

## **Race and Equity Pocket Questions**

**Title and purpose of this initiative:** Rate Increase for Brough Law Firm; This item allows the town manager to update the existing contract with Brough Law Firm in accordance with their rate increase.

**Department:** Town Managers Office

**What are the racial and equity impacts?** There are several potential impacts to race and equity due to choosing to contract a private law firm. First, there is a question of diversity and representation. A private law firm may not represent the diversity of the town, which may make it difficult for them to represent the interest of the town faithfully. Second, there is a concern of transparency and accountability. Private law firms may operate with less transparency to the public, creating a disparity in information among community members. A contracted town attorney also serves solely at the pleasure of Council and does not share close ties to staff and internal considerations in the same way that in-house attorney would.

**Who is or will experience community burden?** There is potential burden on marginalized communities as they may face discrimination in private law firms that they would not be subject to in the public sector. There is also the potential for burden on the taxpayers of Carrboro as a rate increase, in combination with other increases, could eventually lead to higher taxes. Law firms local to Carrboro may experience some burden because of competition from the Chapel Hill firm.

**Who is or will experience community benefit?** The Town of Carrboro and its partners will experience a benefit from continuing service with a trusted law provider. The town and residents of Carrboro will benefit from a neutral, outside perspective in legal matters affecting the town. The legal partners at Brough Law Firm will benefit from continued business with the town. Residents will likely feel no additional cost burden due to this change, though switching to an in-house legal service might increase annual legal costs for the town.

**What are the root causes of inequity?** There are no current known causes of inequity in this item. Potential areas of inequity could revolve around lack of diversity in the private law office or a cost burden that will disproportionately affect low-income residents.

**What might be the unintended consequences of this action or strategy?** There is a negative budget impact as the town will be responsible for paying a higher premium for legal services. There is a possibility that the demographics of the law firm do not align with the demographics of the town, making it difficult for the attorney to act in the interest of the town, lacking similar lived experiences. A potential negative result of this action is that the town could end up paying a higher rate for legal services contracted through Brough Law Firm than if they were to bring legal services in-house.

**How is your department planning to mitigate any burdens, inequities, and unintended consequences?** The Town Managers office will budget strategically so that this rate increase is felt as little as possible by the taxpayers.