



Legislation Text

File #: 19-214, **Version:** 1

Report Prepared by: Mike Conway, Assistant to the City Manager

SUBJECT: Approval of First Amendment to the Townsend Public Affairs, Inc. Contract, Extending the Contract for an Additional Two-Year Term for Legislative Affairs Advocacy and Consulting Services for an Annual Amount of \$60,000

REPORT IN BRIEF

Consider the approval of the First Amendment the Townsend Public Affairs, Inc. contract, extending the term of the agreement for an additional two years for Legislative Affairs Advocacy and Consulting Services for an annual Amount of \$60,000.

RECOMMENDATION

City Council - Adopt a motion approving the First Amendment to the Townsend Public Affairs, Inc., contract and authorizing the City Manager or the Assistant City Manager to execute the necessary documents.

ALTERNATIVES

1. Approve, as recommended by staff; or,
2. Approve, subject to other than recommended by staff (identify specific findings and/or conditions amended to be addressed in the motion); or,
3. Deny; or,
4. Refer to staff for reconsideration of specific items (specific items to be addressed in the motion); or,
5. Continue to a future meeting (date and time to be specified in the motion).

AUTHORITY

Charter of the City of Merced, Section 200.

CITY COUNCIL PRIORITIES

As provided for in the 2019-20 Adopted Budget.

DISCUSSION

During the FY 2017-18 Budget discussion, the City Council expressed the need for having legislative advocacy and consulting services. As a result, City staff issued an RFP soliciting bids for services that further advanced the Council's Goals and Priorities and the recently adopted Legislative Platform, (see attached document). At the end of the RFP process, the City contracted with Townsend Public Affairs, Inc. of Newport Beach, CA, for those services, signing a two-year contract ending June 30, 2019 for an annual amount of \$60,000.

Townsend Public Affairs, Inc. has offices in Sacramento, Washington, D.C., Fresno, Oakland, and Newport Beach. It provides legislative advocacy services and grant writing capabilities. Townsend Public Affairs, Inc. was familiar with the City of Merced, having provided advocacy services from 2007 through 2012, working on the “G” Street Underpass Project, Merced Theatre Renovation Project, COPS funding, Federal Aviation Administration issues and Black Rascal Creek flood assistance.

Since contracting with Townsend Public Affairs, City staff and the firm have worked closely on a number of issues. These include:

- **Water Tax Legislation-** In 2018, legislation was introduced to impose a tax on water users to pay for safe drinking water projects in severely disadvantaged communities (Senate Bill 623). While the City strongly supports the funding of these types of projects, we opposed the legislation due to a number of significant implementation and administrative concerns, as well as the fact that several funding opportunities currently exist for these projects. Townsend Public Affairs worked with the City and other stakeholders throughout the year to keep the bill from being approved by the Legislature and signed into law.
- **Federal Advocacy-** Townsend Public Affairs has worked with the City on federal advocacy efforts through in-person visits and legislative involvement. Meetings with the Mayor and City staff in Washington, D.C. have focused on homelessness, opportunity zones and economic development, and transportation, including high-speed rail. In addition, the City and Townsend Public Affairs have been active in federal legislation, particularly regarding changes to how local governments are required to accommodate wireless communication infrastructure requests.
- **High-Speed Rail-** In addition to efforts to advance the high-speed rail project during federal advocacy visits, the City and Townsend Public Affairs have worked with State officials on the project. These efforts have included assistance with meetings and visits with high-speed rail staff, as well as coordinating testimony for oversight hearings by the Legislature.
- **Affordable Housing Funding-** Townsend Public Affairs assisted City staff with developing the narrative and securing legislative letters of support for an application to the Affordable Housing and Sustainable Communities Grant Program from the California Department of Housing and Community Development. The proposed \$13.9 million grant would help develop the Childs and B Street TOD Affordable Housing project. Additional information on funding announcements are expected over the coming weeks.

In the last two years, Townsend Public Affairs, Inc. has proven to be a valuable partner to the City of Merced. Staff are requesting that the City Council approve the First Amendment to the Townsend Public Affairs, Inc. contract to allow for advocacy services to continue. The proposed amendment would end on June 30, 2021 and provide services through the next two state and federal legislative cycles. In addition, Townsend Public Affairs, Inc. would be available to provide year-round assistance with grant-writing and regulatory inquiries.

IMPACT ON CITY RESOURCES

There is \$60,000 appropriated in the 2019-20 budget for advocacy services and funding is contingent upon Council approval of 2019-20 budget. Funding for the subsequent year is subject to budget approval.

ATTACHMENTS

1. Contract with Townsend Public Affairs, Inc.

2. First Amendment to Contract with Townsend Public Affairs, Inc.
3. FY 2018/19 Adopted Legislative Platform