



City Council Memorandum

City of Arts & Innovation

TO: HONORABLE MAYOR AND CITY COUNCIL DATE: MARCH 25, 2025

FROM: CITY ATTORNEY'S OFFICE WARDS: ALL

**SUBJECT: AUTHORIZE A THREE-YEAR LEGAL SERVICES AGREEMENT WITH THE
LAW FIRM OF WANGER JONES & HELSLEY PC**

ISSUE:

To consider approval of a three-year legal services agreement with the law firm of Wanger Jones & Helsley PC.

RECOMMENDATION:

That the City Council add Wanger Jones & Helsley PC to the panel of approved attorneys for the City, approve a three-year legal services agreement with the law firm of Wanger Jones & Helsley PC and authorize the City Attorney or designee to execute the legal services agreement.

BACKGROUND:

City Charter section 702, "Eligibility, powers and duties of City Attorney," provides, in part, that "the City Council shall have control of all legal business and proceedings and may employ other attorneys to take charge of any litigation or matter or to assist the City Attorney therein."

DISCUSSION:

From time to time, the City has needed specialized legal services regarding the City's water rights. Robert Donlan from the law firm of Ellison Schneider Harris & Donlan LLP has provided such legal services on multiple occasions. Mr. Donlan's practice group has extensive experience in the field of water and regularly represents clients in local, state, and federal administrative proceedings, and in state and federal courts. His group is highly experienced in the processes and requirements needed to establish the validity of, procure, and defend water rights on challenges stemming from endangered species issues, water quality concerns, or competition from other water users. Further, they are familiar with the City's water rights and have been on the City's panel of authorized attorneys as part of the law firm Ellison Schneider Harris & Donlan LLP.

Effective March 1, 2025, Mr. Donlan's practice group is moving to the law firm Wanger Jones &

Helsley PC. The City's legal services agreements are specific to law firms rather than individual attorneys. In order to ensure the City continues to have readily available access to experienced outside counsel for water rights issues, it is necessary to add Wanger Jones & Helsley PC to the City's panel of authorized attorneys and to execute a new legal services agreement.

STRATEGIC PLAN ALIGNMENT: The retention of experienced outside counsel to provide legal advice and supports all priorities of the City of Riverside's Envision Riverside 2025 Strategic Plan, as such advice is provided to all departments of the City, the City Council, Boards and Commissions.

This item aligns with each of the five Cross-Cutting Threads as follows:

1. **Community Trust** – Riverside is transparent and makes decisions based on sound policy, inclusive community engagement, involvement of City Boards & Commissions, and timely and reliable information. Use of outside counsel that specialize in specific areas of the law supports and aids the making of such decisions.
2. **Equity** – Use of outside counsel that specialize in specific areas of the law benefits the entire community by ensuring that such efforts comply with all aspects of the law.
3. **Fiscal Responsibility** – The City Attorney's Office is expending funds in a careful and judicious manner balanced against the need for specialized legal counsel when the circumstances warrant.
4. **Innovation** – The retention of specialized legal counsel to provide specialized legal advice supports City innovation efforts by ensuring that such efforts comply with all aspects of the law.
5. **Sustainability & Resiliency** – The retention of specialized legal counsel to provide specialized legal advice supports City goals of sustainability and resiliency by ensuring that such efforts comply with all aspects of the law.

FISCAL IMPACT:

None at this time. The City Attorney's Office will seek all necessary approvals for specialized legal work performed by Wanger Jones & Helsley PC.

Prepared by: Jack Liu, Interim City Attorney