

March 29, 2024

VIA EMAIL to: [hammondb@cityofboardman.com](mailto:hammondb@cityofboardman.com)

Brandon Hammond  
City Manager  
City of Boardman

Re: Rate Increase

Dear Brandon:

It has been a pleasure to serve as legal counsel to the City of Boardman (“City”). All of us at Beery, Elsner & Hammond, LLP (“BEH”) hope the City continues to find our services valuable and responsive to your needs.

As you are likely aware, BEH was founded with the goal of creating a law office for all local governments, regardless of size, that would be similar in nature to the in-house legal departments of larger jurisdictions. To do this, we have compiled a team of attorneys, each of whom has a general background in municipal law as well as an expertise in another area of law often needed by local governments. This team approach ensures that our clients not only receive top-notch legal services tailored to their needs, but that they receive such services in an affordable manner.

We at BEH feel strongly about this mission, and we appreciate your participation in our “great experiment.” Our dedication to local governments and all the good that they do for our communities makes our work fulfilling and worthwhile. At the same time, however, we recognize that inflation rates have continued to be exceptionally high since we last examined our rates in 2022, and the labor market still presents many challenges for employers. Statewide, the recruitment and retention of municipal attorneys has become particularly difficult in recent years. Because of these factors, and after much deliberation, we have determined that it is necessary to adjust our rates in order to keep pace with increasing operating costs, including recruitment and retention of attorneys and staff. However, we also recognize that we must remain affordable for those clients that rely on our firm to provide ongoing services such as serving as their city attorney, district general counsel, land use counsel or labor counsel. For these types of clients, we have established discounted hourly rates, effective July 1, 2024, that will be as follows:

Partner and Of Counsel	\$305.00
Senior Associate	\$285.00
Associate	\$265.00
Paralegal	\$185.00
Legal Assistant	\$160.00
Law Clerk	\$100.00

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In deciding on these changes, we considered the regional inflation rate over the past two years as well as hourly rates within the overall legal market and among other government practitioners. Recognizing that inflation affects government entities differently than private sector companies, it was important to us that any increase still remains below the annual average increases for the applicable consumer price index (CPI-U). In addition, based on our review of the market, we found that these rates are still significantly lower than industry standard for attorneys with our level of experience, and competitive with or lower than other government practitioners.

You will also notice a few changes besides simply adjusting rates. First, we have added a new rate category for law clerks. We are excited to let you know that we are starting a law clerk program this summer for current law students, with the goal of helping to shape future attorneys while nurturing law students' interests in municipal law. This program is one part of the firm's efforts to help address the current challenges in the municipal attorney labor market. Even though the law clerk rate is already low, we commit to monitoring billing so that you are only billed for law clerk work product that meets our high standards and provides meaningful benefit to our clients. Because this is a new rate category for BEH that was not part of our existing rate schedule, and our law clerk program is commencing in May, this specific change will be effective May 1, 2024 for all clients.

Second, our market research revealed that, while our 2022 associate rate was competitive, our rates for more senior attorneys were exceptionally low. In recognition of the years of experience, foundational municipal law knowledge, and resulting efficiencies and reduced time it takes senior attorneys to complete legal work, we have raised these rates while holding the associate rate at the same 2022 level. We believe having a wider differential among our rates is consistent with the regional legal market, and that all of our rates nevertheless remain competitive with or below those of other government practitioners.

We are grateful for your understanding and trust that these changes will help us continue providing you with superior service. If you have any questions or concerns, please feel free to call to me to discuss.

Sincerely,



Chad A. Jacobs

CAJ/yh