



City of Arts & Innovation

City Council Memorandum

TO: HONORABLE MAYOR AND CITY COUNCIL DATE: OCTOBER 21, 2025

FROM: HUMAN RESOURCES DEPARTMENT WARDS: ALL

SUBJECT: APPROVE LEGAL BUDGET FOR THE LAW FIRM OF LIEBERT CASSIDY WHITMORE IN AN AMOUNT NOT TO EXCEED \$715,500 TO HANDLE THE MATTER OF *PHAEDRA NORTON V. CITY OF RIVERSIDE*

ISSUE:

To consider approval of a legal budget for the law firm of Liebert Cassidy Whitmore (“LCW”) in an amount not to exceed \$715,500 to represent the City in the case entitled *Phaedra Norton v. City of Riverside*.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

That the City Council:

1. Approve a legal budget for the law firm of LCW in an amount not to exceed \$715,500 to represent the City in the case entitled *Phaedra Norton v. City of Riverside, Riverside Superior Court Case No. CVRI2500992*; and
2. Authorize the Mayor Pro Tem to sign an Engagement Letter outlining the authorized budget for legal services in this matter.

DISCUSSION:

City Charter section 702 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.”

After the City received a pre-litigation Tort Claim from former City Attorney Phaedra Norton, on September 13, 2024, the City Council approved the retention of LCW to investigate the claim to avoid conflicts of interest with the City Attorney’s Office. LCW is on the City’s approved panel of outside counsel, specializes in employment law, and has an executed Legal Services Agreement with the City of Riverside for the provision of legal services. To date LCW has billed the City \$98,092.95.

On February 21, 2025, Ms. Norton filed a Complaint with the Riverside Superior Court (Case No. CVRI2500992). As this case has now proceeded to litigation, LCW has provided a proposed

budget to defend the City through trial in the amount of \$715,500 (which includes the \$98,092.95 that has already been paid).

FISCAL IMPACT:

The total fiscal impact of the litigation budget for the case entitled *Phaedra Norton v. City of Riverside* is anticipated to be up to \$715,500. The funds to cover all expenses are currently budgeted in the Liability Trust Fund, City Attorney-Claims Management, Outside Legal Services account 1310000-421100 for attorney's fees in the amount of \$600,000 and Liability Trust Fund, City Attorney-Claims Management Legal Fees account 1310000-428200 for legal costs in the amount of \$115,500 (which includes the cost of travel, copies, transcripts, reporters, etc.).

Prepared by:	Rene Goldman, Human Resources Director
Certified as to availability of funds:	Kristie Thomas, Finance Director
Approved by:	Edward Enriquez, Assistant City Manager/CFO/City Treasurer
Approved as to form:	Rebecca McKee-Reimbold, Interim City Attorney