



DATE: April 19, 2021

TO: Mayor and Members of the City Council

VIA: Peter Pirnejad, City Manager

FROM: Priscilla Schaus, Communications Director/City Clerk

SUBJECT: ISSUANCE OF A REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS FOR STRATEGIC COMMUNICATIONS & OUTREACH SERVICES FOR THE LEVEE IMPROVEMENTS PROJECT

RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that the City Council adopt the attached resolution approving the issuance of a Request for Proposals (RFP) for Strategic Communications & Outreach Services for the Levee Improvements Project (CIP 327-657) (“Levee Project”).

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

A key priority of the Levee Project is to keep community members informed and updated on progress of the project, such as timelines, impacts, milestones, and other key information. To continue proactive and strategic communications and outreach, a Request for Proposals for Strategic Communications & Outreach Services for the Levee Project has been prepared and is presented to the City Council for review. Once approved, it will be released, and responses will be due within four (4) weeks.

BACKGROUND/ANALYSIS

The Foster City levee system, surrounding the majority of the outer bay-front perimeter of the City, is crucial in providing protection from flood hazards and storms. In 2014, the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) determined that the City’s levee system did not meet minimum requirements for flood protection. To protect people and property and avoid designating Foster City as a flood zone (which would require expensive flood insurance for most homeowners), voters passed Measure P in 2018 to

fund the necessary levee improvements.

Construction of these significant improvements began in October of 2020 and will continue through 2023. As construction continues over the project timeline, the City will continue to conduct extensive, proactive communications and outreach on the project duration, impacts, updates, and other important information. The City has communicated with residents through various platforms and methods, including: social media, press releases, project website, mailers, flyers, Community Update webinars, and a construction update electronic newsletter.

The City saw a need for additional communications support to inform the community and address concerns raised by the public related to the largest public works project in the City's history. As the start of construction commenced during the COVID-19 pandemic, the City received a high volume of inquiries and concerns from community members through email, phone, and a Change.org petition. To address this growing need for education and information, the City executed an agreement on January 4, 2021 with Tripepi Smith and Associates, Inc. for proactive communications support and services for the Levee Project. At the February 16, 2021 City Council Meeting, the City Council adopted a resolution authorizing the execution of a contract amendment with Tripepi Smith and Associates, Inc.; the increased contract amount is expected to provide sufficient funding to cover all costs for Tripepi Smith's work through July 31, 2021. These additional resources have helped to enhance the Project's communications efforts through: a new standalone website, more comprehensive and easy to understand FAQs, 3 community updates, and the addition of Levee Live sessions where community members can sign-up for a Zoom meeting with a project team member.

To continue proactive communications and outreach and ensure no lapse in service, a Request for Proposals for Strategic Communications & Outreach Services for the Levee Project has been prepared and is presented to the City Council for review. As experienced in the past several months, there has been a continued need for focused and targeted communications. Although staff has seen some leveling of the community-wide concern, there have been continued spikes in community interest whether it be due to misunderstandings or misinformation. Recently, the City has worked to address several community concerns, including: closures at Baywinds Park and Recreational Water Use, earlier advancement of Phase 3, pedestrian and bicyclist safety on Beach Park Boulevard, and levee elevations and appearance. Staff has worked to address these concerns in a timely and effective manner through updated frequently asked questions, Community Update Webinars, and dedicated informational pages on the project website. To continue this level of service and response, staff anticipates the need for continued focus on pro-active communications to address these pressing needs to share information and project updates. The contract would be for a one-year agreement, with two optional one-year extensions. The draft RFP is

included as an attachment to this staff report. Key items to note are as follows.

Scope of Work

The City is seeking proposals from highly qualified consultants to work closely with the City Manager Department, Communications Division, and Project Manager to provide ongoing strategic and proactive communications and outreach services on the Levee Project. Communications and outreach services and support may include, but are not limited to:

- Drafting content / messaging for Levee Project updates, such as social media, press releases, newsletters, talking points, frequently asked questions (FAQs), flyers, and/or mailers.
- Designing graphics for social media, flyers, signage, and/or mailers and coordinating distribution.
- Managing and maintaining the Levee Project electronic newsletter.
- Managing and maintaining the Levee Project website.
- Developing concepts for and producing Levee Project informational videos.
- Developing outreach strategies for engaging target audiences.
- Managing the Levee Project inquiry hotline and email box.
- Developing memos to keep the City Council informed.
- Coordinating with the Levee Project construction team and other staff on key updates to keep the community informed.
- Organizing and hosting virtual or in-person Community Updates.
- Monitoring social media to understand community sentiment.
- Facilitating media inquiries and developing messaging for interviews.
- Evaluating and measuring outreach efforts.
- Attending and presenting communications efforts at City Council meetings.

CONCLUSION

Once approved, the RFP will be released and responses will be requested by the proposed due date of May 21, 2021. Staff will review the proposals and once a consultant is selected, staff will return to City Council at the June 21, 2021 City Council meeting with a request to award the contract.

FISCAL IMPACT

There is no fiscal impact with authorizing the RFP, however, there will be fiscal impact associated with awarding the contract, which will come back to the City Council at a later date. Funding for the agreement for Strategic Communications & Outreach Services is available in the budget for the Levee Improvements Project (CIP 327-657). In June 2018, Foster City residents voted to approve a \$90 million general

obligation (GO) bond to improve and strengthen the Foster City levee system.

CITY COUNCIL VALUE/PRIORITY AREA

This action is an ongoing step of the Levee Project initiative under the “Facilities & Infrastructure” and “City Council Operations and Improved Community Engagement” Value/Priority Areas. The key outcome is to make substantial progress toward an improved levee on time and within budget to protect the community and critical infrastructure from storms and high tide. Part of this process involves implementing comprehensive communications and outreach efforts and providing a resource for responsive and timely communications to general citizen inquiries.

Attachments:

- Attachment 1 - Resolution
- Attachment 2 - Request for Proposals