



**BOARD OF SUPERVISORS
AGENDA LETTER**

Agenda Number:

Clerk of the Board of Supervisors
105 E. Anapamu Street, Suite 407
Santa Barbara, CA 93101
(805) 568-2240

Submitted on:
(COB Stamp)

Department Name: Public Defender
Department No.: 023
Agenda Date: March 10, 2026
Placement: Administrative Agenda
Estimated Time: N/A
Continued Item: No
If Yes, date from: <Insert Date>
Vote Required: 4/5

TO: Board of Supervisors
FROM: Department Director: Tracy M. Macuga, Public Defender
Contact: Paloma Moran, Fiscal and Business Analyst
SUBJECT: Agreement with JusticeText, Inc. for Digital Evidence and Discovery Management Platform Services

County Counsel Concurrence

As to form: Yes

Other Concurrence: CEO Budget, Risk Management

As to form: Yes

Auditor-Controller Concurrence

As to form: Yes

Recommended Actions:

That the Board of Supervisors:

- A. Approve and authorize the Chief Public Defender, or designee, to execute an agreement with JusticeText, Inc., a Delaware corporation, for a site-wide license of the JusticeText Platform for the Santa Barbara County Public Defender’s Office, in the total amount not to exceed \$345,000 for a five-year term beginning March 1, 2026 and ending February 28, 2031; and
- B. Approve the attached Budget Revision Request No. 0010788 (4/5 vote required) increasing appropriations by \$69,000 in the General County Programs budget (General Fund) under Intrafund Expenditure Transfers, funded by the release of Unassigned Fund Balance, and increasing appropriations by \$69,000 in the Public Defender’s Office General Fund budget under Services and Supplies, funded by an intrafund transfer from General County Programs associated with the release of fund balance from the Tech Innovation Fund; and
- C. Determine that the above actions are government fiscal activities or funding mechanisms which do not involve any commitment to any specific project which may result in a potentially significant physical impact on the environment and are therefore not a project under the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) pursuant to Section 15378(b)(4) of the CEQA guidelines.

Summary Text:

The Public Defender's Office requests Board approval to enter into a five-year agreement with JusticeText, Inc. for a site-wide license to its cloud-based audio and video evidence management and transcription platform. The JusticeText system will provide all Public Defender staff with secure access to store, organize, search, and review discovery materials, including audio and video evidence. The system will support up to 240 hours of audio/video uploads per user, per year, and includes AI-assisted transcription, search, and redaction features.

Adoption of this agreement will significantly improve the office's ability to manage growing volumes of multimedia evidence, reduce delays in case preparation, and improve efficiency in discovery review and compliance.

Discussion:

The JusticeText system complements, but does not duplicate, the County's recently approved NICE DEMS contract. While NICE primarily supports law enforcement digital evidence workflows, JusticeText is tailored to the specific operational needs of the defense function, including attorney-client confidentiality and privileged work product protections.

Key Capabilities of JusticeText:

- AI-Assisted Transcription & Search: Automatic transcription of uploaded files, with keyword search to quickly locate relevant content.
- Secure Cloud Access: Role-based permissions ensuring confidentiality of privileged material.
- Collaboration Tools: Ability to annotate, share, and organize evidence by case.
- Scalability: Supports upload capacity of 240 hours of media per user, per year, across the office.

Operational Benefits:

- Reduces staff time spent on manual review and transcription.
- Enables quicker identification of key facts for motions, hearings, and trial preparation.
- Improves compliance with discovery deadlines.
- Provides a standardized workflow for handling multimedia discovery.

Background:

In December 2024, your Board approved the County's contract with NICE Systems, Inc. for the Digital Evidence Management System (DEMS), effective January 1, 2025. NICE DEMS, which is currently undergoing implementation led by ITD, will serve as the County's system of record for the secure intake, storage, management, and retention of digital evidence, with functionality focused on evidence integrity, chain-of-custody tracking, access controls, and long-term preservation, primarily for law enforcement agencies.

JusticeText serves a different and complementary purpose. While NICE DEMS focuses on evidence management and preservation, JusticeText is designed to support the review, analysis, and litigation use of multimedia discovery materials by public defense agencies. JusticeText offers advanced, defense-oriented functionality not available in NICE DEMS, including automated transcription,

keyword and issue-based search across recordings, speaker identification, annotation tools, and collaborative workflows tailored to attorneys and investigators.

The volume, complexity, and importance of digital discovery materials in criminal defense cases have increased exponentially over the past decade. Public Defender staff now routinely handle large quantities of multimedia evidence from multiple sources, including law enforcement, witnesses, and third-party entities. Traditional manual review processes are time-consuming, prone to delay, and require repeated playback of lengthy recordings.

The JusticeText platform provides an integrated, cloud-based repository with automatic transcription, search, and annotation tools designed for public defense agencies. These tools improve the speed and accuracy of reviews, enable rapid identification of relevant statements or events, and enhance collaboration between attorneys and investigators.

The Public Defender's Office has evaluated available products and determined that JusticeText is the only purpose-built public defense platform that integrates secure multimedia storage with automated transcription and case-specific analytical tools. JusticeText does not replace NICE DEMS; rather, it operates downstream of law enforcement evidence systems, enabling Public Defender staff to efficiently review, analyze, and prepare discovery materials that have already been produced in criminal cases.

Performance Measure:

The JusticeText platform is expected to deliver measurable results in four key areas:

- **Cost Savings:** By replacing a significant portion of outsourced transcription with AI-assisted transcription, the Public Defender's Office anticipates reducing annual transcription costs by at least 40%, representing an estimated \$15,000 reduction within the first year of implementation. These savings will free up resources for other operational priorities while maintaining high levels of accuracy and reliability in transcript production.
- **Discovery Volume Capacity:** With the ability to upload up to 240 hours of audio or video evidence per authorized user per year, the platform will enable the office to process and store more than 12,000 hours of discovery annually. This capacity will ensure a timely and comprehensive review of evidence across all active cases, without the risk of bottlenecks or capacity constraints.
- **Data Security & Compliance:** JusticeText's cloud-based platform meets stringent security standards, including role-based permissions, encrypted storage, and access audit logs. The system will be configured to maintain 100% compliance with County data security protocols and legal confidentiality requirements for attorney-client privileged material. Performance will be tracked through regular security audits and access log monitoring.
- **Collaboration & Access:** The platform's centralized repository and annotation tools will enhance internal collaboration among attorneys, investigators, and legal support staff. The goal is to achieve at least 90% active user adoption within six months of implementation, with staff reporting improved efficiency and effectiveness in case preparation. User feedback will be gathered through post-implementation surveys, with a target satisfaction rating of 85% or higher.

Contract Renewals:

JusticeText was selected because it provides a secure, AI-assisted transcription and case analysis platform specifically designed for public defense organizations and is currently utilized by numerous

public defender offices nationwide. The service addresses a new and emerging operational need to efficiently manage digital evidence and reduce transcription costs. Given the platform's specialized, defense-oriented nature and limited availability in the marketplace, this procurement qualifies as a non-competitive purchase consistent with County policy. A competitive bid process was not conducted because comparable defense-specific technology is not readily available through general transcription or software vendors.

There is minimal risk to the County. Fiscal exposure is limited to the contract amount, and anticipated reductions in outsourced transcription costs are expected to offset expenditures over time.

Fiscal and Facilities Impacts:

Budgeted: No; recommend approval of BJE 0010788 attached.

Fiscal Analysis:

Funding for JusticeText licenses and one-time implementation costs are provided by the General Fund. The funding comes from a set aside in the Technology Innovation Fund that was intended for digital evidence management systems such as JusticeText.

Funding Source	FY 2025-26	FY 2026-27	FY 2027-28	FY 2028-29	FY 2029-30	Total
General Fund	\$69,000	\$69,000	\$69,000	\$69,000	\$69,000	\$345,000
State						
Federal						
Fees						
Total	\$69,000	\$69,000	\$69,000	\$69,000	\$69,000	\$345,000

Staffing Impacts:

There is no new staffing requests associated with this agreement.

Special Instructions:

Please return one Minute Order to Paloma Moran at pmoran@countyofsb.org.

Attachments:

Attachment A – Agreement with Justice Text, Inc.

Attachment B – Budget Revision # 0010788

Contact Information:

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