



Legislation Text

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Staff Report for Council Ad Hoc Committee on State Legislative Platform and Advocacy Services

SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Staff recommends that Council authorize the creation of an ad hoc committee to provide recommendations on the development of a state legislative platform as well as a process through which a contractor will be selected to provide state-level advocacy services on behalf of the City.

BACKGROUND & ANALYSIS

The City of San Leandro for many years has maintained a contract with Simon and Company, Inc. of Washington D.C. for federal advocacy services. However, the City does not presently maintain a contract for similar services at the state level.

Due to an improving economy and an increasingly stable state budget, the State of California is presented with many new opportunities. Nevertheless, the State is still burdened with many legacy challenges as well, including ongoing efforts related to the dissolution of redevelopment agencies statewide. Staff believes that the City could better position itself to harness these opportunities and adapt to these challenges by adopting a state legislative platform and securing the services of a private firm who specializes in state-level advocacy. State advocacy services for the City have traditionally been handled by the League of California Cities, however, due to the sheer volume and diversity of constituent cities served by this organization, their ability to provide focused and timely assistance to San Leandro is severely constrained. As a result, staff believes the City could more effectively tailor its approach and interactions with state agencies with the assistance of an independent contractor working directly on behalf of the City.

Issues of Concern

Staff recommends that the following ongoing issues of concern at the state level be incorporated into the legislative priorities that are developed by the proposed City Council ad hoc committee for the remainder of the 2013-2014 legislative session:

Unwinding of the City's Successor Redevelopment Agency: The City could benefit from advocacy at the state level regarding the State Department of Finance's interpretations of the codified process for the elimination of redevelopment agencies statewide. This process has proven to be contentious and is presently the subject of ongoing litigation.

Public Safety Realignment: The City could use additional assistance in ensuring that the ongoing transfer of state prisoners into County jails and their subsequent release into the community is carried out in a successful manner that maintains public safety.

Additional Funding for Local Priority Projects: By securing the services of a state advocate, staff

believes the City could better position itself to take advantage of additional funding opportunities that may develop for priority local projects as the state's financial position continues to improve.

Proposed Process and Time Line

In order to assist in the formulation of a statewide platform, as well as the selection of a state advocacy firm, staff recommends Council appoint an ad hoc committee made up of three Council Members. This subcommittee would provide policy guidance regarding a request-for-proposals process, candidate interviews, and subsequent recommendations to Council for the finalization of a contract with an advocacy firm.

Once the contract is in place, a draft statewide legislative platform would be developed with input from the subcommittee, the legislative advocate, as well as staff from across the organization. This draft then would be brought forward to the City Council for consideration and adoption.

Both houses of the State Legislature are currently in recess, and expected to reconvene for the second half of the 2013-2014 legislative session beginning in January. Having a contract in place by January 2014 would place the City on a firm footing to begin the new year.

Fiscal Impacts

Contract costs for statewide advocacy services generally run in the order of approximately \$5,000 per month (\$60,000 per year on annualized basis), although exact costs could vary. Should Council ultimately decide to move forward with such a contract, final costs and proposed funding sources would be assessed at a subsequent date.

Although the state legislative process is intricate and often unpredictable, the City will receive some form of a return on its investment. As an example, the City's contract with its advocate in Washington D.C. helped to facilitate several large federal grants, including a \$2.1 million Economic Development Administration (EDA) grant for the expansion of the Lit San Leandro fiber optic network, as well as a \$2.4 million Community Oriented Policing Services (COPS) grant that provided funding to hire five additional police officers for three years.

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