including tax appeals before the “Entire Tribunal” division of the Michigan Tax Tribunal and legal services for Labor and Employment matters. Other outside legal counsel is approved and appointed by the City Commission upon recommendation of the City Attorney. Tax appeals in the small claims division are not included and will continue to be handled by the City Assessor.

The City Attorney position is established by the City Charter and is appointed by and serves at the pleasure of the City Commission. The City Attorney acts as the legal advisor to, and attorney and counsel for, the municipality and all its officers in matters relating to their official duties. The City Attorney represents the City in all actions brought by or against the City or against City officials in their official capacity. The City Attorney manages the overall legal affairs of the City.

**INTENT**

The City is seeking to engage the services of a qualified licensed law firm to represent the City’s interests in all matters consistent with the role of the City Attorney, including Michigan Entire Tax Tribunal tax appeals and Labor and Employment matters. The City intends to enter into a contract beginning approximately July 1, 2026 with an initial term of 18-24 months. The City intends to receive bids from qualified licensed law firms.

**COMMUNITY BACKGROUND**

The City of Traverse City, Michigan is a full service city located in the heart of Grand Traverse County and serves as the hub of a five-county region of 154,452 residents. Traverse City was incorporated in 1891 as a village and in 1895 as a City. It encompasses 8.09 square miles (including airport, Boardman Lake, etc.) and has a residential population of 15,678 (2020 census). Additional information can be found on the City’s website: [www.traverscitymi.gov](http://www.traverscitymi.gov)

The City of Traverse City has traditionally provided a high level of quality services to its citizens, along with public facilities and infrastructure. The City has an outstanding downtown and a strong small business community. Approximately 50% of the property, by land mass, is tax exempt including the airport, schools, community college, and an extensive medical health care system.

The City of Traverse City has approximately 1,115 commercial ad valorem parcels in Grand Traverse County and 24 commercial ad valorem parcels in Leelanau County. From 2020-2025 the City has had an average of 10-12 Entire Tribunal tax appeals per year in the Entire Tribunal Division.

The City currently negotiates with three unions and has six Collective Bargaining Agreements, which can be found on the City’s website ([link](#)).

## **GENERAL REQUIREMENTS**

### **Knowledge of:**

- Demonstrated competence and knowledge in a broad range of municipal legal issues including: regionalism, land use, environmental, labor and employee relations, and tax increment financing.
- Considerable knowledge and experience in legal principles and practices, including civil, constitutional, and administrative law and procedure; ordinances, statutes, and court decisions relating to municipal government.

### **Skills and Abilities:**

- Skilled in effective team building and leadership skills including consensus-building to resolve conflicts, negotiate agreements and gain cooperation among competing interest groups.
- Interpreting and appropriately applying complex codes, regulations, legal documents, policies and procedures and explaining these to the City.
- Excellent oral communications skills for explaining legal issues and options, as well as, complex legal principals and regulations to the City and to garner their compliance.
- Skilled in litigation and in trial work in negotiating settlements and agreements in the best interest of the City.
- Skilled in problem analysis and decision-making, adaptability/flexibly, and stress tolerance in a highly visible public environment.
- Excellent writing skills for preparation and review of legal documents and opinions.
- Ability to establish effective working relationships and use good judgement, initiative and resourcefulness when dealing with employees, elected officials, the media, professional contacts, and the public.
- Ability to consistently demonstrate sound ethics and maintain confidentiality of information.

## **MINIMUM QUALIFICATIONS**

### **Education, Training and Experience:**

- At least five years of responsible experience as a practicing attorney, at least three years of which involved municipal or other government law practice.
- Litigation and trial experience.
- The attorney assigned to work on City Michigan Entire Tax Tribunal tax appeal matters shall have a minimum of five (5) years experience in practice before the Michigan Tax Tribunal including trial practice.
- The attorney assigned to work on City Labor and Employment matters shall have a minimum of five (5) years employment experience including collective bargaining negotiations and Act 312 Arbitration experience as first chair.

### **Licensing and Other Requirements:**

- Must be licensed to practice law in the State of Michigan.
- Must provide proof of legal working status in the United States.
- One of the following required; Juris Doctor or Doctor of Judicial Science.
- Must be in good standing with the Michigan Bar Association.

## **SCOPE OF SERVICES**

The scope of work to be performed under this contract includes the following:

### **General**

1. Provide written and/or verbal advice to the Mayor, City Commission, City Manager, and Department Heads relative to legal matters affecting the City, in a timely manner. Act as a sounding board for the City Commission, City Manager and Department Heads on critical proposals.
2. Prepare for and attend all City Commission and related meetings as needed; consult with City Commission or Manager regarding agenda wording and preparation; follow up from all such meetings as requested.
3. Negotiate agreements with developers, contractors, and other agencies including townships and other county entities (BPW, GTC Road Commission, etc.)..
4. Attend meetings of the Planning Commission, Zoning Board of Appeals, Downtown Development Authority, and other boards and bodies on an as-requested basis.
5. Draft, or review drafts, of ordinances, code amendments, resolutions, agreements, legal opinions, deeds, leases, easement documents, encroachment agreements, monitoring well contracts, and other legal documents and reports as requested by City Commission, Department Heads (or their liaison) and/or City Manager.
6. Represent the City in all aspects of civil litigation, including preparation and trial of cases; recommend actions on claims against the City.
7. Represent the City in labor negotiations, arbitrations, resolution of labor disputes and legal advice pertaining to labor matters as requested by the City Manager, Department Heads (or their liaison) or the City Commission.
8. Represent the City in matters before the Michigan Tax Tribunal.
9. Recommend engagement of outside counsel when necessary. Work with and manage outside counsel (such as insurance counsel defending the City in cases for which coverage is provided).
10. Prosecute violations of the Traverse City Code (except traffic violations).
11. Provide consultations with City Commissioners and Department Heads (or their liaison) on City matters.
12. Perform all other legal services deemed necessary or expedient by the City Commission, Department Heads (or their liaison) or the City Manager.
13. Hold office hours at the Governmental Center weekly for collaboration with City Staff. Please propose whether this will be in person or remote.
14. Advise City Manager and Department Heads whether items need to be reviewed and approved by the City Commission per City policies, such as the Purchasing Policy.
15. Review and advise on Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) matters.
16. Criminal Prosecution
  - a. Represent the City by prosecuting various misdemeanor and civil ordinance violations.
  - b. Prepare cases for prosecution; review reports, request warrants; and conduct legal research.
  - c. Try cases in District Court.
  - d. Determine and recommend appropriate sentences.
  - e. Work with the Traverse City Police Department (TCPD), the TCPD Resiliency Program, County Prosecutor and other community organizations on how best to address community issues regarding crime, fear of crime and quality of life matters.

## **Tax Tribunal**

1. Represent the City in matters before the Michigan Tax Tribunal “Entire Tribunal” division.
2. Draft and file pleadings, motions, and related documents.
3. Arrange for and review appraisals, valuation disclosures and other evidence as necessary.
4. Prepare, file and receive discovery requests, briefs and other necessary filings.
5. Handle matters through resolution or trial phase and appeals as requested.

Further, the City will consider the selected Attorney to be the sole point of contact with regard to contractual matters, including payment of any and all charges resulting from the contract.

## **Labor and Employment**

### **Labor Relations and Collective Bargaining**

- Serve as chief spokesperson or advisor in collective bargaining negotiations with labor unions representing City employees, as requested by the City.
- Provide strategic advice and preparation for negotiations, including costing proposals and drafting bargaining strategies.
- Draft, review, and revise collective bargaining agreements, memoranda of understanding, side letters, and settlement agreements.
- Advise on contract interpretation, administration, and compliance.

### **Employment Law Advice and Compliance**

- Provide legal advice regarding federal, state, and local employment laws, including but not limited to:
  - Public Employment Relations Act (PERA)
  - Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA)
  - Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA)
  - Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)
  - Elliott-Larsen Civil Rights Act
- Advise on employee discipline, discharge, layoffs, recalls, and reductions in force.
- Assist with reasonable accommodation and interactive process matters.
- Review and advise on personnel policies, employee handbooks, and administrative rules.

### **Grievances, Arbitrations, and Administrative Proceedings**

- Represent the City in grievance proceedings, mediation, arbitration, and fact-finding.
- Prepare briefs, motions, and legal memoranda related to labor disputes.
- Represent the City before administrative agencies, including the Michigan Employment Relations Commission (MERC), Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC), Michigan Department of Labor and Economic Opportunity (LEO), and other applicable bodies.

### **Workplace Investigations**

- Conduct or support impartial workplace investigations involving employee misconduct, policy violations, harassment, discrimination, retaliation, or other employment-related complaints.
- Provide legal guidance to the City regarding when an external investigation is appropriate.

- Prepare investigation plans, interview outlines, and document requests.
- Conduct witness interviews and review relevant documents and evidence.
- Prepare written investigative reports with findings, credibility assessments, and conclusions, as requested by the City.
- Advise the City on post-investigation actions, including discipline, corrective measures, and risk mitigation.

### **Litigation and Claims Management**

- Represent the City in labor and employment-related litigation in state and federal courts, as assigned.
- Provide case assessment, litigation strategy, and risk management recommendations.
- Coordinate with the City Manager and outside counsel as necessary.

### **Advisory, Training, and Preventive Services**

- Provide ongoing advice to City management and Human Resources on best practices and risk mitigation.
- Conduct training sessions for City leadership, supervisors, and HR staff on labor relations, employment law updates, and management practices.
- Provide updates on changes in labor and employment law affecting public employers.

### **Availability and Responsiveness**

- Maintain reasonable availability to respond to City inquiries in a timely manner.
- Attend meetings, negotiation sessions, hearings, and City-related proceedings as required.

### **Deliverables**

Deliverables may include, but are not limited to:

- Written legal opinions and memoranda
- Draft and final collective bargaining agreements
- Arbitration briefs and pleadings
- Policy and handbook revisions
- Training materials and presentations

### **Coordination and Reporting**

The labor attorney shall coordinate closely with the City Manager, Human Resources Director, and City Attorney, and shall provide periodic updates on active matters as requested.

### **Exclusions**

This scope does not guarantee a minimum amount of work. The City reserves the right to assign work on an as-needed basis and to retain other legal counsel for specialized matters.

### **PAYMENT**

City prefers a monthly retainer, but will consider all pricing structures submitted.

### **PROPOSAL FORMAT**

Proposals should include at a minimum the following information:

1. Proposed pricing structure including monthly retainer rate, the cost per hour of service for additional work beyond the scope of initial services, if approved by the City and listing of all other expenses to be charged outside of the retainer fee. Include proposed travel charges.
2. Name, address, telephone number (main and fax) and email address of the firm and location of firm offices (if more than one).
3. Name, email and telephone number of primary attorney.
4. Martindale Hubbell rating of the firm/attorney(s) and any other relevant ratings.
5. Number of years the attorney/firm has been in practice.
6. Brief history of the attorney/firm and practice areas.
7. Experience of the attorney/firm in representing municipalities including municipalities currently represented and municipalities represented in the past.
8. Firm composition.
  - a. names of attorneys
  - b. number of support staff
9. Resumes. Attach a current resume for each attorney proposed to work on the City's behalf.
10. A copy of the declaration page for malpractice insurance.
11. Discipline. Indicate for each attorney if there has ever been any disciplinary case against the attorney that resulted in a finding of misconduct.
12. Indicate whether the legal license to practice law of any attorney has ever been suspended. Provide details of dates and causes.
13. Name, address and telephone number of three references.
14. Communication plan for how the firm proposes to attend meetings and provide timely communication, particularly if the firm is not local to the Traverse City area.

## **EVALUATION OF PROPOSALS**

All proposals received shall be subject to evaluation by the City. Price alone shall not be the basis for the award of this work, but shall be only one of the components considered. Attorneys who present acceptable proposals and who are shown to be qualified, responsible and capable of performing the work may be requested to interview with the City prior to any award of this work. The following facts, along with other items, will be considered:

1. Expertise and experience as related to the required work.
2. Qualifications and availability of the firm.
3. Conflicts of professional interests.

**Bidder - Please complete and return**

**BID SUMMARY**

**TITLE: City Attorney Legal Services Including Services for Michigan Tax Tribunal and/or Labor and Employment Matters**

**DUE DATE: Tuesday, May 26, 2026, at 2:00PM**

Having carefully examined the attached specifications and any other applicable information, the undersigned proposes to furnish all items necessary for and reasonably incidental to the proper completion of this bid. Bidder submits this bid and agrees to meet or exceed all requirements and specifications unless otherwise indicated in writing and attached hereto.

Bidder certifies that as of the date of this bid the Company or he/she is not in arrears to the City of Traverse City for debt or contract and is in no way a defaulter as provided in Section 152, Chapter XVI of the Charter of the City of Traverse City.

Bidder understands and agrees, if selected as the successful Bidder, to accept a contract and to provide proof of the required insurance.

Bidder submits this bid and agrees to meet or exceed all the City of Traverse City's requirements and specifications unless otherwise indicated in writing and attached hereto. Bidder shall comply with all applicable federal, state, local and building codes, laws, rules and regulations and obtain any required permits for this work.

The Bidder certifies that it is in compliance with the City's Nondiscrimination Policy as set forth in Administrative Order No. 47 and Chapter 605 of the City's Codified Ordinances.

The Bidder certifies that none of the following circumstances have occurred with respect to the Bidder, an officer of the Bidder, or an owner of a 25% or more share in the Bidder's business, within 3 years prior to the bid:

- (a) conviction of a criminal offense incident to the application for or performance of a contract;
- (b) conviction of embezzlement, theft, forgery, bribery, falsification or destruction of records, receiving stolen property, or any other offense which currently, seriously and directly reflects on the Bidder's business integrity;
- (c) conviction under state or federal antitrust statutes;
- (d) attempting to influence a public employee to breach ethical conduct standards; or
- (e) conviction of a criminal offense or other violation of other state, local, or federal law, as determined by a court of competent jurisdiction or an administrative proceeding, which in the opinion of the City indicates that the bidder is unable to perform responsibility or which reflects a lack of integrity

that could negatively impact or reflect upon the City of Traverse City, including but not limited to, any of the following offenses or violations of:

- i. The General Property Tax Act
- ii. The Michigan State Tax Commission Rules
- iii. The Michigan Tax Tribunal Act
- iv. The Michigan Tax Tribunal Rules
- v. The Department of Licensing And Regulatory Affairs Michigan Administrative Hearing System Administrative Hearing Rules
- vi. Michigan Rules of Professional Conduct and Code of Ethics
- viii. A violation of federal, local, or state civil rights, equal rights, or non-discrimination laws, rules, or regulations.

(f) the loss of a license or the right to do business or practice a profession, the loss or suspension of which indicates dishonesty, a lack of integrity, or a failure or refusal to perform in accordance with the ethical standards of the business or profession in question.

Bidder understands that the City reserves the right to accept any or all bids in whole or part and to waive irregularities in any bid in the best interest of the City. The bid will be evaluated and awarded on the basis of the best value to the City. The criteria used by the City may include, but will not be limited to: experience, price, availability, and other pertinent factors and overall capability to meet the needs of the City. The City is sales tax exempt – Government.

Bidder agrees that the bid may not be withdrawn for a period of sixty (60) days from the actual date of the opening of the bid.

Submitted by:

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Individual or Firm Name

\_\_\_\_\_  
Name and Title (Print)

\_\_\_\_\_  
Address

\_\_\_\_\_  
Phone                      Fax

\_\_\_\_\_  
City,                      State,                      Zip

**EMAIL ADDRESS:**

\_\_\_\_\_  
Sole proprietorship/partnership/corporation

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
If corporation, state of corporation