



PORTLAND PUBLIC SCHOOLS

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Date: June 10, 2020

To: Board of Education

From: Stephanie Soden-Back, Executive Chief of Staff

Subject: Contract for Office of General Counsel Network

I am seeking Board authority to engage the Office of General Counsel Network (OGCN) for legal and conflict resolution services, including contract general counsel services, through December 31, 2020, for \$180,000.

School districts are highly regulated with complex and wide-ranging legal needs. PPS obtains required legal expertise through a combination of in-house lawyers and legal professionals, who are employed by the district, and outside counsel, whose services are acquired by contract. For the past several years, PPS has contracted with the Office of General Counsel Network to provide interim general counsel services, as well as general legal and dispute resolution expertise. The model of contracting out PPS's general counsel needs through a local firm, and in particular the expertise of one of its founding members, has served PPS's legal needs exceedingly well. It is the district's intention to continue this model into the 2020-21 fiscal year, when the need for stability in leadership and legal services has increased as a result of unique and unprecedented legal and operational issues resulting from a global pandemic.

Financially, the contract general counsel model has allowed the district to obtain licensed, highly skilled legal and technical expertise and internal legal office leadership at a substantially reduced, cost-effective hourly rate compared with traditional outside counsel, at a cost comparable to the expense of employing an in-house general counsel. Liz Large with OGCN brings highly experienced and high quality legal expertise and strategic leadership to the district. She has developed programs to mitigate risk and address lingering legal disputes, diversified outside counsel services, negotiated cost-effective outside counsel terms, among other improvements. She has advised senior leadership and the Board, has developed a deep understanding of PPS's policies, processes, areas of risk, and strategic plan.

In addition, contracting with OGCN provides the district access to the services of legal professionals within the OGCN network. These include workplace investigations, conflict resolution, contract and real estate expertise, and regulatory compliance, among others. OGCN is a state-certified, women-owned business enterprise.

For the reasons described above, my recommendation is that the Board of Education approve the contract for Office of General Counsel Network.