



## **CITY OF BELLE ISLE, FLORIDA CITY COUNCIL AGENDA ITEM COVER SHEET**

**Meeting Date:** January 19, 2021

**To:** Honorable Mayor and City Council Members

**From:** B. Francis, City Manager

**Subject:** RFQ for Lobbying and Intergovernmental Consultant Services

**Background:** At the December 1, 2020 meeting, the Council briefly discussed the possibility to hiring a lobbyist to assist the City with issues at the State and Federal level that could affect the City. Some of these issues could be issues related to the airport and FAA as in the recent FAA Environmental Impact Study at OIA or assistance at FWC to allow for improved enforcement on the lake. A firm was presented; however, the Council directed that an RFQ be developed for requesting the services of a lobbying consultant.

Issues that the consultant could advise, counsel, and represent the City in legislative matters; further the City's legislative priorities and may be called upon to pursue funding for City projects at the county, state and federal levels of government. With a small staff, it is difficult to provide the time necessary to meet with state, county and federal officials, which would be the responsibility of the lobbyist. It's sometimes difficult for the City staff and elected officials to navigate the bureaucracy needed to apply for a federal grant or to obtain access to key people in a federal agency. It is often helpful to have another liaison who can work with these agencies on an issue. They can identify resources and grants that could benefit the city. Lobbyists are typically very knowledgeable about the legislative process and know who the decision makers are relative to congressional staff and Members of the Legislature and Congress. Lobbyists assist in the preparation and presentation of information, arrange testimony for congressional hearings, and arrange and attend face-to-face meetings with congressional staff and/or Members of Congress, the Legislature, or agency officials.

The goal is a positive impact on decision makers so as to affect the process in at the state or federal level. A lobbyist works to make sure our needs stay high on the agenda and makes sure others don't get a competitive advantage. Not having state or federal representation can leave the City at a serious disadvantage. Time constraints, the work load, the work of competitors, and the complexity of issues make the services of a lobbyist a necessity. We don't have the capacity or the expertise to follow every development, committee meeting, or amendment at the County, State or Federal levels. At the same time, we rely on the Legislature for a range of things, especially funding for infrastructure and bills that govern the separation of powers

between us and them. This is critical when they introduce bills that try to limit our Home Rule powers. Lobbyists are worth the price to keep up with a legislative process that can affect our budget, but the biggest reason for hiring a lobbyist is to help secure state funding for brick-and-mortar projects, such as improvements to our stormwater system or other major improvements.

**Staff Recommendation:** Recommend publishing the RFQ

**Suggested Motion:** I move we move forward with the RFQ for Lobbying and Intergovernmental Consultant Services

**Alternatives:** Don't move forward with the RFQ

**Fiscal Impact:** Depending on scope of work. Last proposal was \$30,000/6 months

**Attachments:** RFQ