



MINUTES

AD HOC LEGAL SERVICES REVIEW COMMITTEE

Monday, December 01, 2025

5:00 PM

Village Hall – 21 East Church Street, Lake Orion, MI 48362

(248) 693-8391 ext. 102

1. Call to Order

The December 1, 2025, Ad Hoc Legal Services Review Committee Meeting was called to order at 5:00 PM by Village Manager McClary.

2. Roll Call and Determination of Quorum

PRESENT

Council Member Alex Comparoni Jr
Council Member George Dandalides (remote)
Council Member Eric Papacek
Village Manager Darwin McClary
Police Chief Mark Amundson

STAFF PRESENT

Deputy Clerk/Treasurer Lynsey Blough

3. Minute Approval

A. Approval of Minutes of Ad Hoc Legal Services Review Committee Meeting of November 17, 2025

MOTION made by Council Member Dandalides, Seconded by Council Member Comparoni Jr, to approve the Minutes of the November 17, 2025 Ad Hoc Legal Services Review Committee Meeting, as presented.

VOTING YEA: Comparoni Jr, Dandalides, Papacek, McClary, Amundson

VOTING NAY: None

ABSENT: None

MOTION: Carried

4. Call to the Public

None.

5. Other Items

A. Review of Legal Services Proposals – Bloom Sluggett, Foster Swift, and Sherman & Sherman

Village Manager McClary informed the Committee that a page was missing from the Bloom Sluggett packet due to a copier error in which two pages were pulled through together. He distributed the missing page and offered Committee members five minutes to review it and adjust their ratings if needed before continuing with the discussion.

Council Member Papacek shared his evaluations of the remaining proposals. He placed Bloom Sluggett at the bottom of his rankings, citing a misaddressed submission, lighter experience, weaker responsiveness, two recent municipal client terminations, less organized materials, and pricing that was not competitive. He rated Foster Swift much higher, noting their DDA experience, four-hour response time, and familiarity with Village issues, though he was concerned about staff split between locations and their higher \$275 hourly rate. He also scored Sherman & Sherman well, appreciating their concise proposal and low \$135 hourly rate, though he noted the firm's smaller size and potential outsourcing of certain matters.

Council Member Comparoni Jr. agreed with Council Member Papacek's assessments. He did not recommend Bloom Sluggett, citing their Detroit location, higher fees, and the packet error, which he felt reflected poor organization. For Foster Swift, he felt they were generally solid and had adequate staffing, but thought their proposal focused more on the firm than their expertise, and he noted missing information regarding complaints or municipal terminations. He also found their proposal harder to navigate and was put off by the higher cost. Comparoni expressed a strong preference for Sherman & Sherman, praising their simple, clear presentation, smaller size, and willingness to assist. Aside from giving slightly lower marks for number of attorneys and staff, he viewed Sherman & Sherman as one of his top choices for interviews.

Council Member Dandalides rated Foster Swift fairly well but noted concerns, including their failure to name specific attorneys for prosecutions and civil litigation, the presence of key staff in Grand Rapids rather than Southfield, and an hourly rate he felt was too high. He rejected Bloom Sluggett outright, citing the proposed village attorney's minimal experience, vague responses, lack of named attorneys for major duties, and poor explanations regarding municipal terminations. He initially viewed Sherman & Sherman's small size as a drawback but ultimately ranked them much higher after reviewing their proposal, noting their strong court relationships, proactive approach, and potential to provide more engaged, forward-thinking service. He suggested their small size could be an advantage and felt overall rankings might not depend strictly on scores.

Police Chief Amundson found this set of firms less impressive than the first. He recommended eliminating Bloom Sluggett due to errors in their submission, weak organization, vague answers, unexplained municipal terminations, and high pricing. He also had major concerns

with Foster Swift, citing missing responses, a high hourly rate with travel charges, and no clearly identified prosecutor. Sherman & Sherman scored better, and he liked their court engagement, but noted their small staff, limited discussion of key Village issues, and potential concerns that their low \$135 rate might lead to hidden costs or quick plea deals. While he saw some strengths, he remained cautious and was not confident with them.

Village Manager McClary summarized his ratings of the proposals. He rated Bloom Sluggert lowest due to limited experience, distant office, inexperienced attorneys, weak responses, small staff, and high pricing (172 points). Foster Swift scored higher (271 points) despite concerns about office location, lack of a named prosecutor, and high rates. Sherman & Sherman fell in the middle (259 points) due to small staff and limited specialty information, though their pricing was favorable. Overall, he noted that the ratings clearly reflected the relative strengths and weaknesses of the proposals.

B. Selection of Legal Firms for Interviews and Schedule Interview Dates and Times

The Committee discussed ranking their top firms for interviews. Village Manager McClary asked if members were ready to identify their top three or four. Police Chief Amundson suggested an alternative approach of voting yes or no on interviews for each firm rather than relying solely on scores, noting the top firms were very close in points. Members generally agreed, with Council Members Dandalides and Papacek noting that while three firms could streamline the process, a fourth might also be worth considering. Chief Amundson identified Beier Howlett, Giarmarco, Mullins & Horton, and Secrest Wardle as his top three, with Sherman & Sherman as a potential fourth. Council Members Dandalides, Comparoni Jr., and Papacek shared slightly different top-three rankings, with Sherman & Sherman appearing in most members' top four. The group also discussed interview logistics, estimating roughly 45 minutes per firm plus discussion, making a three- or four-firm session about three to four hours. Village Manager McClary noted that while Sherman & Sherman had strengths, their small office size was a concern, and he felt Foster Swift and Giarmarco, Mullins & Horton might be stronger overall, though he was not opposed to including Sherman & Sherman in interviews.

MOTION made by Council Member Comparoni Jr, Seconded by Council Member Dandalides, to select the following legal services firms for interviews with the Legal Services Review Committee: Beier Howlett, Giarmarco, Mullins & Horton, Secrest Wardle, and Sherman & Sherman.

VOTING YEA:	Comparoni Jr, Dandalides, Papacek, McClary, Amundson
VOTING NAY:	None
ABSENT:	None
MOTION:	Carried

The Committee checked their calendar and availability.

MOTION by Police Chief Amundson, Seconded by Council Member Papacek, to schedule possible dates and times for the legal services firms' interviews as follows: Tuesday, December 9, 2025, from 4:00 PM to 7:00 PM, Wednesday, December 10, 2025, from 4:00 PM to 7:00 PM, and Monday, December 15, 2025, from 4:00 PM to 7:00 PM.

VOTING YEA: Comparoni Jr, Dandalides, Papacek, McClary, Amundson
VOTING NAY: None
ABSENT: None
MOTION: Carried

C. Preparation of Legal Services Interview Questions

The committee focused on preparing interview questions for the four selected legal firms. Village Manager McClary suggested limiting questions to about 10 due to the 45-minute interview timeframe and proposed reviewing members' suggestions to reach consensus. Committee members emphasized asking questions that clarify proposals, probe deeper, or explore proactive and innovative legal services rather than repeating information already provided. Key themes included cost management (fee structures, onboarding, estimated hours, and controlling expenses), experience with municipal law (ordinances, DDA/TIF, riparian rights, environmental regulations), responsiveness and firm resources, and proactive legal advice.

Committee members also highlighted the importance of assessing each firm's ability to bring "outside-the-box" solutions, such as improving village operations, addressing outdated ordinances, or exploring major initiatives like potential consolidation with the township. Questions on police-related legal matters, fourth amendment issues, pretrial negotiations, subpoenas, and training were also included.

The group agreed to condense and finalize the questions to about 10–11, with Village Manager McClary tasked with drafting them and sending them back for further refinement.

6. Adjournment

MOTION made by Council Member Comparoni Jr, Seconded by Council Member Papacek, to adjourn the December 1, 2025, Ad Hoc Legal Services Review Committee Meeting.

VOTING YEA: Comparoni Jr, Dandalides, Papacek, McClary, Amundson
VOTING NAY: None
ABSENT: None
MOTION: Carried

The December 1, 2025, Ad Hoc Legal Services Review Committee Meeting adjourned at 6:30 PM.

Darwin McClary
Chairperson

Lynsey Blough, CMC
Deputy Clerk/Treasurer

Date Approved: as presented on December 10, 2025