



# ***Agenda Report***

## ***Fullerton City Council***

**MEETING DATE:** JULY 7, 2020

**TO:** CITY COUNCIL / SUCCESSOR AGENCY

**SUBMITTED BY:** KENNETH A. DOMER, CITY MANAGER

**PREPARED BY:** ANTONIA GRAHAM, DEPUTY CITY MANAGER

**SUBJECT:** PROFESSIONAL SERVICES AGREEMENT FOR  
COMMUNICATION AND OUTREACH EFFORTS  
RELATED TO SALES TAX MEASURE

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### **SUMMARY**

Request to award professional services agreement to Terris Barnes Walters Boigon Heath, Inc. (TBWBH Strategies) for communication and outreach efforts if City Council approves a sales tax measure for the November, 2020 General Election.

### **RECOMMENDATION**

Authorize City Manager to enter into a professional services agreement, approved as to form by the City Attorney, for communication and outreach efforts with Terris Barnes Walters Boigon Heath, Inc. (TBWBH Strategies) in an amount not to exceed \$125,000.

### **PRIORITY POLICY STATEMENT**

This item matches the following Priority Policy Statements:

- Fiscal and Organizational Stability
- Public Safety
- Infrastructure and City Assets.

### **FISCAL IMPACT**

If awarded, the costs associated with communication and outreach efforts will span only the months beginning July 2020 and ceasing in November 2020. Funding is available in the City Manager's operating budget. The cost breakdown is as follows: consultant fees \$7,500 per month (total cost \$37,500) and up to \$95,000 for informational newsletters and mail pieces in various languages mailed to approximately 39,000 households and

online media. The majority of costs are associated with mailings to support education efforts related to the sales tax measure and are at the discretion of the City.

## BACKGROUND

At the April 23, 2019 Strategic Planning Study Session, Staff presented the results of a Community Stakeholder Engagement survey that had been posted online utilizing the City's OpenGov System to solicit public input related to the Strategic Planning Process. At that time, 706 responses were received via OpenGov and nine written statements were submitted via email. Based on the results, there was a desire for City Council to further understand community perceptions and needs. Staff was directed to perform a formal Community Survey that had statistical validity. At the same meeting, the City Council tasked the Infrastructure and Natural Resources Advisory Committee (INRAC) to perform an Infrastructure Needs Review, directing the Committee to examine on-going maintenance and improvement needs of our infrastructure and make recommendations related to funding.

Because of the specific experienced professional support needed, Staff then solicited formal Request for Proposals from qualified firms to conduct professional public opinion polling services. The City received six proposals and subsequently awarded a contract to FM3. A Community Survey, was subsequently developed by FM3, a firm that specializes in public-policy oriented opinion research.

The survey was performed telephonically and online with 515 respondents. The results of the survey indicated that respondents have mixed opinions about the City: they mostly consider it a good place to live and a safe community. But there is concern about the direction of the City and increased crime. Based on the responses, there was a strong sense that the City needed additional funding to address key priorities such as: homelessness, condition of streets and infrastructure and emergency response / public safety. A question was asked about various funding scenarios, to include a parcel tax and sales tax, and support for a sales tax was over 60% of respondents.

Subsequently FM3 Research presented the results of their polling at the March 3, 2020 City Council meeting.

## DISCUSSION

At the March 3, 2020 Study Session, John Fairbank from FM3 Research presented their findings on the community issues survey (Attachment 2). FM3 conducted their research in November 2019 and surveyed residents via online and by cell phone / landline. Over 515 people completed the survey. More than seven-in-ten respondents rate Fullerton as at least a "good" place to live. The firm found that Fullerton residents believe that homelessness, the cost of housing and the condition of local streets are considered to be the most serious problems.

In addition to resident concerns about the City, residents were asked about their attitudes on revenue opportunities available to cities. The City of Fullerton depends on property tax, sales tax, other taxes (e.g. transient occupancy tax, etc.), franchise fees, charges for service and other revenue. The City does not have any additional or add-on revenue enhancements. FM3 found that six-in-ten respondents supported a potential

sales tax measures on the initial reading. While this was prior to COVID, Staff has had discussions with FM3 on the results from November 2019 and they indicated that based on the polling numbers from the survey, there could be a small drop in support but still over the 50 percent needed for approval. The City requested FM3 to follow-up on the November survey and completed what is known as a "Tracking Survey." This survey yielded a 55% approval rating for a revenue measure and that residents want to see more funding for improved roads, homelessness, public safety (police approval rating at 73%) and to ensure a quick emergency medical response time. Additionally, 77% of respondents said that homelessness is a crisis.

Based on the discussion later during the March 3, 2020, Council Meeting, specifically during the recommendations presented by the Infrastructure and Natural Resources Advisory Committee and options presented by Staff, it was requested that the City bring back for future City Council consideration the potential of utilizing a public education firm to assist the City to communicate its needs if a sales tax measure were placed on the ballot as well as to ensure that all efforts were indeed in compliance with educational requirements.

Therefore, the purpose of retaining TBWBH Strategies is to support community and outreach efforts to educate the residents about City operations and the City's financial condition including program and service level reductions due to the City's long-term financial condition and struggles with a persistent structural deficit.

In keeping with the City's standard purchasing procedure, on April 13, 2020, the City released a Request for Proposal for Professional Services for Communication and Outreach Efforts. On May 8, 2020 the City received 25 proposals from communication and outreach firms. A panel was assembled to review and score the proposals. The top four were as follows: TBWBH, Cerrell, WBC and The Lew Edwards Group.

Out of the proposals, TBWBH Strategies, the top rated applicant, is being recommended to provide the City with the strategy and communications services needed to design and educate the community in understanding the City's financial constraints and revenue needs. TBWBH has experience working with nearly 500 jurisdictions on public finance ballot measures. The firm will assist the City in developing a public education and outreach program to educate the community about our funding and infrastructure needs. It should be noted that public resources can be used to educate the public, but they cannot be used to advocate for a ballot measure (Gov. Code Section 54964). Accordingly, the firm will also ensure that all legal requirements are met and no advocacy through any media or efforts is conducted. The goal is to educate the residents about the needs of the City and let them ultimately decide. Thus, the purpose of this consultant is to simply educate voters on the City's financial condition, service needs and infrastructure needs while being compliant with all legal requirements.

Attachments:

- Attachment 1 – Score Sheet Analysis
- Attachment 2 – TBWBH Agreement