

# **Board of County Commissioners**

## **Agenda Request**

Date of Meeting: August 18, 2008

Date Submitted: August 1, 2008

To: Honorable Chairman and Members of the Board

From: Benjamin H. Pingree, County Administrator  
Jennifer Langston, Special Projects Coordinator

Subject: Board approval to Advertise a Request for Proposal for State Lobbying Services for the 2009 Legislative Session.

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### **Statement of Issue:**

This agenda item requests Board approval to advertise a Request of Proposal (RFP) for State Lobbying Services for the 2009 Legislative Session. The agreement for professional services with Doug Bruce & Associates, and J. Johnson Company expired June 30, 2008.

### **Background:**

In 2005, Wakulla County entered into an agreement for State lobbying services with Doug Bruce & Associates, and J. Johnson Company. The terms of the agreement were from March 1, 2005 through June 30, 2008, with \$20,000 paid to each consultant, for a total of \$40,000 per year. The agreement included guiding the county's efforts to obtain funding for improvements to US Hwy 319, Sewer Expansion Projects, Traffic Safety, and "other issues as they arise". The consultants were selected due their expertise in transportation issues, and for the specific purpose of securing funding for the expansion of Highway 319. Due to the exorbitant costs associated with this project and the prioritization made by the Florida Department of Transportation, the Board determined that lobbying activities should be shifted to other critical needs affecting the community. The consultants performed services such as: filing and tracking Community Budget Issue Requests (CBIRS); bill Tracking; updating the Board on current legislative actions; and holding meetings with the local delegation. Since employment, the consultants worked on obtaining funding for various issues and projects as directed by the Board.

### **Analysis:**

Due to the expiration of the agreement for professional services for State lobbying efforts, the Board directed staff to pursue a Request for Proposal for State Lobbying Efforts at the June 2, 2008 Board meeting. This provides the Board with an opportunity to re-evaluate its state lobbying activities in preparation for the legislative deadlines and 2009 legislative session. Due to the variety of challenges that local governments face, such as infrastructure, growth management, budget reductions to State funded programs, unfunded mandates etc..., It may be beneficial to employ the services of a lobbying firm with expertise in a variety of local government issues. If the Board decides to enlist state lobbying services, the specific issues that they would be pursuing are contingent upon the priorities set by the Board at its annual retreat.

Agenda Request: Board approval to Advertise a Request for Proposal /Qualifications for State Lobbying Services for the 2009 Legislative Session.

August 18, 2008

Page 2

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### *Bill Tracking*

County staff manually tracks Bills through the legislative process using the House and Senate websites. Bill actions occur at a rapid pace. The County has no automatic bill tracking capabilities or notification system in place. It is recommended that the County consider investing in a bill tracking service, or request that the selected lobbyist utilize such service to keep the County apprised of legislative actions, including committee meetings. The estimate for a basic subscription to a bill tracking service is approximately \$2900.00 annually.

### *Possible Items to include in an RFP*

After further analysis, local governments solicit lobbying services in a variety of ways. For example some: require top candidates make presentations to the Board, base contract decision on price, and others may select a firm based on specialized subject matter. Due to budget constraints, it is important to examine costs, as well as, insure that the County obtains the quality of services that it desires.

### *Proposed RFP*

The RFP sets forth a Scope of Services that the selected firm will provide services to assist the Board by being responsible for monitoring, identifying and prioritizing opportunities and challenges for Wakulla County with respect to issues under consideration by the State Legislature, Governor's Office and relevant state agencies.

Specifically the RFP includes for the Consultant to work closely with the County's Liaison, and provide, at a minimum, the following services:

- File Community Budget Issue Requests, as determined by the Board of County Commissioners, with appropriate House and Senate Legislative Delegation Members.
- Regularly provide County staff and the Board of County Commissioners with any new information, and actively seek opportunities to enhance the County's state legislative program and provide options as to legislative strategy when necessary.
- Monitor and analyze state legislation including the budget process and report to the County, both orally and in writing, any legislative events that may directly or indirectly impact the County.
- At the end of each week during session, provide the County liaison with a report of the past week's activities affecting the County's substantive and appropriations issues and any other issues that could positively or negatively impact the County.
- Identify and act appropriately on state legislation and legislative proposals that may impact Wakulla County.

Agenda Request: Board approval to Advertise a Request for Proposal /Qualifications for State Lobbying Services for the 2009 Legislative Session.

August 18, 2008

Page 3

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- Identify and secure funding opportunities that may arise from proposed legislation.
- Draft legislation, appropriations requests, and amendments as necessary.
- Lobby for Wakulla County's position on legislation, appropriations and matters of interest, including: Direct contact and communication with the executive branch; state legislators and staff; representatives of state agencies; and testify on behalf of Wakulla County at hearings before legislative committees.
- Maintain close working relationships with Wakulla County staff.
- Provide regular briefing reports to the Board of County Commissioners on key issues and legislative activity as requested by the Board.
- Monitor various state agency actions for potential impact on Wakulla County and, in the event that action is needed, advise the County.
- Testify before legislative committees as appropriate.
- At the conclusion of the session, prepare a final report, including the final status of the County's priorities and a summary of the impact of major legislative changes to Wakulla County.

The RFP will be advertised and response proposals will be reviewed by a committee pursuant to the RFP and Wakulla County Purchasing Policies. After the response proposals are reviewed and ranked by staff, this issue will return to the Board in the form of an Agenda Request setting forth the ranked responses, recommended firm selection and recommended next steps.

Staff anticipates that the County will ultimately negotiate and enter into a general services contract with the selected firm. This general services contract would be effective for a one (1) year term.

*Budget*

The 08-09 Budget includes \$40,000.00 for lobbying services.

*2009 Legislative Session*

The 2009 legislative session is scheduled to begin March 3, 2009, and will deliberate for 60 days. Staff will continue to monitor the important issues relating to Wakulla County.

**Options:**

1. Approve Draft RFP document and publish advertisement for RFP.

Agenda Request: Board approval to Advertise a Request for Proposal /Qualifications for State Lobbying Services for the 2009 Legislative Session.

August 18, 2008

Page 4

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2. Do not Approve Draft RFP document & Do Not publish advertisement for RFP.
3. Board direction.

**Recommendation:**

Options #1.

**Attachments:**

- 1.[DRAFT Request for Proposal](#)