

**INTERGOVERNMENTAL RELATIONS  
COUNCIL COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES  
WEDNESDAY, AUGUST 26, 2020  
10:00 AM  
VIDEOCONFERENCE**

<b>Members Present:</b>	Councilmember Manny Pelaez, <i>Chair, District 8</i> Councilmember Rebecca Viagran, <i>District 3</i> Councilmember Adriana Rocha Garcia, <i>District 4</i> Councilmember Clayton Perry, <i>District 10</i>
<b>Staff Present:</b>	Andy Segovia, <i>City Attorney</i> ; Camila Kunau, <i>Assistant City Attorney</i> ; Carlos Contreras, <i>Assistant City Manager</i> ; Jeff Coyle, <i>Director, Government &amp; Public Affairs</i> ; Sally Basurto, <i>Assistant Director, Government &amp; Public Affairs</i> ; Christine Wright, <i>State Relations Manager, Government &amp; Public Affairs</i> ; Nancy Cano, <i>Office of the City Clerk</i>
<b>Others Present:</b>	Jesse Ancira, <i>Founder and Principal, Ancira Strategies</i> ; Nelda Hunter, <i>Ancira Strategies</i> ; Russell (“Rusty”) Kelley, <i>Blackridge</i> ; Carol McGarah, <i>CEO, Blackridge</i> ; Micah Rodriguez, <i>General Counsel, Blackridge</i> ; Carrie Simmons, <i>Lobbyist, Texas Lobby Group</i> ; Brandon Aghamalian, <i>Partner and President, Focused Advocacy</i> ; Snapper Carr, <i>Partner and General Counsel, Focused Advocacy</i> ; Andrew Keefer, <i>Senior Associate, Focused Advocacy</i>

**Call to Order**

Chairman Pelaez called the meeting to order.

**1. State Representation Services Contracts** [Jeff Coyle, Director, Government & Public Affairs]

Jeff Coyle reported that the City has used experts at the State Capitol for more than 40 years to supplement and support efforts to advance and protect the City’s interests. He stated that the City’s hired consultants provide specialized expertise and maintained existing relationships with State delegates across the entire legislature. He noted that consultants provided strategic advice to help advance the City’s prioritized agenda items through the legislative process, lobbied to obtain funding for the City Budget, and worked to defeat legislation deemed harmful for the community. He noted that the last Legislative Session ended in June 2019 and the City’s consultant contracts expired on September 30, 2019. Mr. Coyle reported that for the upcoming year, a special session would follow the regular session to utilize U.S. Census data for State redistricting which occurred every 10 years; therefore, the consultant contracts would be structured to a 12-month term with a final 2 months of the contract to be floating in anticipation of a special session being called.

Mr. Coyle reported of the proposed State Representation Services contract terms as follows:

- September 1, 2020 through any Special Session of the 87<sup>th</sup> Texas Legislature
- Not to exceed \$7,500/month for twelve months

- Total contract amount: \$90,000
- Renewal options: up to two (2) additional legislative sessions for 1-year terms through June 2025, upon approval by City Council
- Terms consistent for each firm

Mr. Coyle reported that in February 2020, 75 firms were solicited and 8 proposals were received. He stated that soliciting period was extended due to COVID-19 and in July 2020, the Evaluation Committee narrowed down the list to 6 firms and interviews were conducted. He noted that the proposal process was presented to the Audit & Accountability Committee last week for approval, without the disclosure of the Evaluation Committee's recommendations.

Mr. Coyle presented the staff recommended approval of five contracts: Ancira Strategies, Russell T. Kelley dba Blackridge, Focused Advocacy & Marc A. Rodriguez, and Texas Lobby Group.

Councilmember Perry asked how the teams would work together to execute their contracts. He added that the Committee should have more of a role and be more engaged in developing assignments and providing direction. He requested a further discussion on the possible extension of the consulting budget and the possible extension of future contracts, and perhaps the inclusion of this contract, to allow for staff to engage with consultants sooner to develop and plan legislative agendas and strategies over the entire year and in advance of legislative sessions.

Mr. Coyle stated that the entire team would meet every Monday to receive their assignments. He added that he, Assistant City Manager Carlos Contreras, and Christine Wright would lead the teams. Assistant City Manager Contreras acknowledged that each contracted team had unique skills and the goal was to deploy each team in the best ways they could be utilized. Brandon Aghamalian added that everyone from each of the teams had known each other for a long time and had worked together in teams before and had good chemistry.

Councilmember Viagran asked if September 1, 2020 contract start date was the normal start time. She noted that all major cities were most hard hit from Hotel Occupancy Tax (HOT) revenue losses and asked if any of the proposed teams knew of any discussions of the HOT at the State level. She requested a copy of the presentation powerpoint. Mr. Coyle replied that the last two contract terms started on July 1 and ended on June 30 but due to COVID-19 delays, the current proposed contract had a start date of September 1, 2020. He noted that the delay was advantageous this year because of the extended special session. Carrie Simmons stated that there were currently no discussions at the State level regarding reducing HOT rates and noted it was an issue to be examined from a tourist perspective as it affected the City. Mr. Aghamalian stated that HOT losses were part of the overall \$4.6 billion projected State deficit and added he would not be surprised to see discussions develop with HOT to determine some level of flexibility in how HOT could be used to plug deficits at the State and Federal levels.

Councilmember Viagran moved to recommend and forward the proposed State Representation Services Contracts to the full City Council for consideration and approval.

Councilmember Rocha Garcia asked how many of the consultant firms were women-owned. She asked of the partnership between the City and the County on leveraging lobbyist efforts. She asked how success would be measured for the consulting teams. Mr. Coyle replied that he was not certain if any of the firms were women-owned, but many had women serving in key roles. Mr. Kelley replied on behalf of Blackridge and stated that Carol McGarah was its Chief Operating Officer and

Sara Kemptner-Sachde was its Chief Operating Officer. Mr. Coyle stated that the full Intergovernmental Relations Committee would meet on September 9, 2020 to begin discussions and planning for shared legislative outcomes. Mr. Coyle replied that there was a set of performance measures for the teams for providing regular information. He added that globally, staff tracked the success rate of all house bills the teams took an active role in.

Councilmember Rocha Garcia seconded the Motion.

Councilmember Perry recommended that the City establish shared lobbyist efforts with CPS Energy and SAWS, as with its partnership with the County. He noted that CPS Energy and SAWS were municipal utilities owned by the City and their legislative agendas should be tracked and monitored by the City. He asked if any of the consulting teams had the capacity to track and monitor the legislative efforts of CPS Energy and SAWS and to assist in leveraging the City's efforts with theirs. Mr. Coyle stated that staff worked very closely with staff levels at CPS Energy and SAWS and included any major initiatives in the City's legislative agenda. He noted the extra benefit of hiring Focused Advocacy, as Focused Advocacy officially represented CPS Energy.

Snapper Carr recognized Carol McGarah and Marc Rodriguez as subject matter experts regarding utilities and water infrastructures with long histories in those areas and strong understandings of the policies surrounding them. He cited an example during the last legislative session where his team recognized general fund transfers which had dramatic impacts on the City and collaborated with staff to protect the City's best interests.

Jesse Ancira stated that his team had the ability to identify issues, regional or statewide in nature, and to identify parties that stood in opposition. He added that his team had the ability to pull in partners that may not be contracted but that would be part of the effort to pass or kill a piece of legislation.

Chairman Pelaez called upon the Committee to vote. The Motion carried unanimously.

## **Adjourn**

There being no further discussion, the meeting was adjourned at 10:50 am.

---

***Manny Pelaez, Chairman***

***Respectfully Submitted,***

---

***Nancy Cano***  
***Office of the City Clerk***