



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

**Department Name:** County Counsel  
**Department No.:** 013  
**For Agenda Of:** November 7, 2023  
**Placement:** Administrative  
**Estimated Time:** N/A  
**Continued Item:** No  
**If Yes, date from:**  
**Vote Required:** 4/5<sup>ths</sup>

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**TO:** Board of Supervisors  
Board of Directors, Flood Control and Water Conservation District

**FROM:** County Counsel Rachel Van Mullem, County Counsel (805) 568-2950  
Contact Info: Amber Holderness, Chief Assistant County Counsel (805) 568-2950

**SUBJECT:** Approve Eight Amendment to Agreement for Professional Legal Services with Outside Counsel Meyers Nave

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**County Counsel Concurrence**

As to form: Yes

Other Concurrence: Risk Management

As to form: Yes

**Auditor-Controller Concurrence**

As to form: Yes

**Recommended Actions:**

- a) Approve, ratify, and authorize the Chair to execute, on behalf of the County of Santa Barbara and the Santa Barbara County Flood Control & Water Conservation District, the attached Eighth Amendment to Agreement for Professional Legal Services with the law firm Meyers Nave to increase the contract amount by \$1,450,000 for a total not to exceed contract amount of \$8,000,000; and
- b) Determine that the above action is not a project under the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) pursuant to CEQA Guidelines Sections 15378(b)(4) and 15378(b)(5) because it consists of government administrative or fiscal activities that will not result in direct or indirect physical changes in the environment.

**Summary Text:**

The Board first approved the attached Agreement for Professional Legal Services with Meyers Nave on August 28, 2018. The primary purpose was to secure legal advice and representation from Outside Counsel in defending the County of Santa Barbara and the Santa Barbara County Flood Control & Water Conservation District against tort and real property claims and litigation arising from the Thomas Fire and resulting debris flow. A major part of the pending litigation is an attempt by Southern California Edison to shift more than a billion dollars of Edison's liability to the County, the District, and other public entities.

For the past five plus years, Meyers Nave has been coordinating closely and effectively with County Counsel to defend against Edison’s allegations. We anticipate that the litigation will continue for months, if not years. Most recently, Meyers Nave has engaged in significant pre-trial discovery and the filing of dispositive motions, including filing a motion for summary adjudication. That motion is pending a final ruling by the Los Angeles County Superior Court, which is expected in November 2023. If successful, the motion could reduce the County’s potential exposure in the litigation by hundreds of millions of dollars. We anticipate continued pre-trial discovery and additional motion practice to address other of Edison’s claims over the next several months. For those reasons, County Counsel recommends increasing to \$8,000,000 the Agreement’s current payment limit of \$6,550,000. All other provisions of the agreement will remain as previously approved by the Board.

We expect that the excess insurer for the County and the District—PRISM, formerly CSAC-EIA—will reimburse most of the costs of defending against Edison’s litigation, including the costs of Meyers Nave’s services under this contract. Risk Management and County Counsel asked PRISM to begin those reimbursements immediately, which PRISM began to make in February 2021.

**Performance Measure:** N/A

**Contract Renewals and Performance Outcomes:** N/A

**Fiscal and Facilities Impacts:**

Budgeted: Yes

**Key Contract Risks:**

The Office of County Counsel reviewed the Contract Risk Assessment Worksheet as part of our process. Exhibit A of the Agreement (“Statement of Work”) provides that the Board, acting through its County Counsel, expressly retains the authority to direct and control the course and conduct of the litigation, including the exclusive right to make decisions regarding settlement.

A Request for Proposals was not required for this selection.

**Staffing Impacts:** None

**Special Instructions:** Please forward a signed copy to Amber Holderness at [aholderness@countyofsb.org](mailto:aholderness@countyofsb.org).

**Attachments:**

- a) Agreement for Professional Legal Services [8/28/18]
- b) Amendment to Agreement for Professional Legal Services [7/16/19]
- c) Second Amendment to Agreement for Professional Legal Services [10/15/19]
- d) Second [*sic*] Amendment to Agreement for Professional Legal Services [3/10/20]
- e) Fourth Amendment to Agreement for Professional Legal Services [9/01/20]
- f) Fifth Amendment to Agreement for Professional Legal Services [1/26/21]
- g) Sixth Amendment to Agreement for Professional Legal Services [9/20/22]
- h) Seventh Amendment to Agreement for Professional Legal Services [4/4/23]
- i) Eighth Amendment to Agreement for Professional Legal Services

**Authored by:** Amber Holderness, Chief Assistant County Counsel

**cc:** Risk Management