

Proposal for Provision of Prosecuting Attorney Services

Aaron J. Michels

Michels Law

25423 Lakeview Drive, Cohasset MN 55721

907-414-2040

February 21, 2025

General Information:

I am interested in the Grand Rapids City Prosecuting Attorney position. My deep connection to Grand Rapids, and experience practicing law in Minnesota and throughout Alaska, make me the ideal fit for this position.

I grew up in Grand Rapids and graduated from Grand Rapids High School in 2000. I received my bachelor's degree from the University of Wisconsin - Stevens Point in 2004. After graduating from college, I worked as a wildland firefighter for the U.S. Forest Service in Deer River and then as a sports and outdoors writer for the Hibbing Daily Tribune, before attending the University of St. Thomas School of Law in Minneapolis. I graduated and was admitted to the Minnesota Bar in 2010 and performed a full-time internship at the Itasca County Attorney's Office during the summer of 2009. I worked as a judicial law clerk for Judge Gary J. Pagliaccetti in Virginia, Minnesota, for over a year, from March 2011 until April 2012, working at times for all three judges in Virginia, including Judge James B. Florey and Judge Terrence M. Aronson.

I moved to Alaska in 2012 and was a criminal prosecutor in Alaska from 2012 to 2016. I worked as an assistant district attorney in the Kotzebue District Attorney's Office for nearly three years, along with one other attorney. Our support staff consisted of one secretary and one paralegal. We prosecuted all the criminal cases that occur in the Northwest Arctic region of Alaska. My job consisted of managing my half of the Kotzebue criminal docket (we split nearly 1,000 cases per year alphabetically) in all stages of proceedings including charging decisions, arraignments, grand jury presentations, plea negotiations, motion work, and trials. My caseload consisted of everything from violation-level offenses to the most serious felonies. I have also served in the Palmer, Bethel, and Ketchikan District Attorney's Offices. I had the opportunity to return to Kotzebue in 2016 as the magistrate judge. In this position I was responsible for presiding over a wide variety of cases including minor offenses, misdemeanors in all stages, pre-indictment felonies, various civil matters, delinquency, child in need of aid (CINA), and protective orders. In my free time, I pursued the spectacular hunting, fishing, and trapping opportunities that Kotzebue offers. After leaving Kotzebue, I covered the Utqiagvik magistrate judge position remotely for three months. I was an Alaska magistrate judge for seven years.

In 2023, our family, including my wife and our three daughters, left Alaska to move back home to Grand Rapids. Since 2023, I have worked as a prosecutor again for the State of Alaska, now living in the Grand Rapids area and working remotely for the Utqiagvik District Attorney's Office. I have been a criminal prosecutor for five-plus years in total. For the past 13 years I have been practicing criminal law as a prosecutor, or on the bench, and have been in court, in person or remotely, on almost a daily basis. Grand Rapids has always been home. I am happy to be back home with my family, living - hunting, fishing, playing sports - and taking part in this community again. I care deeply about the safety of this community. Keeping Grand Rapids safe from crime is one of the most basic and important things we can do to maintain a high standard of living. I want to do my part.

In summary, my unique set of skills and experience make me the ideal fit for this position. Thank you for your consideration.

Additional Information:

I would be the sole attorney and primary contact, assigned to the City of Grand Rapids. My wife, Dara Michels is the law office assistant/paralegal/office manager.

Contact information is:

Address: 25423 Lakeview Drive, Cohasset MN 55721

Phone: Aaron: 907-414-2040; Dara: 907-617-8281

Email: Aaron: aaron@michelslawmn.com or Dara: admin@michelslawmn.com

Police: I have experience working daily with various state, regional, and municipal law enforcement agencies, including the Alaska State Troopers, North Slope Borough Police Department, Fairbanks Police Department, Kotzebue Police Department, Bethel Police Department, Ketchikan Police Department, Village Public Safety Officers, and Village Police Officers. Fostering a relationship of positivity and trust with law enforcement is of the utmost importance in building strong cases, securing convictions, and holding offenders accountable. This is accomplished through open and honest communication with law enforcement officers.

Fees: I propose a 5-year contract, starting at an annual flat fee of \$100,000 for all services provided, payable in 12 monthly payments. The contract would include an annual 5% cost of living increase. The start date would be on, or about, April 15, 2025.

Conflict of Interest Statement: I do not perceive any conflicts of interest arising from past or future representation that would conflict with my ability to serve as City Prosecutor for the City of Grand Rapids. I do not represent any real estate developers. I do not represent any other local units of government having jurisdiction within, or contiguous to the City of Grand Rapids. I do not plan to take on any representation that would conflict with my ability to serve as City Prosecutor for the City of Grand Rapids.

Aaron J. Michels

25423 Lakeview Drive
Cohasset, MN 55721
907-414-2040
Aaronjmichels@gmail.com

Education

University of St. Thomas School of Law Minneapolis, MN

- Juris Doctor, May 2010
- Over 100 public service hours
- Member of Minnesota Bar, 2010, Attorney ID #0391357
- Member of Alaska Bar, 2012, Attorney ID #1211124

University of Wisconsin - Stevens Point Stevens Point, WI

- Bachelor's Degree in Political Science, December 2004
- Minor: Natural Resource Management

Work experience

Alaska Department of Law – Criminal Division
Utqiagvik, AK

Assistant District Attorney April 2012 – September 2016;
December 2023 – present (remote work for Utqiagvik office)

- Served in Palmer, Kotzebue, Bethel, Ketchikan, and Utqiagvik
- Attorney in Kotzebue office for three years
- Managed felony and misdemeanor caseload in all stages of proceedings including charging decisions, arraignments, grand jury presentations, plea negotiations, motion work, and trials

Alaska Court System

Kotzebue, AK

Magistrate Judge September 2016 – September 2023

- Presided over a wide variety of criminal and civil cases

Minnesota Judicial Branch

Virginia, MN

Judicial Law Clerk March 2011 – April 2012

- Judicial law clerk for Hon. Gary J. Pagliaccetti, Sixth District
- Secretary of Range Bar Association

Itasca County Attorney's Office

Grand Rapids, MN

Internship July 2009 - August 2009

Minneapolis Public Schools &
Independent School District #318

Minneapolis, MN

Grand Rapids, MN

Substitute Teacher January 2005 – March 2011

- Taught K-12 at schools with diverse student bodies

Hibbing Daily Tribune

Hibbing, MN

Sports Writer September 2005 - September 2006

- Published 10-14 stories/columns per week under deadline pressure

USDA-Forest Service

Deer River, MN

Wildland Firefighter GS-0462-03 May 2001 - September 2005

- Full-time seasonal firefighter on Chippewa National Forest

Aaron J. Michels

25423 Lakeview Drive
Cohasset, MN 55721
907-414-2040
Aaronjmichels@gmail.com

References

Hon. Paul A. Roetman; Kotzebue Superior Court Judge; 907-442-1662; PRoetman@akcourts.us

Hon. Michael J. Franciosi; Anchorage District Court Judge; 907-822-3405; MFranciosi@akcourts.us

Hon. Heidi K. Ivanoff; Unalakleet Magistrate Judge; 907-624-3015; HIvanoff@akcourts.us