

ROBERTA M. CORREA
MAYOR - COMMISSIONER

ANNIE H. DAVIS
COMMISSIONER

JUSTIN R. CAMPBELL, SR.
COMMISSIONER

WILL JONES
COMMISSIONER

RUFUS J. BOROM
COMMISSIONER

CYNTHIA W. CURRY
INTERIM CITY MANAGER

KAREN HAYES, MMC, FCPC
CITY CLERK

JASON L. SHAW, SR
CHIEF, POLICE DEPT

CHRIS TAYLOR
CHIEF, FIRE DEPT



AGENDA
CITY COMMISSION MEETING
August 5, 2026 at 5:00 PM

1. CALL TO ORDER

- a. Invocation
- b. Pledge of Allegiance
- c. Roll Call

2. PUBLIC COMMENTS

- a. **Public Comments** - (Speakers limited to three minutes - no action taken on items)
- b. **Commission and Staff Response**

3. REGULAR BUSINESS

- a. Termination of the Finance Director
- b. Concurrence in the Appointment of an Acting Finance Director
- c. Separation of the City Attorney
- d. Contracted Support for Emergency Transitional Legal Services for the City Of Palatka.

4. COMMISSIONER COMMENTS

5. ADJOURN

Upcoming Events	Board Vacancies Board of Zoning Appeals - 3 vacancies
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Termination of the Finance Director

STAFF REPORT

DATE: August 5, 2026
TO: City of Palatka City Commission
FROM: City Staff

APPLICATION REQUEST

The City Commission concur in the removal of Chantel Pierre as Finance Director, effective August 21, 2026 as required by Section 39(1) of the City Charter and Section 2-141 of the Code of Ordinances.

BACKGROUND

Charter and Code authority: Section 39(1) of the City Charter provides that the City Manager shall "appoint, and when necessary, suspend or remove the police chief, fire chief, finance director, city clerk and city attorney with the concurrence of a majority of the city commission." Section 2-141 of the Code of Ordinances carries the same standard for the Finance Director, providing that the position is appointed by the City Manager with the concurrence of a majority of the City Commission and serves for an indefinite term. The Charter conditions the removal of a director holding one of these five offices on the concurrence of the Commission. It does not require a statement of cause.

Action taken: On July 30, 2026, the Interim City Manager relieved Ms. Pierre of the duties of Finance Director. Ms. Pierre has remained a City employee since that date and remains one through the effective date of the removal.

Notice to Ms. Pierre: Human Resources will provide Ms. Pierre with written notice of the terms of her separation, covering the effective date, final pay, accrued leave, the end date of benefits, continuation coverage, the return of City property and who to contact.

PROJECT ANALYSIS

Vote required: Section 39(1) requires the concurrence of a majority of the City Commission. For the City of Palatka, which has a five member Commission, that is three affirmative votes.

Why the item is before the Commission in a public meeting: Section 286.011, Florida Statutes, requires that the collective action of a board or commission be taken at a noticed public meeting, and Florida law provides no exemption for personnel matters. Concurrence is

a collective act of the City Commission. It is therefore taken at a public meeting on a published agenda rather than through the individual agreement of members outside a meeting.

Effective date: The Commission's concurrence is taken on August 5, 2026. The removal is

effective August 21, 2026, so that the Commission's action precedes the removal it concerns. Ms. Pierre remains a city employee through the close of business on the effective date for payroll, benefits and personnel purposes. Human Resources will determine final pay and the payout of accrued leave under City policy.

Scope of the action: Concurrence under Section 39(1) is the Commission's agreement to the City Manager's exercise of the removal power. It is not a finding of cause, a disciplinary determination or an evaluation of Ms. Pierre's service, and the Charter does not require cause for the removal of a director appointed under Section 39(1).

Continuity of the Finance Department: The appointment of an Acting Finance Director is presented as a separate item on this agenda. Under Section 2-141 of the Code of Ordinances the Finance Director is the custodian of all funds of the City.

Staff Recommendation

Concur in the removal of Chantel Pierre as Finance Director, effective August 21, 2026.

ATTACHMENTS

None

STAFF REPORT

DATE: August 5, 2026
TO: City of Palatka City Commission
FROM: City Staff

APPLICATION REQUEST

The City Commission concur in the appointment of Jennifer Thompson as Acting Finance Director, effective retroactively to July 31, 2026, and approve the surety bond required by Section 2-141 of the Code of Ordinances.

BACKGROUND

Charter and Code authority: Section 39(1) of the City Charter provides that the City Manager shall "appoint, and when necessary, suspend or remove the police chief, fire chief, finance director, city clerk and city attorney with the concurrence of a majority of the city commission." Section 2-141 of the Code of Ordinances provides that there shall be a finance director, appointed by the City Manager with the concurrence of a majority of the City Commission, serving for an indefinite term. The same section makes the Finance Director the custodian of all moneys of the City and requires a surety bond in a sum of not less than \$50,000, payable to the City and approved by the City Commission.

Vacancy: The office of Finance Director is vacant.

Scope of the interim appointment: The day to day operations of the Finance Department.

PROJECT ANALYSIS

The appointee: Jennifer Thompson, Financial Services Supervisor, who served as second in charge in the Finance Department.

Term: The appointment is an acting appointment and continues until a Finance Director is appointed under Section 39(1) of the Charter and Section 2-141 of the Code of Ordinances.

Compensation: The current base salary is \$78,353.60. Additional pay of \$753.40 per pay period will be added to address increased workload in the acting role.

Surety bond: Section 2-141 requires the Finance Director to give a surety bond in a sum of not less than \$50,000, payable to the City and approved by the City Commission. The cost of the bond recommended for approval is approximately \$112, issued by vendor Bates, Hewett and Floyd.

Vote required: Section 39(1) requires the concurrence of a majority of the City Commission. For the City of Palatka, which has a five-member Commission, that is three affirmative votes.

Why the item is before the Commission in a public meeting: Section 286.011, Florida Statutes, requires that the collective action of a board or commission be taken at a noticed public meeting, and Florida law provides no exemption for personnel matters. Concurrence is a collective act of the City Commission. It is therefore taken at a public meeting on a published agenda rather than through the individual agreement of members outside a meeting.

Staff Recommendation

Concur in the appointment of Jennifer Thompson as Acting Finance Director, effective July 31, 2026, and approve the required surety bond associated with the position.

ATTACHMENTS

None

Separation of the City Attorney

The City Commission accepts the separation of Jane West as City Attorney, effective August 21, 2026, and approves the transition terms set out in the City's letter of August 3, 2026.

STAFF REPORT

DATE: August 5, 2026
TO: City of Palatka City Commission
FROM: City Staff

APPLICATION REQUEST

The City Commission accepts the separation of Jane West as City Attorney, effective August 21, 2026, and approves the transition terms set out in the City's letter of August 3, 2026.

BACKGROUND

The separation: On the afternoon of July 31, 2026, the Interim City Manager and the City Attorney met, with a representative of Human Resources present. During that meeting, Ms. West raised her departure from the City, asked that the Interim City Manager take the weekend to develop a severance package, and observed that the timing of her departure could work well given the City's budget process. The Interim City Manager agreed. The employment relationship will end by mutual agreement of Ms. West and the City.

Terms: The City confirmed the terms in writing to Ms. West on August 3, 2026. Her effective date of separation is August 21, 2026. she remains a City employee and the sitting City Attorney through the close of business that day. July 31, 2026, was her last official working day at City Hall. August 3 through August 7, 2026, is previously approved vacation leave, and August 10 through August 21, 2026, is a remote transition period, which will then conclude her employment.

Transition work: Ms. West has been asked to provide a written list of the open and pending matters of the City Attorney's Office before August 21, giving the status of each matter, every court, administrative, contractual or statutory deadline and its date, the internal and external points of contact, and where the supporting files and records are held. The City is arranging read-only and remote access to her City email account through August 21 so that she is able to prepare the list.

Severance: Ms. West requested a severance package. The City has considered the request and is not offering severance in connection with this separation at this time.

City records and City property: The legal files, work product, correspondence and electronic records Ms. West created or holds as City Attorney are the City's, including attorney-client privileged material, and the City has asked that all of it be surrendered as part of the transition. Human Resources will arrange the return of City property. Whatever remains of her personal belongings will be collected on a date and time Human Resources sets, accompanied by an

authorized City representative, so that personal property is separated from City records, legal files and privileged material before anything leaves the building.

PROJECT ANALYSIS

Charter and Code authority: Section 39(1) of the City Charter provides that the City Manager shall "appoint, and when necessary, suspend or remove the police chief, fire chief, finance director, city clerk and city attorney with the concurrence of a majority of the city commission." Section 2-105 of the Code of Ordinances provides that the City Attorney is appointed by the City Manager with the concurrence of a majority of the City Commission for an indefinite term. Those provisions govern an appointment and a removal. This separation is by mutual agreement rather than by removal, so concurrence under Section 39(1) is not required.

Why the item is before the Commission: The Commission's concurrence governs the office of City Attorney, the terms of the separation commit the City through August 21, 2026, and the Commission should have the separation on its record before the office changes hands. Approval requires a majority vote of the City Commission.

Continuity of legal services: Ms. West remains the City Attorney until August 21, 2026, and does not advise the Commission on this item. The Interim City Manager is arranging for outside counsel to cover the City's legal work by subject matter through the transition. The appointment of a City Attorney is made by the City Manager with the concurrence of a majority of the City Commission under Section 39(1) of the Charter and Section 2-105 of the Code of Ordinances, and would be presented to the Commission as a separate item.

Staff Recommendation

Accept the separation of Jane West as City Attorney, effective August 21, 2026, and approve the transition terms set out in the City's letter of August 3, 2026.

ATTACHMENTS

1.	Separation from Employment and Transition Requirements
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August 3, 2026

VIA ELECTRONIC MAIL AND U.S. MAIL

Ms. Jane West, Esq.
janewestlaw@gmail.com

RE: Separation from Employment and Transition Requirements

Dear Ms. West:

This letter confirms the terms of your separation from employment as City Attorney, the transition work the City is asking of you, and the administrative steps Human Resources will handle.

OUR MEETING OF JULY 31, 2026

We met on the afternoon of Friday, July 31, 2026, with a representative of Human Resources present.

During that meeting you raised your departure from the City. You asked that I take the weekend to develop a severance package, and you observed that the timing of your departure could work well given the City's budget process. I agreed. You then asked Human Resources to begin preparing a proposed package.

We concluded the meeting on that basis. It was understood that the employment relationship would end by mutual agreement, with the terms and the administrative details still to be determined. Those terms follow.

EFFECTIVE DATE OF SEPARATION

Friday, July 31, 2026 was your last day working at City Hall. Your effective date of separation is Friday, August 21, 2026. You remain a City employee through the close of business that day for payroll, benefits and personnel purposes.

August 3 through August 7, 2026 is previously approved vacation leave.

August 10 through August 21, 2026 is a remote transition period. During that period you will carry out the work needed for an orderly transition of the City Attorney's Office, and you will do that work remotely. Please do not report to City Hall or any other non-public City facility unless the Interim City Manager or Human Resources asks you to and authorizes it.

MATTER LIST

Please prepare a written list of the open and pending matters of the City Attorney's Office and provide it to me before August 21. For each matter, please give:

- The matter and its current status.
- Any court, administrative, contractual or statutory deadline, and the date of each.
- Anything that has to be completed during or immediately after the transition period.
- The internal and external points of contact.
- Where the supporting files and records are held.

So that you are able to prepare the list, the City is working on read-only access to your City email account through August 21. Human Resources will confirm that arrangement with you. Your other City system, network and facility access is closed.

Please also remain reachable during normal business hours through August 21 for questions about the transition.

PAY AND ACCRUED LEAVE

You will receive your regular compensation through August 21, 2026. After that date you will be paid for eligible accrued leave under City policy. Human Resources will review your leave and personnel records and will write to you about final pay, leave payout and benefits.

The City has considered your request for a severance package and is not offering severance in connection with this separation.

CITY RECORDS AND PRIVILEGED MATERIAL

The legal files, work product, correspondence, electronic records and other materials you created or hold as City Attorney are the City's, including attorney-client privileged material. The City asks that you surrender all of it. That request is separate from the matter list above and does not depend on it. Please do not remove, delete, alter or retain any City record except as the City authorizes. Nothing in this letter limits or alters your obligations under the Rules Regulating The Florida Bar. Your obligation to protect the City's privileged and confidential information continues after August 21.

CITY PROPERTY AND BUILDING ACCESS

Human Resources will arrange the return of City property in your possession. That includes City-issued equipment and devices, keys, identification and access credentials, purchasing or credit cards, and City files and records. Apart from the read-only email access above, your access to City systems, networks and facilities will be closed out through the City's separation procedure. Under Section 11.2 of the City's personnel policy, final pay is processed once the return of City property is confirmed, consistent with applicable law.

Personal belongings still in the City Attorney's Office will be collected on a date and time Human Resources sets, and an authorized City representative will accompany you while you collect them. This is so that personal property is separated from City records, legal files and privileged material before anything leaves the building. Please do not enter City Hall, the City Attorney's Office or any other non-public City work area to collect belongings without arranging it with Human Resources first.

WHO TO CONTACT

Human Resources is your contact for final pay, accrued leave, benefits, return of City property, collection of personal belongings and separation paperwork. Please direct questions about the status or handoff of pending legal matters to me.

Thank you for your service to the City.

Sincerely,



Cynthia W. Curry

Interim City Manager

cc: Jason White, Human Resources Director; personnel file

STAFF REPORT

DATE: August 5, 2026
TO: City of Palatka City Commission
FROM: City Staff

APPLICATION REQUEST

The City Commission concur in the engagement of Smith, Gambrell & Russell, LLP, with Lawsikia J. Hodges as lead attorney, to provide transitional legal services to the City for a limited period under the Firm's engagement letter of August 3, 2026, and approve a not to exceed amount of \$90,000 for those services, with the executed engagement letter to be brought back to the City Commission for approval.

BACKGROUND

Why the City needs counsel now: A separate item on this agenda addresses the separation of Jane West as City Attorney, effective August 21, 2026. Ms. West remains a City employee and the sitting City Attorney through the close of business that day, working remotely from August 10, and the office is vacant on August 22, 2026. The City's legal work does not pause for that transition. The interlocal agreement between the City and the City of Palatka Community Redevelopment Agency is mid-negotiation. The CRA Board meets on August 19, 2026, on its budget. The fire services assessment adopted by Resolution 2026-R-102 is to be revisited against budget and role data, the TRIM millage hearings fall in September, the firefighters' collective bargaining agreement is unratified, and roughly \$1,000,000 of the City's American Rescue Plan Act award is still to be spent against a December 31 federal deadline. Code enforcement lien matters and quasi-judicial land use hearings run throughout. The City's Purchasing Policy also requires the City Attorney to approve every City contract for legal sufficiency before it is signed, so, without counsel in place, contracts cannot be cleared and City business stops.

What this item is, and what it is not: This is the engagement of outside counsel for a limited period. It is not the appointment of a City Attorney. A City Attorney is appointed by the City Manager with the concurrence of a majority of the City Commission under Section 39(1) of the City Charter and Section 2-105 of the Code of Ordinances, and that appointment will come to the City Commission as a separate item at the conclusion of the City Attorney search. Ms. West remains the City Attorney through August 21, 2026, and does not advise the City Commission on this item. Approval requires a majority vote

PROJECT ANALYSIS

The City's legal needs: The City Manager's office built a profile of the legal work the City actually generates, drawn from the 2026 City Commission minutes, the CRA Board matters and action registers through July 2026, and the Commission matters and action register. It identifies 15 practice areas. Seven carry the heaviest and most time sensitive load: general

municipal counsel and ordinance drafting; community redevelopment under Chapter 163, Part III, Florida Statutes, and tax increment financing; public sector labor and collective bargaining; code enforcement, liens and collections; real estate, conveyances and surplus property; land use, zoning and annexation; and special assessments and local government finance. Sunshine Law, public records and ethics, public procurement and construction contracts, grants and federal funds compliance, and litigation and liability defense follow close behind. Counsel covering the transition has to answer that list, not a part of it.

The firm and the lead attorney: Smith, Gambrell & Russell, LLP is a national full service law firm with Florida offices in Jacksonville, Tampa and Miami. The Jacksonville office is approximately one hour and ten minutes from Palatka, which makes in person attendance at City Commission, CRA Board and Planning Board meetings practical rather than theoretical, and the firm's size means a specialist can be assigned from within the firm instead of the City engaging and paying to onboard separate counsel for each specialty. The attorneys assigned are Lawsikia J. Hodges and Daniel K. Bean, both Counsel, and Sabrina Smith, Associate. Ms. Hodges is Board Certified by The Florida Bar as a specialist in City, County and Local Government Law and serves on the Bar's certification committee for that specialty, which she formerly chaired. She has over 20 years of experience representing local governments, serves as Town Attorney for the Town of Orange Park and District Attorney for the Anastasia Mosquito Control District of St. Johns County, and was previously Deputy General Counsel in the Office of General Counsel at the City of Jacksonville, advising the Mayor, the 19 member City Council, special districts, independent authorities and local government boards. Her practice covers community redevelopment, interlocal and interagency agreements, government procurement, budget ordinances, federal and local grants, land use and zoning, quasi judicial proceedings, Sunshine Law compliance, public records management and state ethics law, which is close to a line by line match with the needs above and covers the matters that cannot wait.

Scope and procurement authority: The engagement letter covers attendance and participation at City Commission regular and special meetings, staff meetings, Planning Board meetings, and other quasi judicial proceedings including code enforcement hearings on request; review of routine government purchasing contracts, labor and employment matters and government real estate matters on request; and any other legal services the City Manager requests. Either party may end the engagement at any time on written notice. The City's Purchasing Policy exempts legal services, including attorneys, from quotes and from formal competitive solicitation, so no formal solicitation is required. What the policy does require is City Commission approval of the money. The City Manager's signature authority is \$25,000, the policy counts the entire commitment rather than an annual or monthly figure, and a term cannot be divided to stay under the threshold.

The amount: The City Commission is asked to approve a not-to-exceed amount rather than an estimate, because the engagement is billed hourly and the volume of transition work is not known in advance. An estimate authorizes nothing. A not to exceed amount is the City's authorization and its spending limit: the City Manager may commit up to that amount and no further, and return to the City Commission before exceeding it or if the search runs past the period the amount was sized on. Exhibit A to the engagement letter sets the Firm's approved discounted rates at \$415.00 an hour for Counsel and \$375.00 an hour for Associates, with paralegal time and disbursements billed separately. These rates are still in negotiation. The

table below covers the monthly hours from the meeting calendar and the scope above, counting preparation and travel with attendance because both are billable, and the drive is over an hour each way. At those rates, and assuming roughly two thirds Counsel time and one third Associate time, 45.0 hours a month is approximately \$18,000 a month before disbursements, and the amount recommended is \$90,000 covering approximately five months inclusive of disbursements. Five months carries the City from the vacancy through the fall budget and TRIM calendar and into the search. For comparison, the City Attorney position carried a salary and benefits of \$240,000 in fiscal year 2026. The Interim City Manager will review the budget, identify funding and determine if a budget amendment is needed. The hours below are an estimate for sizing the ceiling. They are not a commitment, and the City pays only for time actually worked.

Activity	Hours per month
City Commission meetings, preparation, attendance and travel	15.0
CRA Board and Planning Board meetings, preparation, attendance and travel	13.0
Staff meetings and consultation with the City Manager	4.0
Contract review, ordinance drafting, code enforcement, land use and public records	13.0
Estimated total	45.0

The rates are still being negotiated. The rates in Exhibit A are the Firm's approved discounted rates and are not final. The City Manager is continuing to negotiate the rate structure, and is pursuing a flat monthly amount covering recurring meeting attendance and routine review with hourly billing reserved for special matters, the treatment of travel time between Jacksonville and Palatka, a stated paralegal rate, assignment of routine work at the Associate rate rather than the Counsel rate, and a cap on disbursements. Any reduction achieved does not change the not to exceed amount. It extends the period that amount covers, which is the point of approving a ceiling rather than a monthly figure.

Term and approval of the engagement letter: The engagement begins August 6, 2026, or as soon as negotiations are finalized and continues until a City Attorney is appointed under Section 39(1) of the City Charter and Section 2-105 of the Code of Ordinances, bounded by the not to exceed amount rather than by a fixed end date, so the dollar ceiling is the control. The Firm's engagement letter is dated August 3, 2026, and takes effect, by its own terms, as of the date the Firm first provided services to the City. The executed letter will be brought to the City Commission for approval at its next regular meeting. The Purchasing Policy contemplates this sequence: emergency purchases are an exempt classification subject to retroactive approval, and emergency procurement is a listed sourcing method above \$25,000, an emergency being defined as one where the delay of complying with the ordinary rules and procedures would be detrimental to the health, safety and welfare of the City and its citizens. The City Commission's action on this item authorizes the City Manager to engage the Firm and to incur costs up to the not to exceed amount pending that approval, and ratifies services rendered before the date of this meeting.

Staff Recommendation

Concur in the engagement of Smith, Gambrell & Russell, LLP, with Lawsikia J. Hodges as lead attorney, to provide transitional legal services beginning August 6, 2026 and continuing until a City Attorney is appointed under Section 39(1) of the City Charter; approve a not to exceed amount of \$90,000 for those services, inclusive of disbursements; authorize the City Manager to continue to negotiate the rate structure and to execute the engagement letter; and direct that the executed engagement letter be presented to the City Commission for approval at its next regular meeting.

ATTACHMENTS

1.	City of Palatka - SGR Engagement(82597805.1)
2.	bio-hodges-lawsikia

Bank of America Tower
50 N. Laura Street, Suite 2600
Jacksonville, Florida 32202
Tel: 904-598-6100
www.sgrlaw.com



Lawsikia J. Hodges
Direct Tel: 904-598-6140
Direct Fax: 904-598-6240
lhodges@sgrlaw.com

August 3, 2026

VIA EMAIL – CCURRY@PALATKA-FL.GOV

Ms. Cynthia Curry, Interim City Manager
City Hall
201 N. 2nd Street
Palatka, FL 32177

Re: Interim Engagement for City Attorney - Legal Services

Dear Ms. Curry:

This will confirm that Smith Gambrell & Russell, LLP (sometimes hereinafter referred to as the “Firm”) has been engaged by the City of Palatka, a Florida municipal corporation (referred to herein as the “City”), to provide legal services to the City, including, but not limited to the following services (collectively, the “Services”):

1. Attendance and participation at City Commission regular and special meetings;
2. Attendance at staff meetings;
3. Attendance at City Planning Board meetings;
4. Attendance at other City quasi-judicial proceedings, including code enforcement hearings, upon request;
5. Review of routine government purchasing contracts upon request;
6. Review of labor and employment matters upon request;
7. Review of government real estate matters upon request; and
8. Any other legal services as requested by the City Manager.

We appreciate the opportunity to serve you. Our goals are to provide you with legal services of the highest quality and efficiency and to help you accomplish your objectives.

Our relationship should begin with a mutual understanding of expectations and should continue with full and candid communication between us throughout the course of our representation. Please let us know promptly if you have any questions at any time regarding any aspect of our Firm’s work for you.

The purpose of this letter is to set forth the terms and conditions under which this Firm undertakes to represent you. This letter will also apply to any other matters for which you retain this Firm now or in the future, unless otherwise agreed in writing. Our responsibilities under this agreement are to provide legal counsel and assistance to you in accordance with this letter, and to provide statements to you that indicate the basis for our fees and charges.

The Identity of Our Client. Our client in this engagement will be City of Palatka, a Florida municipal corporation, and you, Cynthia Curry, Interim City Manager, will serve as our primary contact.

How We Charge for Our Services. The primary attorneys working on this matter would be Lawsikia J. Hodges (Counsel), Daniel K. Bean (Counsel), and Sabrina Smith (Associate). The attorney rates are attached hereto as **Exhibit A**. Paralegals in the Jacksonville office providing Services will be billed at applicable rates. Attorney time will be billed on an hourly basis. Additionally, other attorneys, associates, and paralegals may be used to assist with providing the Services and in such cases their hourly billing rates shall apply. Disbursements, if any, for telephone charges, courier services, photocopying, and other out-of-pocket expenses will also be billed and itemized separately.

Client Responsibilities. You agree to cooperate fully with us and to provide promptly all information known or available to you relevant to our representation. You further agree to maintain contact with us during the course of the representation.

During the course of our engagement, we may express opinions or beliefs to you about the effectiveness of various courses of action or about the results that might be anticipated. Such statements are expressions of opinion only and should not be construed as promises or guaranties.

Termination. Either the Firm or you may terminate the engagement at any time for any reason by written notice, subject on our part to applicable rules of professional conduct. If permission for withdrawal is required by a court, we will promptly apply for such permission, and the Client agrees to engage successor counsel to represent you.

Conclusion of Representation; Retention and Disposition of Documents. Unless previously terminated, our representation of you will terminate upon our sending our final statement for services rendered in this matter or a closing statement or otherwise communicating to you in writing that the Firm's representation of you has concluded. Following such termination, any nonpublic information you have supplied us, and which is retained by us, will be maintained in accordance with applicable rules of professional conduct. At your request, and upon receipt of payment for outstanding fees and costs, your papers and property will be promptly returned.

Our own files pertaining to our engagement may be retained by the Firm. Firm files include, for example, Firm administrative records, time and expense reports, personnel and staffing materials, and credit and accounting records; and internal lawyers' work product such as

drafts, notes, internal memoranda, and legal and factual research, including investigative reports, prepared by or for the internal use of lawyers. All such documents retained by the Firm will be transferred to the person responsible for administering our records retention program. For various reasons, including the minimization of unnecessary storage expenses, we reserve the right to destroy or otherwise dispose of any such documents or other materials retained by us within a reasonable time after the termination of the engagement, usually five years.

Post-Engagement Matters. You are engaging the Firm to provide legal services in connection with the services described and referenced above. After completion of that matter, changes may occur in the applicable laws or regulations that could have an impact upon your future rights and liabilities. Unless you engage us after completion of the matter to provide additional advice on issues arising from the matter or specifically ask us to reevaluate the matter as part of our ongoing representation, the Firm has no continuing obligation to advise you with respect to future legal developments. This also includes any continuing obligation, whether during or after our engagement, to monitor future filings that may be necessary.

If the foregoing correctly reflects your understanding of the terms and conditions of our representation, please indicate your acceptance by executing a copy of this engagement letter in the space provided below (or on the following page) and returning it to our office.

We are pleased to have this opportunity to represent you.

Sincerely yours,

Lawsikia J. Hodges

APPROVAL OF ENGAGEMENT

The undersigned has read the above engagement letter and hereby agrees to its terms, and consents to Smith, Gambrell & Russell, LLP's representation of the undersigned on the terms set forth in the above letter, all effective as of the date on which Smith, Gambrell & Russell, LLP first provides/provided services to the undersigned.

By: _____
Cynthia Curry, Interim City Manager

Exhibit A

Approved Discounted Hourly Rates

Counsel	\$415.00
Associates	\$375.00

Lawsikia J. Hodges

COUNSEL

Jacksonville

904-598-6140 | lhodges@sgrlaw.com



Lawsikia Hodges has over 20 years of private and public transactional experience, and she represents local government clients in all facets of government operations. As one of her peers stated regarding Lawsikia, “her research is exhaustive, her opinions are always fully supported, and her effort on behalf of her client is relentless. She is respected by her colleagues and a pleasure to work with.” As the former Deputy General Counsel of the Office of General Counsel, City of Jacksonville, she has previously offered invaluable counsel to a wide array of City of Jacksonville, Duval County, governmental entities, including the Jacksonville Mayor, 19-member Jacksonville City Council, special districts, independent authorities, and various local government boards and commissions. Her practice spans across a broad spectrum of local government law and transactional work, encompassing real estate and public finance transactions, government procurement, budget ordinances, economic development and incentives, community redevelopment, federal and local grants, land use and zoning, interlocal and interagency government agreements, quasi-judicial proceedings, sunshine law compliance, public records management, and state ethics laws governing public officials and employees.

Lawsikia has led legal initiatives for several municipalities and special district governmental entities in Duval, St. Johns, and Clay Counties including the Jacksonville Port Authority (JAXPORT), JEA, Jacksonville Housing Authority (JHA), Jacksonville Housing Finance Authority (JHFA), Police and Fire Pension Board of Trustees (PFPF), the Research Development Authority (RDA), the Duval County School Board, the Anastasia Mosquito Control District of St. Johns County, and the Town of Orange Park. Lawsikia was instrumental in formulating policies and procedures for the City of Jacksonville’s Real Estate Code, Government Procurement Code, and Jacksonville Small and Emerging Business Program. She also formulated grant policies and procedures for the Downtown Investment Authority (DIA), Duval County Tourist Development Council (TDC), Public Service Grant Council, Kids Hope Alliance (KHA), and Jacksonville Housing and Community Development Commission (JHCDC).

Lawsikia is a member of several legal associations, including the Florida Bar Association, the Jacksonville Bar Association, the D.W. Perkins Bar Association, the Florida Association of County Attorneys, the Florida Municipal Lawyers Association, Jacksonville Women Lawyers Association, the Jacksonville Women's Network, and the Catholic Lawyers Guild. Lawsikia is a Leadership Jacksonville and Leadership Clay graduate, and she currently serves on the nonprofit boards of the Museum of Contemporary Art Jacksonville, Inc. (MOCA), WJCT Inc., , Young Catholic Professionals, Inc. (Jacksonville Chapter), the Nonprofit Center of Northeast Florida, Inc., Pace Center for Girls Clay, and Challenge Enterprises of North Florida, Inc. Lawsikia is an active member of St. Catherine of Siena Catholic Church where she serves as a lector, adorer, eucharistic minister, and lay ecclesial minister. She enjoys spending time with her family, reading spiritual books, and attending the Jacksonville Symphony.

Lawsikia's Practice

Governmental Affairs

Government Procurement

City, County, and Local Government Law

Real Estate

Representative Matters

- Serves as the Town Attorney for the Town of Orange Park, Florida, overseeing all legal services for the town regarding parliamentary procedures, town council meetings, ordinance and statutory interpretations, contracts, procurement, collective bargaining, code enforcement hearings, red-light camera hearings, planning and zoning meetings, redevelopment agreements, real estate, home rule and police power, sunshine law, public records, ethics and financial disclosure
- Serves as the District Attorney for the Anastasia Mosquito Control District of St. Johns County, overseeing all legal services for the special district regarding parliamentary procedures, district meetings, statutory interpretations, sunshine law, public records, and ethics and financial disclosure
- Advised and represented clients on all facets of the local government legislative process, including filing legislation and attending public meetings
- Represented clients in all facets of local government economic incentives, including historic preservation grants, revenue enhancement grants, façade grants, and multi-million redevelopment incentives and economic development agreements
- Counseled public and private clients on government procurement contracts and matters, including government solicitation responses, bid protests proceedings, small business

programs, engineering and design services contracts, energy efficiency and savings contracts, public private partnerships, and overhaul of procurement policies, procedures and contracts

- Represented and advocated for public and elected officials seeking favorable advisory ethics opinions before the State of Florida Commission on Ethics
- Served as issuer counsel on tax exempt conduit bond finance projects for housing finance authority and housing authorities for rehabilitation and new construction family development totaling over 150 million
- Led multiple substantial charter and ordinance code rewrites in the areas of procurement, community redevelopment, small businesses, state and local grants, and housing
- Counseled and represented private clients in code enforcement hearings regarding county and municipal code enforcement violations

Honors & Recognitions

AV Preeminent Martindale-Hubbell Peer Review Rated Attorney

Florida Bar Special Committee, Sustainability Initiative for Attorneys

Florida Bar Board Certified Specialist in City, County and Local Government Law

Florida Bar City, County and Local Government Certification Committee, Member (Former Chair)

Florida Trend "Legal Elite" Top Government Attorney

Jacksonville City Council Resolution 2024-263-A - Recognition for Outstanding Career

Leadership Clay Graduate

Leadership Jacksonville Graduate

Credentials

Education

J.D., University of Florida Levin College of Law, Honors

B.A., University of North Florida, Political Science, Honors

Admissions

Florida

Organizational Involvement

Professional

Catholic Lawyers Guild

Clay Bar Association

D.W. Perkins Bar Association

Florida Association of County Attorneys

Florida Bar Association

Florida Municipal Lawyers Association

Jacksonville Bar Association

Jacksonville Women Lawyers Association

Jacksonville Women's Network

Community

Board Member, Challenge Enterprises of North Florida, Inc.

Board Member, Museum of Contemporary Art Jacksonville, Inc.

Board Member, Nonprofit Center of Northeast Florida, Inc.

Board Member, Pace Center for Girls Clay

Board Member, Young Catholic Professionals, Jacksonville Chapter

Board Trustee, WJCT, Inc.

SGR News & Perspectives

FIRM NEWS

Lawsikia Hodges quoted in Clay Today article, "Hodges, Orr appointed to Florida Bar Special Committee" on August 21, 2025 (subscription may be required)

FIRM NEWS

Lawsikia Hodges featured in Jacksonville Daily Record article, "Lawsikia Hodges named Orange Park's town attorney" on August 19, 2024 (subscription may be required)

FIRM NEWS

Lawsikia Hodges featured in Jacksonville Daily Record article, "Lawsikia Hodges joins Smith, Gambrell & Russell" on May 7, 2024 (subscription may be required)

FIRM NEWS

Lawsikia Hodges quoted in Law360 Pulse article, "Smith Gambrell Hires Ex-Jacksonville, Fla., Deputy City Atty" on April 18, 2024 (subscription may be required)

FIRM NEWS

Lawsikia Hodges featured in Florida Politics article, "Former Jacksonville Deputy General Counsel Lawsikia Hodges joins private firm" on April 18, 2024

PRESS RELEASE

Smith Gambrell Russell Welcomes Former City of Jacksonville Deputy General Counsel Lawsikia J. Hodges