

MEMORANDUM



TO: VICTOR CARDENAS, CITY MANAGER
FROM: SHERYL WALSH-MOLLOY, DIRECTOR OF COMMUNICATONS
SUBJECT: WEBSITE CONTRACT
DATE: MARCH 3, 2026

Background

The City of Novi's contract with Municipal Website Services (Muniweb), a Michigan-based company, is scheduled to expire later this year. Since 1999, the City has partnered with Muniweb under a full-service model that includes hosting, maintaining, updating, and supporting the following sites:

- cityofnovi.org
- investnovi.org
- novi.org
- E-Web (online services portal)

In addition, Muniweb provides hosting and maintenance services in kind for the Novi Police and Fire Benevolent Association and Novi Parks Foundation sites.

The current annual investment for these services is budgeted at \$70,000.

Current Business Model

Under the existing agreement, Muniweb operates as a full-service partner, providing:

- Website hosting and infrastructure
- Ongoing maintenance and system updates
- Security monitoring and backups
- Accessibility (ADA) compliance support
- Technical troubleshooting
- Direct content updates and page modifications
- Staff support and day-to-day assistance

This model minimizes internal staff workload and consolidates operational responsibility with a single vendor.

Industry Service Models

When the City proceeds with a Request for Proposals (RFP), it is important to recognize that many website providers typically operate under a different model. Most alternative providers:

- Build and host the website platform
- Provide a content management system (CMS)
- Offer limited technical support
- Require City staff to manage routine updates and content changes
- Charge additional fees for content modifications or ongoing support services

Under a structure such as this, the City would likely need to dedicate additional internal staff time, or secure supplemental support contracts to achieve a comparable service level.

Operational and Staffing Considerations

The City's current full-service model provides effectively 24 hours per day, 365 days per year monitoring, maintenance, troubleshooting, and content update capability through Muniweb.

If the City were to transition to a platform-based vendor model that does not include ongoing content management and real-time support, the City would need to determine how those responsibilities are absorbed internally. This could require:

- Assigning website update responsibilities to individuals in each department
- Establishing formal content ownership and compliance monitoring processes
- Adding dedicated communications or technical staff
- Securing supplemental third-party support contracts
- Implementing after-hours monitoring protocols

Absent a full-service partner, the City would assume responsibility for:

- Time-sensitive emergency updates
- ADA compliance monitoring
- Broken link corrections
- Security-related updates
- Routine page revisions and posting
- Departmental training and quality control

Depending on the structure selected, this could represent a significant ongoing staffing cost or redistribution of workload across departments, potentially affecting service levels and response times.

Conclusion

As the City evaluates website service providers through an upcoming RFP, the primary policy decision is whether to maintain a full-service operational model or transition to a platform-based model requiring increased internal management. While alternative vendors may offer competitive platform pricing, achieving comparable service levels would likely require additional staffing resources or supplemental support contracts, resulting in increased total cost and operational complexity.

The current arrangement provides:

- Centralized accountability
- Continuous monitoring and support
- Reduced departmental burden
- Predictable annual costs

As staff prepares the RFP framework, direction regarding the preferred service delivery model — particularly as it relates to staffing capacity and 24/7 operational coverage — will be critical.