



DATE: June 20, 2023

TO: Mayor and Members of the City Council

VIA: Stefan Chatwin, City Manager

FROM: Priscilla Schaus, Communications Director/City Clerk
Austin Walsh, Communications Manager

DEPARTMENT: Communications/City Clerk

SUBJECT: CONTRACT AMENDMENT NO. 2 WITH TRIPEPI SMITH AND ASSOCIATES INC. FOR STRATEGIC COMMUNICATIONS AND OUTREACH SERVICES FOR THE LEVEE PROTECTION PLANNING AND IMPROVEMENTS PROJECT (CIP 327-657)

RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that the City Council adopt the attached resolution approving Contract Amendment No. 2 in the amount-not-to-exceed \$70,039.62 with Tripepi Smith and Associates (Tripepi Smith) for a six-month contract extension for Strategic Communication and Outreach Services on an ad hoc basis through completion of the Levee Protection Planning and Improvements Project (CIP 327-657).

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. On July 19, 2021, the City Council approved a contract with Tripepi Smith for an initial period of one year from August 1, 2021 to July 31, 2022 for a total amount not to exceed \$127,056, for Strategic Communication and Outreach Services for the Levee Project. The purpose of using the specialized services of Tripepi Smith was to ensure continuing comprehensive and proactive communications, outreach efforts, and responsive and timely communications to citizen inquiries.

The initial term of the contract expired, and the project team determined the communications support by Tripepi Smith continued to yield positive results. On June 20, 2022 City Council approved a one-year extension on the agreement with Tripepi Smith from August 1, 2022, to July 31, 2023, for an additional amount not-to-exceed \$133,408.80, and that contract extension was approved (Contract Amendment No. 1).

With the Levee Improvement Project expected to achieve final completion by January 2024, staff is recommending the agreement with Tripepi Smith be extended for another six-month period, with compensation based on time and materials expended. Staff is recommending a second contract amendment for services to be provided on an ad hoc basis for a six-month period as opposed to an additional one-year extension with a monthly retainer which would span until July 2024, exceeding the timeframe for project completion. Extending the agreement for six months would allow for services through the anticipated project completion which is scheduled for January 2024.

BACKGROUND

Construction of the Levee Project began in October of 2020 and will continue through January 2024. 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, in early 2021, the City entered into a short-term agreement with Tripepi Smith in an amount not to exceed \$49,000 for proactive communications support and services for the Levee Project. Further, the City Council authorized the execution of a contract amendment in the amount of \$61,000 and the increased contract amount of \$110,000 provided sufficient funding to cover all costs for Tripepi Smith's work through July 31, 2021. A total of \$93,478.75 was spent from January 4 to July 31, 2021, and the unused contract funds were returned to the Levee Project account.

On July 19, 2021, City Council approved a longer-term contract with Tripepi Smith in an amount not to exceed \$127,056 from August 1, 2021 to July 31, 2022 for Strategic Communication and Outreach Services for the Levee Project. The agreement was initially brought to the City Council as an agreement for a one-year term with two optional one-year extensions to be exercised at the City Manager's discretion. At this meeting, the City Council approved only the one-year term and directed staff to come

back to the City Council for any extensions of the contract. Services provided were within the budgeted amount and \$98,931.44 was spent for the initial one-year term. A subsequent one-year contract extension (Contract Amendment No. 1) was approved on June 20, 2022 for an amount not to exceed \$133,408.80. As of April 30, 2023, \$84,996 or 63%, has been spent of the total contract amount and \$48,412 remains with three billable months remaining. Monthly costs have varied from \$11,107 in August 2021, to \$7,081 in February 2022 and have generally averaged approximately \$8,000 per month over the life of the project. The average monthly billing has been greater than the retainer because the retainer was intended to cover only a handful of core services and any additional work beyond that limited scope was considered ad hoc, under which hourly rates are applicable.

Generally, there has been a decrease in costs as project construction has continued as anticipated, and it is expected that unspent funds will remain at the end of the contract, to be returned to the Levee Project account. As an additional resource, Tripepi Smith has helped to enhance the Project's communications efforts through a new standalone website, more comprehensive and easier to understand FAQs, community updates, and the preparation of presentations and talking points for project team staff. Tripepi Smith has proactively communicated ongoing activities to address topics of interest clearly and efficiently. Staff has evaluated the services provided and recommends a contract amendment to continue communication and support services and ensure that the community continues to receive extensive, proactive communications and outreach on project information. If the contract amendment is approved at tonight's meeting, work will be provided on an ad hoc basis according to time and materials expended until project completion anticipated in January 2024 and funds not expended will be returned to the Levee Project account.

ANALYSIS

The contract is currently set with a monthly retainer of \$6,500 with other ad hoc charges as additional services are incurred. The retainer amount includes a limited scope of work consisting of items that are expected to be completed regularly, such as production of the construction newsletter, website content updates, project management, creation of social media, and other tasks. Other items in the scope of work are expected to be necessary, but demand cannot be readily predicted, therefore paying for these items on a time and materials basis is preferred. With the project winding down in the months leading up to completion, staff expects that the amount of community outreach and engagement necessary will dwindle as well. As a result, staff is recommending that an amended agreement based solely on a time and materials is preferable to paying a monthly retainer and ad hoc services. With the contract amendment, Tripepi Smith will continue to offer the services outlined in the Professional Services Agreement for Communications Support Services for the Levee Improvements Project (CIP-657). But the provision of services on an ad hoc basis will grant greater flexibility to account for the changing nature of the outreach needed, while also allowing for termination at the end of project completion, rather than maintaining full annual contract that would likely span beyond the expected project completion. The contract

amendment not-to-exceed amount also includes a 5% increase to reflect Consumer Price Index (CPI).

Staff evaluated the services provided by Tripepi Smith and determined that the contract amendment would ensure the necessary communications support services are procured for this ongoing, large-scale project on an ad hoc basis. As part of the contract, Tripepi Smith will continue to 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 inbox; 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; Preparing presentations and materials for the Levee Project team to present at conferences or other regional meetings; Attending and presenting communications efforts at City Council meetings; Develop event timelines and talking points for ribbon cuttings or other events.

Communication and public engagement are critical components of the overall project, and there is 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 possible as the project nears completion. 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. Staff will continue to review the need for all of these services on an ongoing basis, as the project nears completion and certain needs may taper off.

California Environmental Quality Act

Approval of a Contract Amendment is not subject to review under the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) pursuant to Public Resources Code Section 21000, et seq. and the CEQA Guidelines (14 Cal. Code Regs. §§ 15000 et. seq.), including without limitation, Public Resources Code section 21065 and California Code of Regulations 15378 as this is not a “project” that may cause a direct, or reasonably foreseeable indirect, physical change in the environment.

FISCAL IMPACT

There is adequate funding available in the budget for the Levee Project for Contract Amendment No. 2 in the amount not-to-exceed \$70,039.62. Although staff does not expect cost increases as the project continues, the six-month full amount is requested to account for the possibility of unforeseen circumstances arising during the remaining construction period. Unused funds from the contract will be returned to the Levee Project account number 327-0910-657-4251.

CITY COUNCIL VISION, MISSION, AND VALUE/PRIORITY AREA

City Council Operations and Improved Community Engagement

ATTACHMENTS:

Attachment 1 – Resolution

Attachment 2 – Contract Amendment No. 2

Attachment 3 – Contract Amendment No. 1 (contract extension dated 6/20/22)

Attachment 4 – Agreement