RE: Illinois FOIA Request – Outside Counsel Referrals, FOIA Processing Practices, and Legal Expenses

From Monster News <newsdesk@pigmonster.online>
To <foia@cityofcarmi.com>
Date 2026-11-03 11:10

To: City of Carmi FOIA Officer

RE: Illinois FOIA Request – Outside Counsel Referrals, FOIA Processing Practices, and Legal Expenses

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Dear FOIA Officer:

Pursuant to the Illinois Freedom of Information Act, 5 ILCS 140/1 et seq., Monster News requests electronic copies of existing public records for the period **September 1, 2026, through the date this request is received**, concerning the City of Carmi's handling of Freedom of Information Act requests and the referral of those requests to outside legal counsel.

Specifically, we request:

1. **Outside Counsel Referrals:** Records identifying FOIA requests referred by the City to Lashly & Baer or any other outside law firm for review, assistance, response, or other work. This includes referral emails, memoranda, correspondence, routing records, and related documents.
2. **Internal Processing:** Existing records identifying FOIA requests handled by City employees or officers without referral to outside counsel, including records reflecting the City's internal processing procedures.
3. **Referral Decisions:** Communications, memoranda, notes, or other records explaining why particular FOIA requests were referred to outside counsel rather than handled internally.
4. **Authorization and Engagement Records:** Records identifying the City official, employee, or other person who authorized or directed each referral to outside counsel, including applicable approval or authorization records. This request also includes the August 31, 2026, legal-services agreement with Lashly & Baer, all amendments or related engagement documents, and the resolution or other records approving or ratifying the agreement, including records reflecting when the firm was authorized to begin work.
5. **Legal Billing and Expenses:** Invoices, billing statements, itemized time entries, descriptions of services, and other records reflecting charges by Lashly & Baer or any other outside law firm. This includes the complete $21,531.50 invoice discussed at the November 2, 2026, City Council meeting, together with any supporting billing detail, regardless of whether individual entries are characterized as FOIA-related, to the extent those records are subject to disclosure.
6. **Policies and Procedures:** Current and prior written FOIA policies, procedures, staff instructions, referral guidelines, training materials, or other records governing how the City receives, reviews, processes, and responds to FOIA requests, including when requests are referred to outside counsel.
7. **Processing and Disposition:** Existing records reflecting the dates FOIA requests were received, referred to counsel, returned to City personnel, and answered or otherwise closed, to the extent those records are maintained by the City.

This request seeks existing records only. It does not ask the City to create a new spreadsheet, report, or statistical compilation. If records are maintained in email, electronic files, billing systems, or other formats, please provide them in their existing electronic format where reasonably available.

If any portion of a requested record is exempt from disclosure, please redact only the exempt portion and release all reasonably segregable nonexempt material. For any denial or redaction, please identify the specific statutory exemption relied upon as required by FOIA.

Monster News requests a waiver of fees because the requested records concern the use of public funds, the administration of public-records access, and the conduct of public business. Disclosure will contribute to public understanding of how the City handles FOIA requests and incurs outside legal expenses. The request is not for a commercial purpose.

Please provide the records electronically by email or another electronic delivery method. If you anticipate that any portion of this request will involve fees, please notify us of the estimated cost before processing.

Thank you for your attention to this request. We look forward to your response within the time provided by the Illinois Freedom of Information Act.

Sincerely,

Monster News
Editorial Team
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Monster Newsroom