



CITY AND BOROUGH OF SITKA

A COAST GUARD CITY

MEMORANDUM

To: Mayor Eisenbeisz and Assembly Members

Thru: John Leach, Municipal Administrator *John Brantley*, Acting

From: Sara Peterson, Municipal Clerk
Holley Bayne, Deputy Municipal Clerk / Records Specialist
Grant Turner, IT Director

Date: February 12, 2026

Subject: Supplemental Appropriation for Public Records Request Software

Background

The City and Borough of Sitka continues to experience growth in both the number and complexity of public records requests. Requests are currently managed through email and manual tracking methods, which are labor-intensive, decentralized, and increasingly difficult to manage efficiently.

During development of the FY27 budget, staff submitted a resource proposal request for the purchase of NextRequest, an online platform designed to manage public records requests, which was preliminarily approved for inclusion in the draft budget. However, demand has continued to increase; in January 2026, during the span of 20 working days, the Clerk's Office received 19 requests. Within the first 9 working days of February, 13 requests were received. Of these 32 requests, half were for police records.

A closer look at some historic numbers shows a growing trend as well: In 2017 there were 54 requests, growing to 131 requests in 2019, 149 in 2022, 172 in 2024, and most recently maxing out at 209 in 2025. Given this trend, staff believe it is in the organization's best interest to move forward with implementation sooner rather than waiting until the next fiscal year.

Processing a public records request currently involves the following steps:

1. Review the request for completeness. This may involve a consult with the clerk, the attorney, or the administrator before proceeding. Some of these consults may last over an hour, depending on the complexity of the request.
2. Reach out to requestor for clarification if needed.
3. Send email to requestor confirming receipt and status follow-ups when needed.

4. Save and redact the requestors' personal information before sending to staff.
5. Email departments the request and send email reminders when needed.
6. Compile the request and send it to the legal department with reminders as needed. Legal redacts required sensitive information.
7. Finalize the approved request with a notarized certification page and bates stamping.
8. Track each step on sticky notes and enter tracking info in excel for an audit trail.
9. Respond to requestor with records and respond to questions when needed. A large file that cannot be sent via email will need an additional step to create a file that can be sent via email.
10. Save final copy on clerk's drive.

The existing records request form is a PDF, available online and paper copies are available at the clerk's office. The vast majority are received via email, with users editing the PDF to fill in the information, essentially using the PDF as an online submission. It's not uncommon that the edited PDF is received at the clerk's office unreadable due to the formatting, resulting in staff needing to either reformat the text, or reach out to the requestor to redo their request in a way that is readable.

Analysis

NextRequest would provide a centralized, transparent platform for managing public records requests, improving internal workflow, coordination among staff, and communication with the public. Many steps in the current process can be automated, reducing administrative burden while improving accuracy, tracking, and customer service. The system also maintains an audit trail for each request and allows large files, including video, to be transmitted without the limitations of email.

Implementation is expected to take approximately seven weeks and includes portal configuration, template creation, user setup, and staff training. Because most requests are already received and fulfilled electronically, a system designed specifically for this purpose will improve efficiency while still allowing paper submissions for those who prefer them.

Without a dedicated system, the organization faces increasing workload, potential delays, and a higher risk of errors or noncompliance with public records laws. Over time, implementation is expected to improve productivity, streamline workflows, and support efficient, transparent compliance with public records obligations. NextRequest's SaaS model also ensures ongoing updates and security protections.

This project aligns with Strategic Plan Goal 2.2 by enhancing public access, improving response times, and strengthening communication with the community.

Fiscal Note

The annual subscription cost for the software is \$9,498, with a one-time setup fee of \$1,500, for a total first-year cost of \$10,998. Renewal is available on an annual basis.

The software will support Clerk and Legal functions and will be purchased and maintained by the IT Department. Costs are funded by the General Fund.

Based on the anticipated contract terms, staff is requesting appropriation for the first two years of service to cover implementation and the initial subscription period:

Description	Amount
Implementation Fee	1,500
Year 1	9,498
Year 2	9,973
Total Request	20,971

Funding for one year of this software was preliminarily included in the draft FY2027 budget. Approval of this ordinance will remove the amount from the draft budget to avoid duplicate appropriation.

Recommendation

Staff recommends approval of this ordinance to proceed with the purchase and implementation of the NextRequest public records request management system.

CITY AND BOROUGH OF SITKA

ORDINANCE NO. 2026-06
AN ORDINANCE OF THE CITY AND BOROUGH OF SITKA MAKING SUPPLEMENTAL
APPROPRIATIONS FOR FISCAL YEAR 2026
(Public Records Request Software)

BE IT ENACTED by the Assembly of the City and Borough of Sitka, Alaska as follows:

1. CLASSIFICATION. This ordinance is not of a permanent nature and is not intended to be a part of the Sitka General Code of the City and Borough of Sitka, Alaska.

2. SEVERABILITY. If any provision of this ordinance or any application thereof to any person or circumstance is held invalid, the remainder of this ordinance and application thereof to any person and circumstances shall not be affected thereby.

3. PURPOSE. The purpose of this ordinance is to make a supplemental Operation appropriation for FY2026.

4. ENACTMENT. In accordance with Section 11.10 (a) of the Charter of the City and Borough of Sitka, Alaska, the Assembly hereby makes the following supplemental appropriation for the budget period beginning July 1, 2025 and ending June 30, 2026.

Table with 2 columns and 6 rows. Row 1: FISCAL YEAR 2026 EXPENDITURE BUDGETS. Row 2: GENERAL FUND. Row 3: Transfers Out: Increase transfers out by \$20,971 transferred to the IT fund for implementation of public records request management software. Row 4: INTERNAL SERVICE FUNDS. Row 5: Information Technology – Operations: Increase appropriations in contracted/purchase services by \$20,971 to support the purchase of public records request management software.

EXPLANATION
Funding of \$20,971 is needed for implementation of online public records request management software.

5. EFFECTIVE DATE. This ordinance shall become effective on the day after the date of its passage.

PASSED, APPROVED, AND ADOPTED by the Assembly of the City and Borough of Sitka, Alaska this 10th day of March 2026.

ATTEST:

Steven Eisenbeisz, Mayor

Sara Peterson, MMC
Municipal Clerk

1st reading: 2/24/2026
2nd and final reading: 3/10/2026

Sponsor: Administrator