City of Franklin Engineering Services
Financial Stewardship, Accountability, and Service Delivery

The City of Franklin remains committed to delivering high-quality engineering services through responsible financial management, professional expertise, and accountability to the Common Council and our residents.

Our Engineering Service Delivery Model

In 2024, the City began transitioning to a hybrid engineering service delivery model, utilizing Graef-USA, Inc. for general municipal engineering services while continuing to engage other qualified engineering firms for specialized and project-specific work. This decision followed an evaluation of operational needs, staffing challenges, professional qualifications, demonstrated performance, responsiveness, institutional knowledge, and the City's ability to maintain continuity across its infrastructure, utility, and development projects. Graef serves as an extension of the City's Engineering Department, providing municipal engineering services, plan reviews, construction oversight, project coordination, technical expertise, and support to residents, developers, and City departments. Importantly, Graef is not the City's exclusive engineering consultant.

The City's professional engineering and related consulting relationships include:

- **Graef-USA, Inc.**, general municipal engineering and specialized engineering services.
- **Ruekert & Mielke, Inc.**, surveying, boundary documentation, and project-specific engineering services.
- **Clark Dietz, Inc.**, engineering consulting and project-specific technical services.
- **Civiltech Engineering, Inc.**, transportation infrastructure and pathway design.
- **Harwood Engineering Consultants, Ltd.**, stormwater management, storm sewer, grading, and erosion control reviews.
- **Foth Infrastructure & Environment, LLC**, professional engineering, planning, and construction oversight services.
- **Terracon Consultants, Inc.**, geotechnical engineering services.
- **JSA Environmental, Inc.**, specialized environmental engineering and compliance monitoring.

These firms provide services based on project needs, qualifications, available expertise, workload, and applicable contractual requirements. The City retains the flexibility to utilize the professional resources best suited to each project. Contracting with Graef for municipal engineering services does not preclude the use of other qualified engineering consultants.

Common Council Approval and Ongoing Oversight

The City's general municipal engineering arrangement with Graef was presented to and approved by the Common Council on multiple occasions, including August 27, 2024, December 3, 2024, and January 21, 2025. The Council has also received subsequent Engineering Department updates addressing contractual obligations, expenditures, staffing, infrastructure projects, and ongoing operations. Engineering services are coordinated through City Administration and the Engineering Department, with Finance and other City departments participating in project planning, financial review, and operational decisions as appropriate.

The City's professional services agreements establish responsibilities, invoicing requirements, expenditure authorization procedures, and performance expectations. The City remains responsible for project decisions, financial oversight, and accountability, whether municipal employees or contracted professionals perform the engineering services.

Understanding Engineering Expenditures

Evaluation of the City's engineering expenses must consider the total cost of delivering services, not just payments to an individual consulting firm. Under the former staffing model, the City incurred substantial personnel costs, including salaries, employee benefits, retirement contributions, equipment, and operating expenses, while also contracting with outside engineering firms. Under the current model, the City provides many engineering responsibilities previously performed by City employees through contracted professional services.

Engineering expenditures also include separately funded capital and infrastructure projects, specialized consulting services, and engineering work associated with private development. The City bills developer-related engineering costs to the responsible developers, including the City's applicable administrative fee. These reimbursable expenditures must be distinguished from costs the City ultimately bears.

An increase in payments to a contracted engineering firm does not, by itself, establish that the City's overall engineering costs have increased. An accurate comparison must account for former personnel and operating expenses, other contracted engineering services, retained City costs, project-specific funding, developer reimbursements, and the scope and quality of services delivered.

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Professional Standards and Accountability

The City's contracted engineering professionals are subject to applicable Wisconsin professional licensing and ethical standards. Engineering contracts establish responsibilities, financial controls, performance expectations, and the City's authority to direct and oversee contracted services. The Engineering Department coordinates projects and services with Administration, Finance, participating departments, and the Common Council, consistent with their respective responsibilities and approval authority.

Our Continued Commitment

The City of Franklin values the professional relationships it has developed with its engineering consultants and the experience, responsiveness, and expertise they bring to our community. The current service delivery model provides access to specialized professional resources, operational flexibility, and the engineering capacity necessary to support the City's infrastructure, utilities, development activities, and long-term planning.

Our responsibility remains unchanged: to provide reliable municipal services, manage public resources responsibly, maintain appropriate oversight, and make decisions in the best interests of Franklin residents. The City will continue evaluating its engineering operations and professional service relationships based on performance, operational effectiveness, financial stewardship, and our community's needs.

City of Franklin
Departments of Administration and Engineering