



DATE: July 19, 2021

TO: Mayor and Members of the City Council

VIA: Peter Pirnejad, City Manager

FROM: Priscilla Schaus, Communications Director/City Clerk

SUBJECT: AGREEMENT WITH TRIPEPI SMITH AND ASSOCIATES FOR COMMUNICATIONS SUPPORT SERVICES FOR THE LEVEE PROTECTION PLANNING AND IMPROVEMENTS PROJECT (CIP 327-657)

RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that the City Council adopt the attached resolution authorizing an agreement with Tripepi Smith and Associates (Tripepi Smith) from August 1, 2021 to July 31, 2022 in an amount not to exceed \$127,056 for Strategic Communication and Outreach Services for the Levee Protection Planning and Improvements Project (CIP 327-657) for the initial term of one year. It is further recommended that the City Council authorize the City Manager to execute two optional one-year extensions, upon demonstration of satisfactory performance.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

A key priority of the Levee Project is to keep community members informed and updated on the progress of the project, such as timelines, impacts, milestones, and other key information. The City has a team of communications professionals that are aiding City staff with outreach work on the Levee Protection Planning and Improvements Project (Levee Project). In 2021, the City entered into a contract for proactive communication services with Tripepi Smith, and City Council approved Contract Amendment No. 1 for Tripepi Smith to remain engaged on the project for a longer timeline and allow them to expand their scope of work to meet the needs of the team. The current team includes Tripepi Smith, Paul Nagengast with Regional Government Services as the Project Manager on the Levee Project, and the City's

Communications Division staff.

On April 19, 2021, the City Council approved a Request for Proposals (RFP) for Strategic Communications & Outreach Services for the Levee Project to continue proactive and strategic communications and outreach. Following the issuance of the RFP, seven responses were received by the deadline. The Communications/City Clerk Department conducted an initial review and identified three proposers to be interviewed by the Project Manager, City Manager, and Communications/City Clerk Department. Interviews were conducted on June 2, and it was determined that Tripepi Smith provided the best value for services due to comparable experience, demonstrated understanding of the project, and methodology for accomplishing the scope of work. Staff recommends the approval of a contract with Tripepi Smith for Strategic Communication and Outreach Services for the Levee Project to ensure continuing comprehensive and proactive communications, outreach efforts, and responsive and timely communications to citizen inquiries.

BACKGROUND

Construction of the Levee Project 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 in an amount not to exceed \$49,000 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 in the amount of \$61,000 and the increased contract amount of \$110,000 was expected to provide sufficient funding to cover all costs for Tripepi Smith's work through July 31, 2021. As of June 1, \$77,808.75 has been spent and \$32,191 remains. Monthly costs have varied from \$18,469 in February, to \$7,497 in May. Costs are expected to fluctuate in response to construction activities or other issues that may arise. This contract was originally brought forth at the June 21, 2021 meeting with the start date of July 1, 2021 and the agenda item was tabled to the July 19 City Council meeting. The resolution and agreement have been updated to reflect

the new one-year term beginning August 1, 2021. If the new contract is approved at tonight's meeting, the new contract will begin August 1, and funds not expended from the original contract will remain in the Levee Project account.

These additional resources have helped to enhance the Project's communications efforts through: a new standalone website, more comprehensive and easy to understand FAQs, community updates, and the pilot of Levee Live sessions where community members could sign-up for a Zoom meeting with a project team member. On April 19, City Council authorized the issuance of a Request for Proposals (RFP) for Strategic Communications & Outreach Services for the Levee Project to continue proactive and strategic communications and outreach for a duration of one year, with two optional one-year extensions. The Levee Project is anticipated to be completed by January 2024, and this agreement along with the optional extensions would provide communications support services through the remainder of the project.

ANALYSIS

In response to the RFP issued for the proposed project, staff received a total of seven (7) responses. The Communications/City Clerk Department performed an initial review with the following findings:

- Edeveco submitted a proposal in the amount of \$3,500 monthly, following an initial payment of \$8,500. The proposal did not indicate the level of demonstrated experience with similar projects that was seen in other responsive submissions.
- Goodsides submitted a proposal for video production services, which was found not to be responsive to the RFP.
- The Hayes Initiative submitted a proposal in the amount of \$19,685 monthly/ \$236,220 annually. The cost was significantly higher than the costs indicated by other responsive submissions.
- We the Creative submitted a proposal focused primarily on marketing/branding and provided only an hourly work cost breakdown, which was found not be responsive to the RFP.

The three top submissions were as follows:

- JPW Communications submitted a proposal for an estimated amount of \$125,000
- SGA Marketing submitted a proposal for an estimated amount of \$116,308
- Tripepi Smith and Associates submitted a proposal for an estimated amount of \$127,056

The three submissions were considered by a review team consisting of the Communications/City Clerk Department Staff, Levee Project Manager, and City

Manager via an interview process. The submitters provided a 5-10 minute introduction, followed by approximately 20 minutes of questions & answers where they were asked to provide information about their experience with similar projects, and what they would change about the current approach to the project, including the project website. The submitters indicated the cost proposals were estimates and that pricing was based on time and materials. Following the interviews, the project team met to discuss the results, and determined that all three of the submitters were qualified; however, JPW Communications and Tripepi Smith demonstrated a clearer understanding of the project scope of work. However, staff was also concerned that the ongoing implementation costs provided by JPW Communications could range anywhere from \$4,500 to \$15,000 per month and JPW Communications did not provide sufficient clarification during the interview process. The City engaged in the competitive bid process to determine if a better value for services could be obtained, and the project team determined that the services currently provided by Tripepi Smith have provided a good value and yielded positive results and the approach presented as part of the proposal would continue the productive trajectory. The project team recommends awarding the agreement to Tripepi Smith and entering into a one-year contract in an amount not to exceed \$127,056 for Strategic Communication and Outreach Services for the Levee Protection Planning and Improvements Project.

In the RFP, staff requested pricing options for time and materials and a fixed price cost. Tripepi Smith provided both pricing options. Initially, Tripepi Smith offered a retainer or fixed price of \$10,588 per month based on the scope of work supplied in the RFP, and non-retainer/ad hoc hourly pricing for additional services. The proposal also included general information that if Tripepi Smith was on retainer in excess of \$6,500 a month, retainer rates would be applicable.

Staff determined that a lower retainer amount and lower ad hoc pricing would provide a better value. Staff negotiated a retainer rate of \$6,500 for a more limited scope of work to include the items that expected to be completed regularly, such as production of the construction newsletter, website content updates, project management, creation of social media content, and other tasks. Other items in the RFP's scope of work are expected to be necessary, but the demand cannot be readily predicted, therefore paying for these items on a time and materials/ad hoc basis is preferred. This pricing strategy would allow us to utilize the retainer rates on some services which are lower than the current contract ad hoc pricing. Selecting a lower retainer of \$6,500 rather than \$10,588 ensures a more accurate billing schedule, and the work that cannot be predicted on a set schedule will be charged at a lower rate than if no retainer was utilized. If the new contract is approved at tonight's meeting, the new contract will begin August 1, and funds not expended from the original contract will remain in the Levee Project account.

The contract, including the two optional one-year extensions to be exercised at the City

Manager's discretion, would ensure that sufficient communications support services are procured through the completion of construction, which is anticipated in January 2024. Should construction end early or if services are no longer needed, staff would terminate the contract early and the City would only pay for services rendered.

As part of the contract, Tripepi Smith will provide communications and outreach support including, but 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.

Communication and public engagement is a critical component of the overall project. 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 recently, continued spikes in community interest are anticipated as construction activities continue. To retain an appropriate level of service and response, staff anticipates the need for continued focus on proactive communications to share information and project updates in a timely manner.

FISCAL IMPACT

There is adequate funding available in the budget for the Levee Protection Planning and Improvements Project (CIP 327-657) for the implementation of a one year contract with Tripepi Smith in an amount not to exceed \$127,056 for Strategic Communication and Outreach Services for the Levee Protection Planning and Improvements Project. The Agreement allows for two one-year term extension options to be exercised at the

discretion of the City Manager. Each optional extension includes a 5% increase to the base not-to-exceed contract amount. If the Agreement is approved, therefore, the City may expend up to \$127,056 in the initial one-year term, up to \$133,408.80 in the first extension period (year 2), and up to \$140,079.24 in the second extension period (year 3).

CITY COUNCIL VISION, MISSION, AND VALUE/PRIORITY AREAS

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 – Agreement
- Attachment 3 – Tripepi Smith Proposals
- [Attachment 4 – Responses to RFP \(available via this link\)](#)