



Legislation Text

File #: 2020-244, Version: 1

Report to Mayor and City Council

Tuesday, April 21, 2020

Discussion

SUBJECT:

**CONSIDER A REQUEST FOR QUALIFICATIONS FOR FEDERAL AND STATE
LEGISLATIVE ADVOCACY SERVICES (CITY COUNCIL)**

I. SUMMARY

This item is being introduced at the request of Mayor Albert Robles.

Townsend Public Affairs (TPA) has provided State and Federal legislative advocacy services for the City of Carson since January 2011. The current contract between the City and Townsend Public Affairs expires June 30, 2021 with 2 additional one-year extensions. The City Council is being asked to consider several options regarding advocacy services by having staff conduct a request for qualifications (RFQ), negate the use of an advocacy service and obtain updated information from the League of California Cities, or continue with Townsend as the City's advocacy provider and including additional scope of work while remaining at the current rate of contract. Townsend has offered to include, at no additional cost, writing and securing grants, and working with us to identify grant and loan opportunities for our businesses and non-profit organizations.

II. RECOMMENDATION

DISCUSS and PROVIDE direction.

III. ALTERNATIVES

REQUEST staff initiate a request for proposals for both state and federal legislative advocacy services, OR

TERMINATE the professional services agreement with Townsend Public Affairs for state legislative advocacy services, in the amount of \$8,000 per month for the period July 1, 2018 through June 30, 2021 and utilize League of California Cities for advocacy services, OR

CONTINUE the professional services agreement with Townsend Public Affairs for state and federal legislative advocacy services with an additional scope of work not exceeding the current contract rate of \$8,000 per month for the period July 1, 2018 through June 30, 2021, OR

TAKE another action the City Council deems appropriate.

IV. BACKGROUND

Townsend Public Affairs has served as the Federal and State advocate for the City of Carson since January 2011. In this capacity, TPA has advocated on behalf of the City on dozens of bills both in Sacramento and Washington D.C., as well as crafted City of Carson specific legislation and ensured it passed the Legislature and was signed into law. The proposals that TPA has assisted the City with during the tenure of our relationship have yielded several millions of dollars of direct benefit to the City and our residents. Below is a summary of activities TPA has worked on for the City of Carson

In its capacity as our legislative advocate, TPA has lobbied on many bills at both state and federal levels that the City has supported or opposed. TPA has also worked to secure funding for the city through legislation or competitive grant writing, securing \$368,350 to date. TPA assisted the City in obtaining an extension on a \$5 million grant from the California Pollution Control Authority for the purchase of the land fill liner for the 157-acre project. Townsend assisted the City in the drafting and successful passage of special legislation, AB 1144 (Hall), which addressed \$48 million in unfunded liability from the City of Carson's post-retirement medical benefit program.

TPA has assisted in obtaining funding opportunities for retrofitting windows for homeowners located under the flight path of Long Beach Airport, as well as secured funding opportunities for parking spaces and infrastructure for owners and operators of electronic vehicles. They have assisted with finding grant and funding opportunities for business owners and homeowners to be used to upgrade their property. In addition, Townsend has also worked with the City on special legislation dealing with obtaining a direct allocation of cap and trade funds to Carson, based on the location of two refineries and other GHG producing industries in the City.

RECENT ONGOING ACTIVITIES AS PROVIDED BY TOWNSEND

COVID-19 Information and Response

TPA has updated the City daily on COVID-19 developments at the State and Federal level since the beginning of the current state of emergency. These updates include up-to-the-hour information on the activities at the State and Federal level, information and context that plays a critical role in any decision the City takes to address this crisis, and information about what key proposals TPA has pushed to benefit the City. TPA has fielded, researched, and responded to a series of important City inquiries dealing with sensitive human resources items such as sick leave, accrued benefits, and pensionable income. TPA also maintains constantly, daily communication with the City's representatives as well as the entire California delegation to continue to advocate the City of Carson's position on COVID-19 response, potential stimulus packages, and relief programs.

Legislative Directed Spending

Throughout the legislative session, TPA has communicated with Senator Bradford and Assembly Member Gipson on the City's legislative goals and priorities as well as funding needs that could be addressed through legislative directed spending in the State Budget or related funding mechanisms. TPA has been working during the current legislative session to promote City of Carson projects that could potentially be tapped for funding support from the State during the Budget process. Due to the unplanned state of emergency and the current legislative recess, the Budget process for this year is in a constant state of change.

SR-47/Alameda Street Operations and Maintenance

TPA has also been engaged on behalf of the City of Carson to help determine the current ownership and operations obligations of Alameda Street, also known as State Route 47 (SR-47). TPA set up and participated in various back and forth communications with Caltrans District 7 (Los Angeles) including an in person meeting at Caltrans District 7 headquarters on February 13 to discuss the current status of SR-47 and to build a meaningful relationship with Caltrans District 7. TPA helped prepare the City for the meeting by conducting legislative research into the California Streets and Highways Code and formulating a case to present to Caltrans District 7. There is still a dialogue that is needed between the City and Caltrans District 7 and TPA will continue to help facilitate that process.

SB 343 (Bradford) Personal Income Taxes: Kast Property Tank Farm Facility Cleanup (2017-2019)

TPA worked closely with Senator Bradford to advance SB 343 starting in 2017. The bill was written specifically for residents of the Carousel Housing Tract in the City of Carson, who were awarded monetary compensation for physical and emotional impacts suffered as a result of hazardous waste that was improperly disposed of at the site of the future housing tract. Typically, only a portion of this award would be considered tax exempt by the State, SB 343 continues to exempt the additional monies from State taxes.

TPA worked closely with local community partners and stakeholders throughout the legislative process including providing letters of support from the City to each policy committee, members of each house of the legislature, and to the Governor. TPA also assisted Assistant City Manager John Raymond when he travelled to Sacramento in 2018 to testify on the bill by drafting and providing talking points as well as attending subsequent committee hearings and providing expert testimony at the request of Senator Bradford. Governor Jerry Brown signed the bill into law on Friday September 28, 2018.

Proposition 68 Park Bond (2016-2018)

TPA worked to ensure the concerns and priorities of the Carson City Council were reflected in the final park bond language, including language for the priority/preference of funding for local all abilities special-needs parks, and inclusion of eligibility for pools, splash pads, community centers and other recreational amenities. As a direct result of the City Council's advocacy, State policy was amended going forward and the number of splash pads and all abilities special-needs parks will grow tremendously in California over the next decade.

Goods Movement and Infrastructure Funding (Ongoing)

TPA has been working closely with Senator Bradford and Assembly Member Gipson's office on the allocation of funding through the State's Cap and Trade Program for adequate goods movement compensation. This is in direct response to the disproportionate number of heavy-duty vehicles and trucks that travel on Carson city streets to and from ports and shipping warehouses every day to reach the rest of the Country. Currently goods movement funding programs fail to adequately distribute funding to communities such as Carson that are disproportionately impacted by the adverse effects such as traffic congestion, deteriorating roads, and poor air quality. TPA is actively pursuing updated policies, with the possibility of partnerships with the Port of Los Angeles and the Port of Long Beach, to directly benefit City maintained infrastructure in perpetuity.

TPA understands the importance of infrastructure for the City of Carson. TPA has worked with federal agencies on the City's behalf to highlight our transportation priorities, including building crucial relationships with federal representatives and stakeholders. TPA continuously strategizes on how to connect local and regional projects to federal funding opportunities.

TPA has worked with legislators to advocate for continued or increased funding for four out

of five federal transportation infrastructure programs between Fiscal Years 2018 and 2019, with the fifth program receiving a one-time tripling of funding in Fiscal Year 2018.

TPA is currently focusing efforts to implement the City's transportation priorities in the upcoming Surface Transportation Reauthorization, which expires in September 2020. This legislation is critical, as it provides funding to modernize highways to reduce congestion and carbon pollution. With major thoroughfares such as Interstates 110, 405, 710 all providing access to the Ports of Los Angeles and Long Beach, this legislation will be critical as the City experiences challenges with heavy truck traffic, traffic mitigation, dilapidated roads, and air quality. Additionally, TPA is working with members of Congress such as Congresswoman Grace Napolitano on including funding for ports like Los Angeles and Long Beach, which cities such as Carson will benefit from through the improved movement of goods

Brownfield Legislation (Ongoing)

TPA continuously advocates for a reauthorization of brownfields grant programs that would update policy and ensure stability for funding for brownfield grants, and engagement in the annual appropriations process to ensure the funding is always allocated for the programs. This is a major topic of conversation with the City of Carson's representatives in Congress.

TPA successfully advocated for the Chairman of the House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee to propose a broad-reaching package that included provisions on brownfields, as well as other items like water and wastewater, broadband, and some energy-related initiatives. Included in the proposal was a reauthorization of the Environmental Protection Agency's brownfields program for five years, with a maximum investment of \$2.45 billion in the redevelopment grants program over this time, and \$250 million for state brownfields programs. This proposal gained attention in January 2020, but currently has not progressed due to the coronavirus pandemic.

Concurrently, TPA has been advocating against cuts to federal funds for brownfield grants. In the President's Fiscal Year 2021 Budget Request, President Trump requested \$80 million - a cut of \$9 million over the Fiscal Year 2020 enacted level. Each year, TPA has engaged with Congress and the House and Senate Appropriations Committees to push back on these proposed cuts, netting an increase in the millions of dollars for brownfields grants each year. TPA continuously does this through a combination of direct engagement and appropriations letters that we draft for the City, file once signed, and utilize each year.

Federal Wireless Telecommunication Facilities (2017-2020)

TPA has also worked extensively to protect the City's local control as wireless companies push for less City oversight of their actions. TPA already had experience pushing against the threat to local control by wireless infrastructure expansion in 2017, as they worked to oppose SB 649 (Hueso), a piece of State legislation that would have stripped authority from municipalities to make decisions on local infrastructure. While the Governor vetoed the bill, they followed up with federal team members and stakeholders as the issue rose to the federal level. Shortly after the end of the California legislative session, TPA's federal

advocates obtained a copy of a draft legislative proposal to make similar wireless infrastructure changes at the federal level. TPA worked with congressional staff to mitigate the worst provisions in the draft text.

On Carson's behalf, TPA worked closely with Senate Commerce, Science, and Transportation Committee staff on draft text to ensure that municipal priorities were reflected in introduced language. While TPA was able to mitigate the impacts on municipalities by lengthening restrictive deadlines on permit consideration, the bill as introduced (the STREAMLINE Small Cell Deployment Act, or S. 3157) still included too many detrimental provisions to support. TPA engaged stakeholders through local government coalitions and communicated the importance of blocking this legislation. TPA also worked to ensure that the House Energy and Commerce Committee was aware of the issue and would not allow any Senate bill to move forward in the House. Although a Senate hearing was held on July 25, 2018, no further action was taken on the bill and it died at the end of the 115th Congress. The reintroduced bill has not received a hearing in the current 116th Congress.

Subsequently, when the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) implemented similarly restrictive regulations at the end of 2018, TPA worked with the California Congressional delegation to introduce a bill in the first days of 2019 to undo these regulations. That bill, H.R. 530, was introduced by Congresswoman Anna Eshoo (D-CA) and currently has 59 cosponsors in the House of Representatives. Immediately afterwards, TPA began working with Senator Feinstein to introduce a Senate companion bill, S. 2012, that would increase the chances of eventual passage. Senator Harris signed on as an original cosponsor, indicating unity among the California Delegation. Although progress on the bills have stalled due to the coronavirus pandemic, TPA is optimistic that we will continue to gain momentum as this crisis demonstrates the serious impacts of putting unnecessary restrictions on local control.

V. FISCAL IMPACT

The services obtained through an RFQ may be higher or lower than the current contract.

VI. EXHIBITS

N/A

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