

Board of County Commissioners

Agenda Request

Date of Meeting: March 17, 2009

Date Submitted: February 27, 2009

To: Honorable Chairman and Members of the Board

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

Subject: Board Consideration to utilize the existing State contract lobbying firm to lobby relevant State and Federal Governmental entities to leverage Economic Stimulus funding on behalf of Wakulla County.

Statement of Issue:

This item requests Board Consideration to authorize the existing State Lobbying firm to lobby relevant State and Federal Governmental entities to leverage Economic Stimulus funding on behalf of Wakulla County.

Background:

President Obama signed the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act on Tuesday, February 17, 2009. This effort provides for an estimated \$12.2 billion dollars for the state of Florida. Analysis at the Federal and State levels currently being conducted and information is being communicated regarding the preparation and distribution of stimulus funding. The federal funds are anticipated to be distributed through State Agencies and the Federal grants processes.

At the January 20, 2009 Board meeting, the Board accepted the staff recommended shovel-ready projects for consideration of the potential economic stimulus funding opportunities initiated by the Federal Government (Attachments 1 & 2). Staff communicated the recent proactive efforts taken to obtain stimulus funding by partnering with neighboring counties and other entities in a cohesive regional approach now referred to as the Tallahassee Capital Region group. Our municipalities and school board have also been participating in the regional meetings and their projects are included in the regional list.

Since the Board meeting, the following activities have occurred relating to the regional stimulus effort:

- Weekly regional meetings have continued
- Press Release held at the Capitol Press Corps & Local Press Release conducted
- Meetings and conference calls with the Florida Department of Transportation, & Capital Region Transportation Planning Agency
- Meeting with the Office of the Governor
- Discussions held with State & Federal Legislators

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Analysis:

This agenda item requests Board Consideration to utilize the existing State contract lobbying firm (Governance Services) to lobby relevant State and Federal Governmental entities to leverage Economic Stimulus funding on behalf of Wakulla County as part of an overarching regional effort to secure lobbying services specifically for stimulus funding (Attachment 3).

Discussions have been held at the regional meetings as how to best promote the group's regional effort. Due to the varied size of the active partners, some entities have federal lobbyists, and some do not. At the most recent regional meeting, the majority of the participants agreed that employing a lobbyist to promote the region's efforts/projects would be beneficial in obtaining funding. It is based on this regional effort that staff brings this issue forward.

Regional Partners

- The Tallahassee City Commission, at its February 25, 2009 meeting, granted the Mayor the flexibility of spending up to \$20,000 to pursue a proposal to acquire professional lobbying services to enhance efforts of the Tallahassee Capital Region to secure federal regional stimulus funding. They are in the process of contracting with Governance Services.
- Leon County Commission approved for no more than \$20,000 for the professional lobbying services if the City of Tallahassee and the Leon County School Board committee funds to a regional lobbying effort. They are contracting with Governance Services.
- Gadsden County Commission is considering employing Governance Services for stimulus funding opportunities, at March 17, 2009 Board meeting.
- One of the major hospitals has expressed strong interest in utilizing a lobbyist in pursuit of federal funding. They are currently negotiating with Governance Services.

Existing State Legislative Contract Lobbyist (Governance Services)

On January 6, 2009, per the Board's direction, a Consulting agreement was initiated between Governance Services, L.L.C and Wakulla County to perform state lobbying services on behalf of Wakulla County.

Section 4. of the consulting agreement related to Consultant's Compensation states:

“For and during the performance of the foregoing state lobbying services, Consultant shall be paid a yearly retainer of Thirty Nine Thousand (\$39,000) and no/100 Dollars. *At any time during the contract period, County may, at its sole discretion increase the compensation*

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amount to add duties and tasks to Consultant on the federal level, with Board approval.”

“Consultant shall be responsible for any and all office and telephone expenses for performance of state lobbying services. Any extraordinary expenses including, travel to represent the County on the Federal level, shall be the responsibility of the County, but may not be incurred without prior written approval from the County Administrator. For purposes of the Contract, travel is hereby defined as being inclusive of airfare, hotel, and taxi for Consultant no greater than Three Thousand (\$3,000.00) and no/100 Dollars per year for exclusive representation of Wakulla County.

“Moreover, the intent of such travel, if approved is to provide the County the opportunity to gage Consultant’s expertise and performance at Federal lobbying services prior to any additional duties in accordance with the terms of this Agreement.”

Since the execution of the agreement, Governance Services has conducted state lobbying activities such as:

- Attended the Board’s Annual Retreat & Legislative Delegation meeting
- Attended weekly meetings lobbyist meeting with Florida Association of Counties
- Provides comprehensive news service
- Monitors Priority Bills and Bills of Interest & provides regular updates.

Summary

The current budget recession and deficit at the state and federal levels does not allow any funding for local needs at this time. Staff recommends that due to the historic unprecedented distribution of federal stimulus funding, it is important that Wakulla County take proactive measures to insure that Wakulla County receives funding for its (7) seven critical shovel-ready projects in the amount of \$41.5 million and over \$1.1 billion on a regional basis with job creation of approximately 16,000 jobs. Wakulla County is unique in that it has participated in the Tallahassee Capital Region Area stimulus effort as a united approach to obtain and be considered for this funding. It is further recognized that our local budget is tight however, utilizing Governance Services to obtain federal stimulus funding would be an additional asset, as well as access to their grant-writing services, to aid in obtaining funding for our critical needs.

The lobbying firm would be expected to assist in enhancing the projects of the Tallahassee Capital Region at the state and federal levels. The services that would be provided would include assistance in preparing grant applications for direct funding, emphasizes the economic impact of the Tallahassee Capital Region’s economic stimulus package in regards to job creation, and advocate with the Tallahassee Capital Regional Legislative Delegation as well as key staff at the state and federal levels, for the projects that have been identified in the economic stimulus package. In

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addition, in order to provide a clear message and avoid conflicts, the lobbying firm selected would be required to coordinate its efforts with the current lobbying teams of each Tallahassee Capital Region partner. Communications would be expected on a routine basis as to the status of the projects.

Staff requests that the Board determine the amount of funding. As you can see, other regional partners have contributed \$20,000. (Note: Wakulla County has contributed \$3,000 to date). Should the Board decide to approve funding to a same level as other regional partners, \$17,000 would be the maximum and would be paid from the Reserve Account. An additional benefit includes continued cooperation with our regional partners and assumes a small fiscal cost for a potential large fiscal outcome.

Options:

1. Authorize Governance Services to Lobby for Economic Stimulus Funding on behalf of Wakulla County and authorize Chairman to Execute an Agreement for Services funded at a level determined by the Board.
2. Do Not Authorize Governance Services to Lobby for Economic Stimulus Funding on behalf of Wakulla County and authorize Chairman to Execute an Agreement for Services.
3. Board direction.

Recommendation:

Option #1

Attachments:

1. Wakulla County Economic Stimulus Projects
2. Tallahassee Capital Region Brochure
3. Agreement for Services