



REQUEST FOR QUALIFICATIONS

VILLAGE ATTORNEY & MUNICIPAL LEGAL SERVICES VILLAGE OF NORTHPORT, MICHIGAN

1. Introduction & Purpose

The Village of Northport (“Village”) is requesting qualifications and proposals from experienced attorneys or law firms to provide municipal legal services, including appointment as Village Attorney.

The Village Attorney is appointed by the Village Council and serves as the chief legal advisor to the Village Council, Village President, Village Manager, and Village boards, commissions, and departments. Services include general counsel, drafting and review of ordinances and contracts, and such other legal services as requested by the Village.

The Village intends to enter into a professional services agreement with the selected attorney/firm for a term of [initial term, e.g., three (3) years], with options to renew as approved by the Village Council.

2. Background – Village of Northport

The Village of Northport is a general law village located in Leelanau County, near the northern tip of the Leelanau Peninsula, on the shore of Grand Traverse Bay. According to the 2020 Census, Northport has a population of approximately 496 residents and a land area of about 1.65 square miles.

The Village operates under the General Law Village Act, PA 3 of 1895, with a Village Council and Village President. The community hosts a mix of year-round residents, seasonal homeowners, and visitors drawn to Northport’s waterfront, small-town character, and regional tourism economy.

The Village engages regularly with issues related to:

- General municipal governance and administration
- Land use, zoning, and development review
- Public infrastructure and utilities (streets, sanitary sewer, marina)
- Intergovernmental agreements with Leelanau Township and other entities
- Public meetings and records, including the Open Meetings Act and FOIA
- Ordinance enforcement and occasional civil or administrative proceedings

3. Scope of Services

The Village seeks an attorney/firm to provide comprehensive municipal legal services. At a minimum, the Village Attorney will be expected to:



3.1 General Counsel Services

- a. Serve as legal advisor to the Village Council, Village President, Village Manager, and designated boards, commissions, and committees.
- b. Attend regular and special Village Council meetings, and other meetings as requested, to provide legal counsel and parliamentary advice.
- c. Provide written and verbal legal opinions and memoranda on matters involving municipal law, including but not limited to:
 - General Law Village Act
 - Open Meetings Act
 - Freedom of Information Act
 - Michigan Planning Enabling Act & Zoning Enabling Act
 - Michigan Tax Increment Financing, Brownfield, and related development statutes
 - Election law matters affecting Village actions
- d. Draft, review, and/or approve as to form:
 - Ordinances and ordinance amendments
 - Resolutions
 - Contracts, purchase agreements, leases, and intergovernmental agreements
 - Easements, deeds, licenses, rights-of-way, and related documents
- e. Advise on personnel, employment, and labor matters, including compliance with applicable federal and state laws, in coordination with specialized labor counsel as needed.
- f. Advise on zoning, land use, site plan review, development agreements, and code enforcement, in coordination with planning and engineering professionals.
- g. Consult with the Village's auditors, financial advisors, planners, engineers, and other consultants as needed.

3.2 Litigation & Specialty Services

- a. Represent the Village in administrative proceedings, state and federal courts, and before regulatory agencies, as requested and approved by the Village Council, or coordinate with special counsel retained by the Village.
- b. Coordinate with the Village's insurance carrier and any assigned defense counsel on covered claims.
- c. Provide or coordinate specialized legal services (e.g., labor, bond, environmental, tax tribunal, complex development) either directly or through associated counsel. Respondents should clearly indicate any specialty areas in which they have significant experience.



3.3 Prosecution Services (Optional)

The Village may, at its discretion, include ordinance prosecution services within this engagement or under a separate agreement. Respondents should indicate:

- Whether they are willing and able to provide prosecution services for Village ordinance and municipal civil infraction matters;
- Experience in district court prosecution of local ordinance violations, if applicable.

3.4 Availability & Responsiveness

- a. Be reasonably available to respond to telephone calls and emails from Village officials and staff during normal business hours.
- b. Provide expected response times and any procedures for urgent or after-hours matters.

The Village does not guarantee a particular volume of work or billable hours. Workload is expected to vary based on Village projects, litigation, and governance needs.

4. Minimum Qualifications

The primary attorney designated as Village Attorney must, at a minimum:

- Hold a Juris Doctor degree from an ABA-accredited law school.
- Be duly licensed to practice law in the State of Michigan and in good standing with the State Bar of Michigan.
- Have at least five (5) years of experience in municipal law, including regular representation of general law villages, cities, townships, or counties.
- Demonstrate knowledge of:
 - General Law Village Act
 - OMA, FOIA
 - Zoning & planning law, land use, and development
 - Public finance and intergovernmental agreements
- Maintain professional liability (errors and omissions) insurance in an amount acceptable to the Village.
- Firms may propose a team approach; however, a single lead attorney must be designated as the Village Attorney and primary contact.

5. Proposal Content

Proposals should be concise yet provide sufficient detail to allow the Village to evaluate the attorney/firm and include at least the following:

- Cover Letter signed by an authorized representative, summarizing the firm's interest, key qualifications, and commitment to serve as Village Attorney.
- Name, address, and contact information of the firm and primary contact.
- Year established and form of organization (PC, PLLC, etc.).
- Office location(s) where services will be provided, with identification of the primary office for Northport.



- Identify the proposed Village Attorney and any supporting attorneys or staff.
- For each, provide:
 - Bar admission(s) and year
 - Areas of practice and municipal law experience
 - Summary of experience with Michigan local governments (general law villages, townships, cities, authorities, etc.)
- A brief narrative (no more than [3–5] pages) describing relevant experience in:
 - Municipal governance and council advisory work
 - Ordinance drafting, zoning and land use
 - Development review, TIF/Brownfield/HTIF or similar tools
 - Intergovernmental agreements and public infrastructure projects
 - Litigation and administrative proceedings involving municipalities
- List current or recent Michigan municipal clients (last 5–10 years).
- Provide at least three (3) references (name, title, jurisdiction, phone, email) who can speak to the attorney/firm's municipal work.
- Identify any clients or interests that could reasonably present a conflict when representing the Village (e.g., Leelanau County, Leelanau Township, major local developers or contractors, adverse parties in current disputes, etc.).
- Describe the firm's approach to conflict identification and management.
- Describe your approach to providing ongoing general counsel services, including:
 - Typical response times to inquiries from elected officials and staff
 - Methods for managing workload and prioritizing urgent matters
 - Approach to training or updating staff and officials on new legal developments
- Provide a proposed fee structure, which may include:
 - Monthly retainer for routine general counsel services (describe what is included/excluded)
 - Hourly rates by attorney/staff classification for work outside the retainer (e.g., litigation, complex development, specialty matters)
 - Proposed rates for meeting attendance (onsite/remote) if different from standard hourly rates
 - Identify any alternative fee arrangements the firm is willing to consider (e.g., capped fees for certain projects).
- Evidence of professional liability insurance (coverage limits and carrier).
- Disclosure of any State Bar complaints, public discipline, or malpractice suits involving the proposed Village Attorney or firm within the past five (5) years, and their resolution.
- Disclosure of any firm bankruptcy, receivership, or municipal client terminations/resignations within the past five (5) years, with explanation.

Exceptions / Deviations:

Note any exceptions or requested modifications to this RFQ/RFP or to the anticipated professional services agreement.

Any proposed fee structure shall be subject to the fee adjustment limitations set forth in Section 8



6. Evaluation Criteria

The Village will evaluate proposals using criteria substantially similar to those used in other Michigan RFQs for legal services, including:

- Demonstrated knowledge and experience in Michigan municipal law
- Experience with general law villages and small communities
- Quality, depth, and stability of the proposed attorney/team
- Demonstrated understanding of Northport's likely legal needs (governance, zoning, development, utilities, intergovernmental issues)
- Responsiveness, availability, and communication style
- Quality of references
- Proposed fee structure and overall value to the Village

The Village may select a short list of finalists for interviews before making a recommendation to the Village Council.

7. Submittal Instructions & Timeline

7.1 Schedule (tentative)

RFQ/RFP issued: December 17, 2025

- Deadline for written questions: January 12, 2026
- Responses to questions posted: January 19, 2026
- Proposal submission deadline: January 23, 2026
- Village review and finalist selection: January 29, 2026
- Interviews (if conducted): January 29, 2026 to February 13, 2026
- Village Council selection and approval of contract: February 19, 2026
- Anticipated commencement of services: March 1, 2026

These dates are estimates and may be modified at the Village's sole discretion.

7.2 Questions

All questions regarding this RFQ/RFP must be submitted in writing (email preferred) to:

Jered Ottenwess, Village Manager

Village of Northport

P.O. Box 336

Northport, MI 49670

Email: manager@villageofnorthport.net

Questions must be received by the deadline identified above. Responses to questions may be shared with all known recipients of this RFQ/RFP and/or posted on the Village's website.

7.3 Proposal Submission

Submit ten (10) hard copies and one (1) electronic PDF copy of the proposal in a sealed envelope clearly marked:



“Village Attorney RFQ/RFP – Legal Services”

to:

Village Clerk
Village of Northport
P.O. Box 336
Northport, MI 49670

Proposals must be received by **Friday, January 23, 2026 at noon/12 PM**. Late proposals will not be accepted.

Electronic copies may also be submitted via email to: clerk@villageofnorthport.net, provided a complete, legible PDF is received by the submission deadline.

8. General Terms & Conditions

No Obligation to Award

Issuance of this RFQ/RFP does not obligate the Village to award a contract, and the Village reserves the right to reject any or all proposals, waive informalities, or re-solicit proposals as deemed in the best interest of the Village.

Costs of Preparation

All costs incurred in the preparation and submission of a proposal are the responsibility of the respondent and will not be reimbursed by the Village.

Fee Adjustments and Rate Increases

Any proposed fees, hourly rates, or other charges submitted in response to this RFP shall remain fixed for the initial contract term unless otherwise expressly permitted herein.

Annual increases to audit fees or hourly rates, if proposed, shall be capped at no more than the lesser of:

1. The percentage increase in the Consumer Price Index for All Urban Consumers (CPI-U), U.S. City Average, for the most recently published 12-month period; or
2. **[five percent (5%) per year.**

No increase in fees or hourly rates shall be permitted while any audit, project, engagement, or other matter for the Village is in progress (“in flight”), including but not limited to multi-year audit work, special audit procedures, federal Single Audit work, or any other extended engagement. Approved rate adjustments may take effect only after the completion and final delivery of all work associated with the applicable engagement or project.

Regardless of the foregoing, no increase in any fee or hourly rate shall be effective unless and until the Firm has provided the Village with at least sixty (60) days’ prior written notice of the proposed increase. Any such increase shall be subject to review and approval by the Village Council as part of the annual budgeting or contract renewal process.



Failure to comply with the requirements of this subsection shall render any proposed fee or rate increase void and unenforceable.

FOIA & Public Records

Proposals may be considered public records subject to disclosure under the Michigan Freedom of Information Act, subject to permissible exemptions. Respondents should clearly mark any proprietary or confidential information, understanding that the Village will comply with applicable law.

Contract Approval

Any resulting contract is subject to approval by the Village Council and full execution by the Village and the selected attorney/firm.

Equal Opportunity

The Village is an equal opportunity employer and does not discriminate based on race, color, religion, sex, national origin, age, disability, or other protected status. Respondents shall comply with all applicable federal, state, and local laws and regulations.