



## COUNCIL AGENDA ITEM COVER SHEET

**Meeting Type:** Council - Regular

**Meeting Date:** April 4, 2024

**Agenda Item Type:** New Business

**Staff Contact:** April Spradlin

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### STAFF REPORT

#### AGENDA ITEM:

Consideration to Purchase JUST FOIA Open Records Software in the amount of \$8,942.50.

#### BACKGROUND:

Just FOIA is a GovTech company that provides open records software. As part of our efforts to become paperless and more efficient, this online service will provide better efficiency in completing open records request and ensuring we are providing quality responses and maintaining compliance. We will benefit from JustFOIA, our recommended software solution, in the following areas:

- **On-Demand Virtual Service Delivery:** Absent a streamlined technical solution, fulfilling record requests requires an increased level of foot traffic by our staff, especially our constituents. Our constituents have grown to expect more of our services to be available online rather than having to come to our offices, and the pandemic drastically accelerated that expectation. JustFOIA will allow us to handle service delivery both virtually and in-person.
- **Service to Constituents:** Our constituents surely do not want to travel to our physical location to pick up records (note that some files are too large for us to email or require a secure FTP, etc.) or pay fees if they are applicable. We certainly do not want to encourage or require them to do so. With the contactless JustFOIA records request solution, we can provide constituents the ability to submit, communicate during the process, pay fees, and download responsive documents, all via a secure online portal.
- **Service to other Agencies:** Often, we are required to provide sensitive data, documents, and reports to other partner agencies at their request. JustFOIA's secure record request and delivery platform has the ability to manage our many inter-agency requests too. Having all inter-agency requests come in to our department through one flexible yet standardized portal would also increase efficiency and credibility with timely and accurate responses.
- **Efficiency:** Every department can use this type of solution to increase efficiency regarding their role in fulfilling a request for records. Therefore, the technology will assist us in the event of a reduction in headcount in various departments. As an additional benefit, JustFOIA can be used for much more than public records requests. Many of their customers are using the software to receive and fulfill requests for a variety of non-FOIA type of request such as Liens, Permits, Code Compliance, Planning and Zoning, Subpoenas, and even paying for parking tickets.
- **Transparency:** Three-in-four Americans believe that public trust in government has been declining. Two-thirds believe the government intentionally withholds important information from the public that it could safely release. However, 84% believe it's possible to improve confidence in government - and their top solution to build public trust is more disclosure of what the government is doing. Furthermore, a Salesforce report noted that 87% believe a great digital government experience would increase their trust in public organizations. JustFOIA allows us to proactively categorize and release

documents to our community, further enhancing our transparency at a time of heightened uncertainty.

- **Compliance:** When faced with a reduction in resources, compliance and the quality/timeliness of our response is further at risk. We desperately need a software solution to increase efficiency and provide internal reporting on who fulfilled a request and communicated to the requester. JustFOIA provides a built-in redaction tool, which will allow us to use auto-redaction in addition to manual redactions to ensure no personally identifiable information is at risk of being released; the solution also autogenerates an exemption log to explain the legal reason(s) that we are able to exempt the information from public view. The tracking and compliance tools in JustFOIA will better enable our organization to avoid lawsuits and fines, mitigate risk.
- **Security:** JustFOIA is hosted on the Microsoft Azure Government Cloud, the gold standard for government Cloud storage. JustFOIA achieved their SOC 2 Type II certification and the CJIS ACE Seal of compliance and all of their employees undergo ongoing HIPAA, CJIS and Security training. Additionally, JustFOIA was founded by a company with 20 years of experience working with governmental agencies and their records, so they understand our needs.
- **Need:** FOIA requests are increasing - both in volume and complexity – with the average number of received requests rising by more than 20% since last year. Based on a survey of 1,200 government agencies last year, 70% replied that their FOIA requests remained at the same or higher volume in after the pandemic hit. With that, we should expect a greater increase in the number of requests that we receive. With JustFOIA, we will be better prepared to handle the coming increase in volume.

**Why JustFOIA:** While there are other solutions on the market, we believe that JustFOIA is the easiest-to-use and best solution for our organization because of the following:

- **Configurability:** JustFOIA allows us to have more control over system settings and functionality than other solutions on the market. We can set up dynamic fields to recognize keywords entered by citizens and point them to the right place if their request is not intended to be submitted as a public records request or is submitted to the wrong department/agency. For example, if someone is looking for a birth certificate, we can point them to our vital records request system.
- **Flexibility:** We can utilize JustFOIA for more than just public records requests. Many of their customers are using JustFOIA for other requests such as Liens, Permits, and Subpoenas, allowing for a better return on our investment.
- **Unlimited Admins, Power Users, and General Users:** The system provides an Enterprise license that will allow us to grow since there are no limitations on Admins, Power Users or General Users.
- **Long-Term Partnership Ensuring Client Success:** We are with you every step of your JustFOIA Client Journey. Our Delivery Team conducts live trainings and partners with you to ensure the system is configured to your unique needs. Our partnership continues throughout your journey, supported by our Technical Support & dedicated Client Success Teams.
- **Online JustFOIA Training Center for Continued Learning:** In addition to the live trainings, JustFOIA will upload the recordings of those trainings into the JustFOIA Training Center to accompany other videos and training resources for our staff.
- **Technical Support:** They maintain a high standard of customer service to ensure 100% satisfaction. JustFOIA only utilizes in-house technical support staff in the United States.
- **Dedicated Customer Success Specialist for Ongoing Support:** We will be assigned a dedicated customer success specialist who will serve as a proactive resource to our organization. They will consult and partner with us to ensure we are continuing to receive the most out of our investment.
- **Overall Philosophy:** In 2014, JustFOIA started as a product built by MCCi for government agencies, who were looking for a better way to track and manage public records request. JustFOIA integrates customers into the product feedback loop with the JustFOIA Ideas Portal, where customers can rank their most desired new features to be considered for the Development Roadmap. Fast forward to 2022, and JustFOIA now supports the records request efforts of more than 375 organizations in 43 states.

**FUNDING:**

20-52-1300 (Assigned Funds)

**STAFF RECOMMENDATION:**

To approve the proposal to purchase Just FOIA at \$8,942.50 for the first year which includes the onboarding cost. Starting next year, the cost will be 5,692.50 with a 5% increase each year thereafter. The cost beginning next year will be divided amongst each department.

**ATTACHMENTS:**

Contract, Just FOIA Proposal, and Informative Information

**PREVIOUS DISCUSSIONS:**

Council Retreat 03/26/2024