



April 11, 2025

Sent VIA Email

Kristi Richardson
Village President - Elect
Village of Poplar Grove
200 Hill Street
Poplar Grove, IL 61065
VIA Email: Krichardson@villageofpoplargrove.com

Re: Request for Qualifications – Sosnowski Szeto, LLP

Dear President-Elect Richardson:

Please allow for this correspondence to serve as a response to your request for qualifications for our firm for possible consideration to the appointment of the office of Village Attorney.

As you may be aware, I have served, as a Village Attorney for Poplar Grove, since 2009. In 2017, when I opened my own practice, my firm appreciated the opportunity to continue to represent the Village until my firm stepped down as Village Attorneys in 2024.

Dave and I look forward to meeting with you later this month to discuss our firm's qualifications. Should you have any questions, or need anything further, please feel free to contact our office.

Sincerely,

ROXANNE M. SOSNOWSKI
RMS/mar

cc: Attorney David Kurlinkus, via email only



Background Statement

Sosnowski Szeto, LLP is a minority, and women owned limited liability partnership that has been in business since 2017. Our firm is comprised of five attorneys and two paralegals and an administrative assistant. The named partners of the firm have practiced local government law for over twenty years each in Winnebago, Boone, Ogle, Dekalb, McHenry and Stephenson Counties. Each member of our firm is knowledgeable and has experience working with local governments and advising them on all aspects of municipal law.

The law firm of Sosnowski Szeto, LLP offers local governments reliable and trusted advice in areas ranging from general municipal governance, economic development, tax increment financing districts, business development districts, public finance, zoning, municipal prosecution, real estate, litigation, election law and labor/employment law matters.

When municipal matters involve other legal practice areas, our law firm is equipped to evaluate and move forward with the municipal directive. We utilize a rich background in practical business representation which brings a special insight into the development and application of local government regulations, procedures, and operations. Our lawyers work as a team and our municipal practice group has access to other disciplines that allow them to provide their municipal legal opinions in the context of particular situations. Our firm's real-world perspective has been honed over two decades of applying municipal law principles to everyday situations to arrive at practical solutions.

Our firm operates under the core belief that quality representation starts with knowing your client and serving them faithfully. With over twenty years of government representation, our firm has consistently served its local government clients through personal service and attention to detail. The value of our service to local governments is based on our efforts to understand their communities and building meaningful relationships with them and their leaders. With a passion for service, a foundation rooted in a full and keen understanding of the law and providing advice that takes into consideration other important facets, such as business and economics, Sosnowski Szeto, LLP provides *complete* representation and service to our local governments.

Attorney Roxanne M. Sosnowski was named an Emerging Lawyer in 2015 and 2016 and a Leading Lawyer by Leading Lawyers Magazine 2017, 2018, and 2019. Attorney Sosnowski was profiled in Leading Lawyers Magazine in 2019.

Attorney Roxanne Sosnowski was a finalist for the 2019 Women in Business award from the Stateline Area Chamber of Commerce.



Attorney Aaron N. Szeto was named a Leading Lawyer by Leading Lawyers Magazine in 2017, 2018 and 2019. Attorney Szeto was a finalist for the 2018 Best Real Estate Attorney award from the Rockford Register Star.

Attorney Sosnowski and Attorney Szeto were asked to serve on the Home Rule Committee for the Illinois Municipal League due to their extensive experience as municipal attorneys.

The following pages showcase the members of our firm and our background and experience.

Qualifications

Should the Village of Poplar Grove select Sosnowski Szeto, LLP to serve as its Village Attorney, Attorney Aaron Szeto, Attorney Roxanne Sosnowski, Attorney David Kurlinkus and Attorney Laura Goding will be assigned to be the primary attorneys to represent the Village.

Attorney Aaron Szeto has been a practicing attorney for over twenty years. He received a Bachelor of Science degree from the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign in 2000. In 2004, Attorney Szeto graduated Cum Laude from Northern Illinois University's College of Law and was admitted to the Illinois State Bar.

Attorney Szeto focuses his practice in Municipal and Local Government Law; Zoning and Land Use Law; Real Estate Development and Transactions; Commercial Transactions and Public Finance.

Within his municipal practice, Attorney Szeto advises his public clients on general municipal law matters, real estate transactions, annexations as well as zoning and land use matters. He has extensive experience in structuring and negotiating annexation and development agreements and sales tax rebate agreements. Further, Attorney Szeto has extensive experience with the formation, implementation and use of complex special taxing districts such as Tax Increment Financing, Special Service Areas, Special Assessments Areas, and Business Districts. He regularly negotiates and drafts redevelopment agreements which utilize these types of districts as mechanisms for fostering economic growth and spurring development within municipalities. Attorney Szeto attends municipal and local government council/board meetings and Zoning Board of Appeals Hearings as corporate counsel.

Attorney Roxanne Sosnowski has been a practicing attorney for over twenty years. She received her Bachelor of Arts degree from Northern Illinois University in 2001. In 2004, Attorney Sosnowski graduated Cum Laude from Northern Illinois University's College of Law and was admitted to the Illinois State Bar.

Attorney Sosnowski focuses her practice in the areas of municipal law, labor and employment law, education law and business representation.

Within her municipal practice, Attorney Sosnowski advises her municipal clients on general municipal law, licensing matters and election law. She has extensive experience in employment and personnel matters and represents management interest in virtually all aspects of the employment relationship with their employees, including counseling employers with respects to the hiring process, discipline and separation of their employees, negotiating collective bargaining

agreements, handling grievances and arbitrations and if necessary, the representation of employers in connection with litigated disputes. Attorney Sosnowski also advises her municipal clients on public purchasing matters; licensing and the Open Meetings Act and Freedom of Information Act. Attorney Sosnowski is well versed in election law and serves as counsel for municipal electoral boards during election challenges.

Attorney David Kurlinkus practices in the areas of corporate formation and representation, traffic/DUI prosecution, employment and labor law, estate planning, administrative law, local government law, education law, election law and commercial litigation. Attorney Kurlinkus has served as legal counsel to municipalities, townships and to the Winnebago County Board. As a part of his municipal experience, Attorney Kurlinkus has served as an administrative hearing officer as well as served as a prosecutor of municipal code violations. He has advised elected and appointed governmental officials on local, state and federal issues of law. Attorney Kurlinkus has negotiated numerous union contracts on behalf of governmental employers. He has represented private and governmental clients before administrative agencies and in state and federal courts. Attorney Kurlinkus also advises clients on estate planning and in establishing appropriate types of business entities. He served as Chief of Staff and Chief of the Civil Bureau of the Winnebago County State's Attorney's Office for 12 years. He has served on the Hononegah Community High School District Board of Education since 1995 and has served as Board President since 1997.

Attorney Laura Goding concentrates her practice in the areas of municipal law, employment and labor law, real estate transactions, election law, and estate planning. Within this practice, Attorney Goding represents municipalities in administrative hearings and serves as a municipal prosecutor in traffic and DUI matters.

While in law school, Attorney Goding served as an associate editor for the Northern Illinois Law Review and worked as a Graduate Assistant for the Office of Career Opportunities and Professional Development.

The attorneys in our firm are experienced, trained and knowledgeable in the areas identified below. Our firm advises our clients routinely on general local government law; the Illinois Open Meetings Act/FOIA; land use, annexation and zoning matters; economic and real estate development; labor and employment issues; Police and Fire Commission matters; liquor licensing and election law. Further, our firm serves as the municipal prosecutor for many of the municipalities that we represent, prosecuting municipal code violations, traffic violations, DUI's and administrative hearings. Our attorneys have also served as moderators and speakers at various local government conferences such as: Illinois Municipal League, Illinois Municipal Treasurers Association, and the Illinois Tax Increment Association.

- i. Land Use, Zoning Board of Appeals and Planning Commissions. Our attorneys are well versed in municipal zoning and land use law and routinely serve as counsel to the municipality's Zoning Board of Appeals as well as Planning Commissions. When requested, we work closely with the municipality's zoning officer/staff to review and advise on zoning and land use applications such as map amendments, variances and special use permits.
- ii. Personnel Matters/Collective Bargaining. Our firm understands that personnel matters often can be highly sensitive, costly, and could have effects on other local government employees. Our firm attorneys frequently draft personnel policies and employee handbooks, as well as provide training and counsel in areas such as Wage and Hour Laws, Fair Labor Standards Act, ADA compliance, FMLA compliance, HIPAA obligations and employee benefit review to municipal staff and the Village Board in a manner that takes into account and respects the confidential nature of many personnel matters. Recognizing that the obligations of a Village are similar to that of a corporation, proper preparation and documentation is crucial in this area of municipal practice. Our firm currently represents four police departments, and we serve as counsel for all levels of contract and personnel administration including handling matters before the Board of Police and Fire Commissioners. Our firm also has extensive experience working with local and national unions, performing collective bargaining agreement contract analysis, meeting with labor representatives, negotiating contracts, addressing employee discipline pursuant to the terms of the agreement and through the grievance and arbitration process, and representing municipalities before the Illinois Labor Relations Board. Significant cost savings can be realized by utilizing municipal counsel that has experience in this area of practice.
- iii. Taxes, Fees and Systems Development Charges. Our firm has experience advising our local government clients on taxes, fees and charges. Whether we are advising local government on how to implement an additional property tax or drafting an ordinance imposing a permitting fee, our firm is well versed in this area.
- iv. Public Purchasing and Contracting. The attorneys in our local government practice group are very familiar with public purchasing and bidding requirements and have made recommendations to our local government clients on specific purchasing and contracting regulations and processes. Additionally, our attorneys draft and review RFPs and RFQs and also review bid responses to ensure responsiveness and compliance with bidding requirements.
- v. Planning, Construction and Operation of Public Facilities. Our local government attorneys work closely with the client's engineers and public works departments to advise on public

facilities issues. We are experienced in drafting permanent and temporary easements for public facilities as well as the process for vacating streets and all alleys which are no longer needed by the municipality.

- vi. Knowledge of Law. Our local government practice group is very knowledgeable with the laws applicable to municipalities, including the provisions of the Illinois Municipal Code, the Freedom of Information Act, the Open Meetings Act, and the Gift Ban and Ethics Act. Our local government attorneys are very often charged with the responsibility of responding to FOIA requests on behalf of some of our municipalities and review requests, determining if any exemptions apply and respond within statutorily prescribed timeframes. Further, our attorneys are well versed in Robert's Rules of Order and serve as parliamentarian during Council meetings. Our firm attorneys provide regular training for newly elected officials through the Illinois Municipal League in addition to providing these trainings to our firm clients on either an organizational or individual basis.
- vii. Corporate Transactional Law and Contract Review. With strong backgrounds in business and transactional law, the attorneys in our local government practice group are trained to both review and draft contracts and intergovernmental agreements. Our approach begins with ascertaining an understanding of the client's needs and desires on a particular matter. We focus on identifying terms which may be detrimental to our clients and then utilize years of negotiation skills to reach mutually acceptable conclusions.
- viii. Insurance Claims. The attorneys in our local government practice group routinely work with the client's insurance carriers to evaluate and respond to claims brought against our local government clients. At times these insurance claim matters can be highly publicized, and our firm is experienced in advising our clients on how best to manage public perception and interact with media. We understand the importance of maintaining and supporting the public image of our communities and stand ready to assist in public relations matters to help ensure the interest of our municipalities are properly protected.
- ix. Real Estate Transactions. The attorneys in our local government practice group have extensive backgrounds and experience in real estate development and transactions and are qualified to advise and represent the Village in acquisitions, sales, leases, easements, liens and property tax matters. Our firm is well-versed with the statutory requirements for selling and purchasing real estate and provide counsel throughout the entire real estate transaction process including contract review and negotiations, title review, due diligence, financing, and closing. Our firm drafts and negotiates the lease of municipal property as well as leases where the Village leases property from other landowners. Our firm routinely drafts and records liens against properties to help recover monies owed to the Village.

- x. Research. Our firm maintains a current library, both written and computerized, covering all areas of local government law. We also maintain a current subscription to Lexis Nexis for legal research and are prepared and capable to research any issue which may come before the Village.
- xi. Administrative Hearings and Litigation. Our firm serves as prosecutors in the communities we represent that utilize administrative hearings and we routinely work with the municipality's code enforcement officer to bring cases through the administrative hearing process to compel compliance with municipal ordinances. Our municipal practice group has experience in litigating matters regarding a variety of local government issues such as zoning and contract enforcement. Our attorneys also have litigated actions to compel remediation of property code violations and subsequent lien foreclosure suits to help recoup expenses incurred. Our attorneys have also defended our local government clients in grievances and arbitrations as well as actions filed before the Illinois Labor Relations Board and the Illinois Department of Labor.
- xii. Drafting Ordinances, Resolutions and Code Revisions. With nearly 50 years of combined practice in local government law, our firm is experienced in drafting ordinances and resolutions in practical and concise language which accomplish the goals of the local government while conforming to legal standards. We routinely conduct audits of current ordinances to ensure compliance with applicable State and Federal law.
- xiii. Oral Advice and Availability. With years of local government experience, the attorneys providing services to the Village are comfortable providing oral advice during Council meetings and by telephone to Village Staff. Our firm strives to be available to our clients and respond to their inquiries in a timely manner. Personal cell phone numbers are provided to the client so that the municipality can reach us during or outside of customary work hours.
- xiv. Condemnation/Eminent Domain. Our attorneys are familiar with the eminent domain process and stand ready to help the municipality move forward with any directive to eminent domain property. Understanding that eminent domain can be a controversial topic, we work closely with our municipalities to formulate a clear plan prior to initiating the eminent domain process so as minimize any potential negative publicity.
- xv. Annexations. With years of local government experience, our attorneys are experienced with the statutory process for annexing properties into municipalities as well as negotiating and drafting annexation agreements. Our office prepares all necessary notices and

ordinances to annex properties and participates in the required public hearings associated with annexation agreements. We also assist our municipalities in formulating plans for the annexation of properties so as to promote orderly growth of the municipality's borders.

- xvi. Special Service Areas. Our firm is highly experienced in creating Special Service Areas for our municipal clients. We help identify when a Special Service Area is appropriate as a mechanism for funding public improvements and then guide our clients through the formation process. Knowing that the formation of a Special Service Area can be blocked by property owners, we also help our clients formulate a plan to help obtain property owner support of the Special Service Area.
- xvii. Business Regulation. With nearly 50 years of experience representing local government, our firm's attorneys understand that municipalities, at times, will be required to regulate businesses. Our attorneys are ready, willing and able to assist in these instances. We routinely draft regulatory ordinances and are prepared to help enforce these regulations when directed by our clients through the administrative hearing process or filing suit in circuit court. Further, our firm drafts and prepares permits and license applications in accordance with ordinance requirements. We also advise our clients on licensing suspensions and revocations.
- xviii. Economic Development and Financing. Our firm understands that economic development and financing are vital to helping our municipal communities thrive and grow. Utilizing our experience in corporate law, real estate transactions, and zoning, we have the experience and drive to help municipal clients bring in new businesses to encourage economic development. Our knowledge of tax increment financing districts, business districts, sales tax rebates, property tax abatements and other economic incentive tools allows us to help our communities put together incentive packages to help retain or attract businesses.
- xix. Civil Rights. Our firm has experience advising our municipal clients in how to address civil rights claims should they arise. Our firm represented and advised our clients on Division of Human Rights complaint and EEOC complaints. Our firm also routinely conducts internal policy investigations for our municipalities and offers training on a variety of discrimination, harassment, and compliance matters.
- xx. Criminal Law. Our firm has extensive experience in prosecuting traffic and DUI cases for many of our municipal clients. We currently serve as the municipal prosecutor for three of the communities that we represent.

- xxi. Ethics/Conflicts of Interest. Our municipal attorneys are well versed regarding matters involving ethics and should a conflict of interest arise it is our obligation to you to advise you of the conflict and refer you to another attorney that can assist you in that matter.
- xxii. Bond Financing. Our office has participated in numerous bond issuances and is experienced in utilizing bonds to finance municipal projects. We have experience working closely with financial advisors, Village finance officials, and bond counsel to help structure bond financing projects.
- xxiii. Government Grants and Contracts. With years of local government experience, the attorneys providing services to the Village are well versed in both government grants and contracts. Our firm routinely negotiates intergovernmental agreements and participates in the grant application process. Further, our attorneys are familiar with federal and state contracting requirements during procurement, bid submission and contractor selection processes.
- xxiv. General Business Operations. Our municipal attorneys have served as general corporate counsel for our municipalities. Through this practice, we routinely provide advice and legal opinions to our municipal clients on a wide range of topics including, but not limited to, legal questions posed by our clients, legal matters relating to the performance of their duties, compliance with the requirements of FOIA, the Open Meetings Act, the Gift Ban Act, Conflict of Interest laws, and various other government issues as requested. Our attorneys attend regularly scheduled municipal meetings, including committee of the whole meetings and any meetings that are requested by our clients. Our attorneys have experience with code enforcement hearings, ordinance violations, liquor commission hearings and administrative tow hearings. Further, we have experience reviewing contracts for real estate transactions, intergovernmental agreements, franchise agreements, professional services, purchases, and service or product contracts. Our attorneys regularly draft legislation such as ordinances and resolutions. Additionally, our attorneys are also well versed in election law and have served as counsel for municipal electoral boards during election challenges.
- xxv. Telecommunications Law and Utility Franchise Agreements. Our municipal attorneys regularly review and negotiate utility franchise agreements for our municipal clients. This experience includes negotiation of contracts regarding cell phone towers, gas and electric franchises, water and sewer services, internet, and cable services.
- xxvi. Tax Increment Financing. Our municipal attorneys have worked extensively with our municipal clients to help them create and maintain Tax Increment Financing Districts. We

are well versed in the processes and requirements to create TIF districts and the annual reporting requirements to the State Comptroller's office. We prepare the annual TIF report and attend the annual Joint Review Board meetings on behalf of our municipal clients.

Approach

If our firm is selected to serve as Village Attorney, managing partner Roxanne Sosnowski and Attorney David Kurlinkus be assigned as the primary attorneys for the Village of Poplar Grove. We believe that responsiveness is critical to providing quality service and by having our two most experienced attorneys assigned to the Village we feel that our firm will always be available to the Village. Further, if Village workloads require, other members of our firm are available to assist to ensure municipal directives will be timely met. We believe that when our firm is functioning collectively as a unit, we provide the optimal level of service to our municipalities.

We feel that it is of paramount importance to develop and foster professional relationships with each of the Village's elected officials and staff members. Our firm believes that by developing an in-depth knowledge of the Village of Poplar Grove, as a whole, we can better understand the community that we serve.

The attorneys and staff with our firm pride themselves on their responsiveness and willingness to go above and beyond for our clients. Our firm acknowledges that each client and each situation is unique, and many problems do not contain one-size-fits-all solutions. Our firm has built its reputation on tackling these difficult issues in order to provide creative, practical, and cost-effective solutions to these issues as they arise. As new questions/concerns come into the firm, the managing partners will assess the relevant issues, determine the appropriate course of action, clarify any outstanding issues with the Village, and prepare a thoughtful and articulate response. Our attorneys understand that when our municipalities contact us, they are seeking clear, concise, and practical solutions to their issues and we craft our responses with these principles in mind.

It is the firm's policy that every email or call that we receive is responded to as soon as possible and we affirm that no communication will go unacknowledged for more than twenty-four (24) hours. Just as we are aware that a Village's service and responsibilities to its citizens are provided 365 days a year, we understand that we must always be prepared to help, regardless of the date or time. Each of the attorneys and staff members at our firm values this responsibility and the trust that our municipalities place in us.

References

Village Attorney

Village Administrator Jim Claeysen
Village of Cherry Valley
806 E. State Street
Cherry Valley, IL 61016
Phone: 815-332-3441

Email: jclaeysen@cherryvalley.org

Specific Areas of Counsel: Sosnowski Szeto, LLP provides counsel in all the areas of municipal practice, including, but not limited to, Municipal Administrative Hearing Prosecution, Contract Law, Criminal Law, Government Grants and Contracts, General Municipal Business Operations, Tax Increment Financing, Labor and Employment, Code Enforcement.

City Attorney

City Mayor Tom Fitzgerald
City of South Beloit
519 Blackhawk Blvd.
South Beloit, IL 61080
Phone: 815-389-3023

Email: t.fitzgerald@southbeloit.org

Specific Areas of Counsel: : Sosnowski Szeto, LLP provides counsel in all the areas of municipal practice, including, but not limited to, Municipal Administrative Hearing Prosecution, Contract Law, Planning and Zoning Law, Annexations, Special Service Areas, Business Regulation, Economic Development/Finance, Civil Rights, Criminal Law, Real Estate, Government Grants and Contracts, General Municipal Business Operations, Utility Franchise Agreements, Tax Increment Financing, Code Enforcement, Labor and Employment, Freedom of Information Act and Open Meetings Act.

Village Attorney

Village President John Peterson
Village of Rockton
110 East Main Street
Rockton, IL 61072
Phone: 815-624-7600

Email: peterson@rocktonvillage.com

Specific Areas of Counsel: Sosnowski Szeto, LLP provides counsel in all the areas of municipal practice, including, but not limited to, Municipal Administrative Hearing Prosecution, Contract Law, Planning and Zoning Law, Annexations, Special Service Areas, Business Regulation, Economic Development/Finance, Civil Rights, Criminal Law, Real Estate, Government Grants and Contracts, General Municipal Business Operations, Utility Franchise Agreements, Tax Increment Financing, Code Enforcement, Labor and Employment, Freedom of Information Act and Open Meetings Act.

City Attorney

City Mayor Jodi Miller

City of Freeport

314 W. Stephenson Street

Freeport, IL 61032

Phone: 815-235-8200

Email: jmiller@cityoffreeport.org

Specific Areas of Counsel: Sosnowski Szeto, LLP provides counsel in all the areas of municipal practice , including, but not limited to, Contract Law, Planning and Zoning Law, Annexations, Special Service Areas, Business Regulation, Economic Development/Finance, Civil Rights, Criminal Law, Real Estate, Government Grants and Contracts, General Municipal Business Operations, Utility Franchise Agreements, Tax Increment Financing, Code Enforcement, Labor and Employment, Freedom of Information Act and Open Meetings Act.

Billing and Rate Information

Sosnowski Szeto, LLP proposes an hourly rate structure of \$185.00 per hour for all attorneys performing services on behalf of the Village of Poplar Grove. The hourly rate charged by the firm for labor/employment or special taxing districts (i.e. TIF, Business Districts and SSA) assignments is \$250.00 per hour. These rates may be revised from time to time by Sosnowski Szeto, LLP and the Village will be informed of any increase. The Village will be billed at the hourly rates set forth above (or as subsequently adjusted) for all services rendered. This includes telephone calls, drafting and reviewing documents and correspondence, travel time to and from hearings and meetings, depositions and court time, legal research, negotiations, and any other services relating to Village matters. Sosnowski Szeto, LLP will send to the Village detailed itemized bills on a monthly basis. We do not charge our clients for any copy, regular mail, or notary fees. Services are billed in increments of 1/10th of an hour.