STAFF REPORT

Bookkeeping & Accounting Services

TO	BOARD MEETING
Board of Harbor Commissioners	November 18, 2026
FROM CCHD	**FROM CSS**
Mike Rademaker, CEO/Harbormaster	Mike Bahr, CEO, Community System Solutions

Executive Summary

Three firms have submitted proposals to support the Crescent City Harbor District's bookkeeping, financial reporting, and grant-funded project accounting. The District's written Scope of Work calls for a complete set of routine and grant-related services, including biweekly payment authorization packages and seven specified monthly Board reports. The proposals differ materially in responsibility assignments, personnel detail, transition method, and price structure.

CBX, Inc. most explicitly addresses the full recurring reporting list at the lowest proposed monthly ceiling, but leaves qualifications and production staffing to be substantiated upon further request. J.R. Martin & Associates offers a structured transition and recurring reconciliations, while retaining certain functions with District personnel and excluding several required activities from its base retainer. NOW CFO provides the most detailed construction-project accounting and grant-compliance plan, but does not expressly commit to every routine District reporting format or a not-to-exceed fee.

Comparison in three numbers

CBX, INC.	J.R. MARTIN	NOW CFO
$3,200	**$6,000**	**$6,350–$10,050**
monthly proposed ceiling	monthly retainer; overages possible	estimated ongoing monthly range

What the District asked firms to provide

In April 2026, the District issued a Request for Accounting Firm Services and received no proposals. CSS began direct outreach to accounting firms in July, contacted firms across Northern California and the Bay Area, and circulated the Scope of Work for Bookkeeping/Accounting Services. Interested firms discussed District needs with the CEO/Harbormaster and CSS. Multiple firms, including the three proposers, signed nondisclosure agreements and were granted guest access to District QuickBooks records to evaluate the workload. The resulting submissions are from (1) CBX, (2) J.R. Martin & Associates, and (3) NOW CFO.

The two-page Scope of Work is now available and forms the comparison standard. It is not limited to ordinary monthly bookkeeping: it requires fiscal-agent and grant-accounting functions, invoice review, Board payment packages, QuickBooks maintenance, grant reports, year-end audit support, annual budget assistance, and escalation of issues. It places the contractor under the direction of the CEO/Harbormaster and calls for coordination with District staff and contractors.

Required deliverables and deadlines

Requirement	Scope of Work expectation
Every two weeks	Payment authorization report with supporting invoices for the Board agenda (item 4).
Each month	Grant transaction/reimbursement report, District financial statement, cash flow statement, monthly balance sheet, monthly profit and loss, profit and loss by class, and budget-to-actual report (item 5a–g).
Continuously / as needed	Invoice coding and QuickBooks upkeep; grant and audit documentation; fiscal reports for grant agencies; budget and special reporting (items 1–3 and 6–14).

This staff report evaluates the following:

Service coverage. Does each written proposal expressly cover the scope, or does it assign work back to District staff, reserve it for additional billing, or leave it unspecified?

Proposal completeness. Has each proposer supplied the six requested submission components—including three relevant project examples, a proposed team chart with résumés, and a time-and-materials not-to-exceed price?

Comparison at a glance

Summary of proposed service models, delivery obligations, cost structures, and gaps against the District's Scope of Work.

Evaluation factor	CBX, Inc.	J.R. Martin & Associates	NOW CFO
Primary model	Broad recurring bookkeeping, grant accounting support, and specified Board financial reports.	CPA-led recurring close with District office performing more transaction-processing work.	Controller-led project accounting, financial controls, grant reimbursements, and cash forecasts.
Daily bookkeeping	QuickBooks entry, reconciliations, exception review, and financial reports described.	Firm reconciles, records payroll, and reviews coding; District office enters bills and payments.	Invoice workflow and monthly close described; District-wide QuickBooks allocation requires confirmation.
Board payment process	Express biweekly payment authorizations with invoice detail; Office Manager prepares checks.	Office handles payment steps; separate biweekly authorization package not offered expressly.	Approval and payment workflow proposed; Board-specific cadence and signing protocol need alignment.
Seven monthly reports	Lists all seven specified report types, subject to data and configuration.	Monthly reports promised, but scope's seven formats are not itemized.	Monthly reporting and dashboards proposed; all seven District-wide formats not itemized.
Grant reimbursements	Fiscal records, reimbursement support, and status reporting; submission role needs defining.	Grants team retains reimbursement submissions; firm provides underlying accounting reports.	Preparation, submission, and tracking of reimbursement packages expressly proposed.
Capital-project work	Project/grant coding covered; heavy cleanup or complex requests may need added time.	Construction projects excluded from current retainer pending later pricing.	Capital-project coding, commitments, compliance, draws, and cash timing are central.
Audit and year-end	Year-end support and routine audit documentation expressly included.	Audit support and federal awards schedule excluded from base fee.	Audit-ready close, audit schedules, compliance monitoring, and response support described.
Transition plan	Predominantly remote; onboarding steps, named team, and start date not yet fixed.	December roadmap and handoff; January 1 service target; March retainer recast.	Four-phase setup over roughly 12 weeks; binding start date and acceptance criteria open.
Ongoing price	$80/hour, 30–40 hours estimated, proposed $3,200/month not-to-exceed.	$6,000 monthly retainer applied to actual hourly work; not a fixed maximum.	Controller $210/hour; accountant $80/hour; approximately $6,350–$10,050/month estimated.

Source: District Scope of Work (pp. 1–2); combined proposals, CBX (pp. 1–15), J.R. Martin (pp. 16–26), NOW CFO (pp. 27–31).

Who proposes to do what? — Operations and Board reports

Each row relates to a Scope of Work requirement. “Defined” means described in writing. “Partially defined” identifies narrower or shared roles.

Scope requirement	CBX, Inc.	J.R. Martin & Associates	NOW CFO
1 Fiscal-agent / grant accounting functions	**Defined:** Fiscal support and grant administration stated; District payment approvals remain separate.	**Outside:** Fiscal-agent duties specifically stay with the District.	**Partially defined:** Grant accounting and controls described; formal fiscal-agent role not defined.
2 Work with Office Manager; review invoices and enter in QuickBooks	**Defined:** Invoice review, coding, and QuickBooks entry with Office Manager.	**Partially defined:** District office enters bills and prepares payments; firm reviews coding.	**Partially defined:** Firm handles invoice workflow; QuickBooks and Office Manager role split unclear.
3 Verify grant invoices against contracts and scope	**Defined:** Coordination with Grants Manager and contractor scope review described.	**Not specified:** Grant-class coding proposed, but contract-level grant invoice verification not specified.	**Partially defined:** Contract and deliverable matching described; Grants Manager collaboration needs definition.
4 Biweekly Board payment authorization with invoices	**Defined:** Every-two-week payment authorization package including invoice detail.	**Not specified:** Monthly Board financials proposed, but no separate biweekly package commitment.	**Not specified:** Invoice approval routing proposed; Board-specific two-week package not identified.
5a Grant transaction / reimbursement status report	**Defined:** Monthly grant expenses, reimbursements requested/received and outstanding.	**Partially defined:** Grant coding and supporting reports; specific status format not committed.	**Defined:** Grant spending and reimbursement status tracking described; Board format to confirm.
5b District financial statement each month	**Defined:** District monthly financial statement is expressly listed.	**Defined:** Complete monthly financial reporting is proposed.	**Partially defined:** Monthly statements described; District-wide versus project focus needs clarification.
5c Monthly cash flow statement	**Defined:** Cash flow statement listed among monthly Board deliverables.	**Not specified:** Cash forecasting is optional; monthly statement not expressly in base.	**Partially defined:** Frequent cash forecasts described; formal monthly statement not specified.

Assessment labels indicate what can be established from the written proposals.
The Board may require a more detailed response from each finalist.

Who proposes to do what? — Reporting formats and fiscal control

Scope requirement	CBX, Inc.	J.R. Martin & Associates	NOW CFO
5d Balance sheet by month	**Defined:** Balance sheet by month expressly listed.	**Not specified:** Monthly reporting promised without this specifically named schedule.	**Not specified:** Monthly financial statements offered; no named monthly balance-sheet schedule.
5e Profit and loss by month	**Defined:** Monthly profit-and-loss report expressly listed.	**Not specified:** Monthly reports offered without an itemized P&L-by-month schedule.	**Not specified:** Monthly statements described; this exact report not named.
5f Profit and loss by class	**Defined:** Profit-and-loss by class expressly listed.	**Partially defined:** Grant-class coding offered; class-based P&L not specified.	**Partially defined:** Project-class coding described; QuickBooks class P&L format not specified.
5g Monthly budget-to-actual report	**Defined:** Monthly budget-to-actual report specifically listed.	**Outside:** Budget-to-actual Board reporting is described as optional leadership support.	**Partially defined:** Project budget-to-actual reporting stated; District-wide version not specified.
6 Send authorized payments to Office Manager for checks/signing	**Defined:** After Board authorization, provides information to Office Manager for check process.	**Partially defined:** District performs checks and payments; firm authorization handoff not defined.	**Partially defined:** Firm may schedule ACH/wire/check payments; must conform to Board procedures.
7 Keep QuickBooks current	**Defined:** Recurring transaction entry and QuickBooks maintenance expressly offered.	**Partially defined:** Reconciliations and payroll posting proposed; office enters the bills.	**Partially defined:** Accounting-system configuration/close offered; QuickBooks-specific upkeep not explicit.
8 Year-end information and audit firm documentation	**Defined:** Year-end schedules, reconciliations and auditor document support described.	**Outside:** Audit support and federal awards schedule are specifically excluded.	**Defined:** Audit-ready schedules, auditor responses and compliance work described.

Who proposes to do what? — Grants, budget and coordination

The final six obligations address grant reports, budget preparation, special documentation and identification of issues affecting performance.

Scope requirement	CBX, Inc.	J.R. Martin & Associates	NOW CFO
9 Fiscal reports for Grants Manager / monitoring	**Defined:** Grant expense, reimbursements and backup reports described.	**Partially defined:** Grants team retains requests; firm supplies underlying reports.	**Defined:** Project/grant fiscal reports, reimbursement packages and tracking included.
10 Fiscal reports to grant financing agencies	**Defined:** Reports to grant financing agencies as authorized within scope.	**Not specified:** Direct grant-agency fiscal reporting not expressly committed.	**Partially defined:** MARAD reporting and grant compliance described; agency/report list needs specification.
11 Assist with annual District budget	**Defined:** Annual budget assistance and prior-year data/review expressly offered.	**Outside base:** Annual budget preparation appears under optional financial leadership.	**Partially defined:** Forecasting and project budget control offered; annual District budget not named.
12 Define additional reports with District	**Defined:** Reporting formats and schedules to be agreed with management.	**Partially defined:** Handoff and retainer recast involve collaboration; new reports may add fees.	**Defined:** Setup, reporting and controls designed with District leadership.
13 Supply other documents needed for deliverables	**Defined:** Additional reasonable documentation included within agreed scope.	**Partially defined:** Supporting reports offered; other services separately priced.	**Partially defined:** Project and audit records offered; broader document duties need scoping.
14 Identify issues or hazards affecting services	**Defined:** Exception tracking and issue escalation expressly described.	**Defined:** Proactive identification of concerns is a stated practice.	**Defined:** Variance alerts, control reviews and compliance risks proposed.

What documentation is still missing?

The Scope of Work contains six express proposal-submission requirements.

Submission requirement	CBX, Inc.	J.R. Martin & Associates	NOW CFO
1 Cover letter and authorized signer	Cover letter names Cristian as the representative authorized to negotiate; surname/authority should be confirmed.	Presentation includes firm contacts but does not identify the individual authorized to bind the firm.	Names Kelly Ciccolo as preparer; negotiating/contract-signing authority is not stated.
2 Qualifications / firm information	Office, specialization and entity type provided; year founded, staffing count and certain certifications remain unconfirmed.	Redding CPA practice, “since 2009,” and broad client base described; detailed team size/designations not provided.	General enterprise/team qualifications described; firm size, specific credentials and local certifications not itemized.
3 Three comparable projects in past five years	Three experience fields remain placeholders; project/client specifics and references not furnished.	References offered upon request, but three specific recent engagements not identified.	No three recent comparable project summaries or contacts provided.
4 Organization chart and summary résumés	Organization is diagrammed; named delivery roles/resumés missing.	Responsibilities split among firm, office and grants team; named personnel chart and résumés not provided.	Controller/accountant role descriptions offered; names, chart and résumés not provided.
5 Work approach and report delivery	Detailed task-by-task method; report cadence specified for most recurring services.	Detailed transition and monthly closing roadmap; some required report formats and grant tasks omitted.	Detailed four-phase project approach; routine Board report cadence and formats require completion.
6 Pricing and cost exceptions / NTE	Hourly $80 with proposed $3,200 monthly not-to-exceed; exceptions and expanded scope require negotiation.	$6,000 retainer subject to hourly overages and recast; additional scope excludes an established fixed ceiling.	Hourly rates and estimated setup/monthly ranges stated; no contract maximum or unit deliverable ceiling.

Firm-by-firm evaluation

CBX, Inc.

CBX addresses the written Scope of Work most comprehensively at the deliverable level. It names the two-week payment authorization package, all seven monthly financial reports, QuickBooks maintenance, grant expense tracking, audit-document support, and budget assistance. Its predominantly remote approach anticipates collaboration with the Office Manager, Grants Manager, and CEO/Harbormaster. The $80 hourly rate and proposed $3,200 monthly maximum imply roughly 40 billable hours in a fully utilized month.

Strength. The offer aligns well with the District's prescribed reporting timetable and carries a proposed spending control. Its submission also contemplates District authority for approvals, check preparation, and check signing.

Risk. The proposal does not establish that 30–40 monthly hours will cover every listed activity during grant-intensive periods. Several requested project examples are placeholders; production personnel and résumés are not provided. Complex grant work, historical cleanup, additional audit requests, and travel may require further written authorizations or a revised ceiling.

Recommended Interview focus. Request sample Board reports, an initial workload budget by task, actual named staffing, and firm references. Ask CBX to demonstrate a monthly production calendar that fits within the cap.

J.R. Martin & Associates

J.R. Martin proposes a December accounting transition roadmap, reconciliation of opening balances to the June 30, 2026 audit, a documented findings memo, and recurring bookkeeping beginning January 1. The current proposal calls for a $7,000 roadmap, a minimum $1,500 adjustment phase, and a $6,000 monthly retainer billed against hourly work, with a March review to reset the retainer. The firm emphasizes reconciliations, monthly reporting, payroll posting, and a Board presentation by Zoom.

Strength. The staged handoff, review of account balances, and documented findings could reduce the risk during construction ramp-up.

Risk. Construction accounting is excluded from the initial retainer. Audit support, the federal awards schedule, State Controller reporting, and other services are additional; the office and grants personnel retain key invoice, payment and grant-submission work. The proposed retainer is not a monthly cost ceiling.

Recommended Interview focus. Request pricing for all 14 Scope of Work duties, especially biweekly Board packages, grant invoicing/reimbursement, annual budget support, and audit schedules. Obtain a written cap and a transition contingency plan.

Construction accounting and cross-cutting risks

NOW CFO

NOW CFO proposes a model focused on chart-of-accounts design, cost coding, line-of-credit controls, invoice processing, grant reimbursement, budget monitoring, monthly closing, and audit support. The stated roles are a Controller at $210 per hour and a senior/staff accountant at $80 per hour. Phase 1 setup is estimated at $9,500–$13,200; ongoing support for Phases 2–4 is estimated at $6,350–$10,050 per month.

Strength. The accounting design, commitment tracking, cash forecasting, and grant reimbursement protocols appear well suited to major federal grants. The proposal is comparatively detailed about compliance workflows and construction-cost visibility.

Risk. It does not expressly commit to each of the seven District-wide monthly QuickBooks report formats or the biweekly Board authorization package. The proposed payment-processing responsibilities must be reconciled with the District's approval and check-signing practices. Named assigned staff, references, start date, and binding fee ceilings are not provided.

Recommended Interview focus. Request exact recurring Board deliverables, a full District-wide bookkeeping calendar, role-specific hourly estimates, defined startup deliverables, and a monthly not-to-exceed proposal. Clarify whether its suggested ledger corrections are substantiated and authorized work or merely preliminary observations.

Additional considerations

Issues	Determine before a contract award
Continuity and resilience	The District needs named primary and backup staff, monthly-close and Board-agenda deadlines, and procedures for turnover, cybersecurity, record retention, and return of files.
Comparable price	Costs must include both ordinary Harbor operations and grant-funded construction work, with clarified startup charges, role rates, exclusions, and written authorization thresholds.

Comparative pricing

The three figures below are not equivalent contract prices. CBX proposes hourly billing with a $3,200 monthly not-to-exceed amount for its described scope. J.R. Martin offers a $6,000 monthly retainer against hourly charges, with overages and scope adjustments possible. NOW CFO supplies an hourly-based estimated range rather than a maximum.

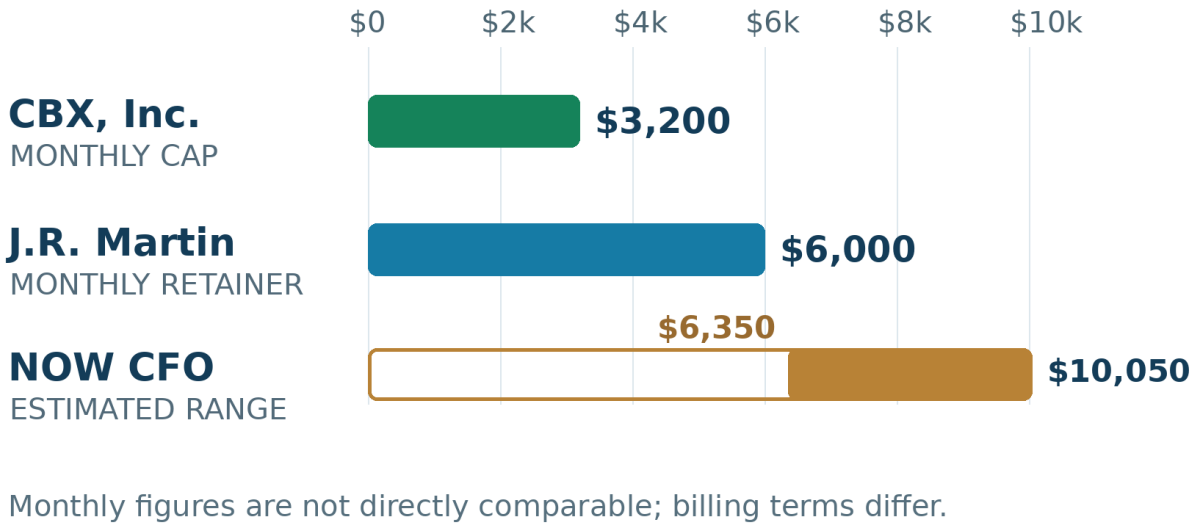


Figure 1. Quoted ongoing monthly amounts. NOW CFO's horizontal segment represents its estimated monthly range; the other bars show a proposed ceiling and a retainer, respectively.

Potential twelve-month cost scenarios

Proposer	Startup or transition	Recurring charge	Potential 12 months*
CBX, Inc.	No separate setup fee quoted	$80/hr; proposed $3,200/month ceiling	**Up to $38,400**
J.R. Martin	$7,000 roadmap + $1,500 adjustment minimum	$6,000/month retainer, not fixed	**At least $80,500 before extras**
NOW CFO	$9,500–$13,200 Phase 1 estimated	$6,350–$10,050/month estimated	**$85,700–$133,800 estimated**

* NOTE: these are simplified illustrations derived from 12 × the stated ongoing monthly figure, plus stated startup fees where applicable. These are not like-for-like scopes. J.R. Martin's retainer begins with a proposed December 15 draft; the timing and number of actual billings must be confirmed. Excluded work, changes in fee assumptions, and travel may alter every scenario.

All-in comparison

Before deciding whether a lower monthly amount is genuinely less expensive, the Board may want to ask each firm to price the same baseline set of transactions and grant activities. That response should distinguish required work included in the quote from optional or excluded work, identify the monthly effort by staff role, and specify the maximum cost without additional written approval.

Because the Scope of Work anticipates a time-and-materials contract with a not-to-exceed amount, a monthly retainer or estimated range should be converted to a firm authorization ceiling for comparison purposes. If the Board wishes to separate ordinary bookkeeping from specialized capital-project accounting, that alternative could also be priced.

8 RECOMMENDED BOARD ACTION

Proposed selection process

Staff recommends proceeding with a structured clarification and interview process. The Board may select one or more firms for interviews based on its priorities. The Board is not being asked to authorize the expenditure or execute an agreement through this agenda item.

Attachments:

1. Scope of Work for Bookkeeping/Accounting Services (two pages).
2. CBX, Inc. proposal (pages 1–15 of the combined proposal packet).
3. J.R. Martin & Associates proposal (pages 16–26).
4. NOW CFO proposal (pages 27–31).

All proposer qualifications, staffing, proposed availability, prices, and experience are based on the written submissions and require confirmation before contract award.

Scope of Work for Bookkeeping/Accounting Services

Crescent City Harbor District

The selected firm must have the qualifications, experience, and applicable licenses necessary to perform the services described below.

Scope of Services

The scope of services includes, but is not limited to, the following responsibilities:

1. Act as the District's fiscal agent and grant accounting administrator for financial transactions, including grant transactions, and ensure that expenditures are made and properly authorized, documented, and coded.
2. Work with the Harbor District Office Manager to receive and review invoices and payments, including grant reimbursements, and enter the relevant transactions into the District's QuickBooks system.
3. Review grant-related invoices with the Grants Manager to confirm that the invoiced work is consistent with the applicable contract and scope of work.
4. Prepare payment authorization reports, together with supporting invoices, for inclusion in the Harbor District Board of Commissioners' agenda every two weeks.
5. Prepare the following monthly financial reports for inclusion in the Board of Commissioners' agenda:
    a. Grant transaction report showing expenditures and reimbursement status
    b. District financial statement
    c. Cash flow statement
    d. Balance sheet by month
    e. Profit and loss by month
    f. Profit and loss by class
    g. Budget-to-actual report
6. Submit payment authorization information to the Harbor District Office Manager for check preparation and signature by the delegated members of the Board of Commissioners.
7. Ensure that the District's QuickBooks records remain current.

8. Provide year-end financial information and documentation requested by the District's audit firm.
9. Provide fiscal reports to the Grants Manager as needed for grant reimbursement requests and grant monitoring.
10. Provide fiscal reports to grant financing agencies as needed.
11. Assist the Board of Commissioners with preparation of the annual budget.
12. Work with the Harbor District to identify additional information and reporting necessary to fulfill the scope of work.
13. Provide any additional documentation needed by the Harbor District to meet the scope-of-work deliverables.
14. Identify issues or hazards that may affect performance of the scope of work.

The selected firm will report directly to the CEO/Harbormaster and coordinate with other Harbor District employees and contractors involved in the work.

Proposal Format Requirements

1. **Cover Letter.** Identify the consultant or firm submitting the proposal and the person authorized to negotiate and commit on the firm's behalf.
2. **Qualifications.** Provide the firm's background, organizational structure, year founded, office locations, number of employees, and areas of specialization. State whether the firm qualifies as a local business, small business, Disadvantaged Business Enterprise, minority-owned business, or woman-owned business.
3. **Relevant Project Experience.** Provide at least three examples from the past five years in which team members performed similar services.
4. **Team Organization.** Describe the proposed organization for performing the services. Include an organization chart and summary-level résumés for proposed team members.
5. **Scope of Services Approach.** Explain the proposed approach, including how the work will be performed and how reports will be prepared and delivered.
6. **Fees.** Provide fees for performing the scope of services. Identify any services that would cost significantly more than other elements and state the associated cost. The District reserves the right to remove elements from the final award. The District intends to contract on a time-and-materials basis with a not-to-exceed amount.