

City of La Quinta

CITY COUNCIL MEETING: July 7, 2015

STAFF REPORT

AGENDA TITLE: DISCUSS RETAINING LOBBYIST SERVICES

RECOMMENDATION

Provide direction to staff.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- On May 19, 2015, City Council approved a legislative policy guide update and discussed enhancing the City's legislative initiatives, including hiring a lobbyist.
- Staff surveyed Coachella Valley cities regarding their use of lobbyists, participation with the League of California Cities, and approach to addressing legislative priorities (Attachment 1).
- Cities with contracted lobbyist's services have the lobbyist perform duties ranging from monitoring legislation to providing the City direct access to State departments.
- Should Council elect to pursue contracted lobbyist services, staff will release a request for proposal (RFP) and report back to Council in September.

FISCAL IMPACT

None.

BACKGROUND/ANALYSIS

At the May 19, 2015 City Council meeting, staff presented Council with options to enhance the City's legislative initiatives including retaining a lobbyist and increasing engagement with the League of California Cities. The City has never retained a dedicated contract lobbyist; however, lobbyist services have been utilized to advance the City's objectives on special projects like redevelopment dissolution. Advantages of hiring a lobbyist include:

- Lobbyists are professionals in their field, providing expertise in legislative strategy and technique to facilitate legislation through the process.
- They can identify where leverage needs to be applied and can point out pitfalls, through their understanding of the political climate in the state.
- Assisting the City in advancing good relations with legislators that may pay off well into the future.

Lobbyist services can, however, be costly; the preliminary range is \$40,000 to \$100,000. In addition, staff would still need to draft correspondence to legislators and regulators, monitor the legislative process in conjunction with a lobbyist, review the Senate and Assembly daily files, and continue its active participation with coalitions and stakeholder groups working on post redevelopment matters.

The Cities of Indian Wells and Palm Desert both utilize the same firm, Joe A. Gonsalves and Sons. In conversations with the contract managers from those cities, they indicated the lobbyist has been helpful by directly connecting them with the California Department of Finance and with any State Department on a personal basis. A summarized scope of work for those contracts is further detailed in Attachment 2.

Should the Council elect to retain a contract lobbyist, staff recommends proceeding with a RFP process to most effectively evaluate services and pricing. As such, the RFP will require proposers to provide a separate cost to track state grant funding opportunities, which is a function currently done by in-house staff.

A proposed schedule for a lobbyist RFP process is:

Milestone	Schedule
Circulate RFP	July – August
Recommendation to City Council	September 15, 2015
2016 Legislative Session Begins	January 2016

ALTERNATIVES

As the Council expressed a desire to further look into contract lobbyist services, staff does not recommend an alternative.

Report prepared by: Chris Escobedo, Assistant to City Manager

Report approved by: Frank J. Spevacek, City Manager

Attachments: 1. Survey
2. Lobbyist Services for Indian Wells and Palm Desert

City	Lobbyist Y/N?	League of California Cities	City Staff's Role
La Quinta	No	Actively participates in legislative webinars Reviews Letters of Action Follows League updates	Utilizes Legislative Policy Guide Suggests Letters of Support and Opposition Actively Monitors Legislation Staff participates in various Coalitions
Indian Wells	Yes Gonsalves & Sons Firm \$36,000 / Year	Is represented by Lobbyist	Communicate and Consult with Lobbyist Firm Participate in various Coalitions
Palm Desert	Yes Gonsalves & Sons Firm \$36,000 / Year	Is represented by Lobbyist	Communicate and Consult with Lobbyist Firm Participate in various Coalitions Has a "Legislative Review Committee" composed of Staff and Elected Consults with League of California Cities actively
Cathedral City	No	Monitors League information Follows League updates	Actively Monitors Legislation Staff participates in various Coalitions Consults Council regarding Letters of Support & Opposition
Coachella	No	Monitors League information Follows League updates	Actively Monitors Legislation Staff participates in various Coalitions Consults Council regarding Letters of Support & Opposition
Desert Hot Springs	No	Monitors League information Follows League updates	Actively Monitors Legislation Staff participates in various Coalitions Consults Council regarding Letters of Support & Opposition
Indio	No	Actively participates in legislative webinars Reviews Letters of Action Follows League updates	Actively Monitors Legislation Staff participates in various Coalitions Consults Council regarding Letters of Support & Opposition
Palm Springs	No	Actively participates in legislative webinars Reviews Letters of Action Follows League updates	Actively Monitors Legislation Staff participates in various Coalitions Supports Council decision regarding Legislation
Rancho Mirage	No	Receives quarterly summary of legislative activity by League Representative. Activity participates in legislative webinars. Reviews Letters of Action. Follows League Updates.	Every quarter a League representative visits the council and provides a legislative report. The City Attorney works with council to be as proactive as possible regarding legislative matters.



City: Indian Wells, California

Contracted Lobbyist: Gonsalves & Sons Firm

Contract Cost: \$3,000 / Month

Scope of Services Provided: Through a conversation with City Manager Wade McKinney, the lobbyist firm is known to perform the following duties:

- Weekly reports of the legislative environment
- Present at Council meetings upon request
- Have provided direct access to the Department of Finance as well as most State Departments through personal relationships to be the voice of the City
- Assistance in drafting letters of support and opposition
- Coordination of meetings with the Governor's Office, State Department Representatives, and other Legislators
- Review of legislative bills introduced and inform City of those affecting its interests



City: Palm Desert, California

Contracted Lobbyist: Gonsalves & Sons Firm

Contract Cost: \$3,000 / Month

Scope of Services Provided: Through a conversation with Risk Manager Steven Aryan, the lobbyist firm is known to perform the following duties:

- Reviews all Bills introduced and notifies of those that may affect City's interests
- Acts as an official representative of the City for all legislative affairs
- Advocates for the City's Legislative interests whenever possible
- Assists in drafting letters of support and opposition
- Coordinates meetings with the Governor's Office, State Department Representatives, and other Legislators

