



MEMORANDUM

TO: City Council

FROM: Bill Robeson, Interim City Manager
Jessica Matson, Legislative & Information Services Director/City Clerk

SUBJECT: Consideration of an Agreement with Clifford Moss for Voter Opinion Polling and Public Outreach and Education Services for a Potential Future Ballot Measure

DATE: August 22, 2023

SUMMARY OF ACTION:

Consider approving a Professional Services Agreement with Clifford Moss for an amount not to exceed \$115,000 for a voter opinion survey (“polling”) services with their subcontractors True North Research and Dynata, as well as project management, public outreach and education services conducted by Clifford Moss, for a potential future ballot measure.

IMPACT ON FINANCIAL AND PERSONNEL RESOURCES:

\$115,000 for voter opinion polling and public outreach and education services has been identified in the Fiscal Year 2023-25 Biennial Budget. Significant staff resources will be utilized to coordinate the efforts.

RECOMMENDATION:

Approve a Professional Services Agreement with Clifford Moss for Voter Opinion Polling and Public Outreach and Education services for an amount not to exceed \$115,000 in substantially final form.

BACKGROUND:

In August 2019, Council authorized the City Manager to enter into a Consultant Services Agreement with True North Research for voter opinion survey services for a potential Transaction & Use Tax (Sales Tax) measure on the November 2020 ballot. Polling was conducted in the Fall of 2019 and results were presented to Council in January 2020. In June 2020 Council discussed bringing forward a 1% Sales Tax measure on the November 2020 ballot and ultimately chose not to pursue the ballot initiative due the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic. Approximately two years later, having continued to identify significant funding needs, particularly for the City’s infrastructure, pavement maintenance, stormwater systems, and sidewalks, the City Council again discussed the potential for

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seeking additional Sales Tax revenue through a new ballot measure. On [May 24, 2022](#), Council approved placing a 1% local Sales Tax measure, Measure D-22, on the November 8, 2022 ballot.

On November 8, 2022, a General Municipal Election was held in the City which included Measure D-22, asking voters if the City shall be authorized to increase the Sales Tax by 1% to fund maintenance and repair of streets, sidewalks, stormwater and drainage facilities, and for other City programs and facilities. Measure D-22 did not pass, with 45.64% of the votes in favor of the measure. 50% of the votes, plus one vote is necessary to pass a General Tax Measure.

On [March 2, 2023](#), Council participated in a goal-setting study session and identified seven priorities:

1. Funding: New Revenue Sources, Economic Development;
2. Five Cities Fire Authority;
3. Address Current Infrastructure Needs;
4. General Plan;
5. Water Resilience;
6. Homeless/Housing; and
7. Staff Resources/Employee Attraction and Retention

The top four priorities were identified as the City's focus for the upcoming two-year budget process, including a potential revenue measure.

On [June 13, 2023](#), City Council authorized the publishing of a Request for Proposals (RFP) for Voter Opinion Polling and Public Education and Outreach Services. The RFP was published on the City's website on June 14, 2023 and sent to prospective firms. At the close of the RFP deadline on July 21, 2023, the City received proposals from the following four (4) firms:

- Clifford Moss and True North Research
- NBS and CivicMic
- Probolsky Research
- Tripepi Smith and FM3 Research

A team of six (6) staff from across departments reviewed and ranked each proposal. The top two firms, Clifford Moss/True North Research and Tripepi Smith/FM3 Research were interviewed by the City team.

ANALYSIS OF ISSUES:

Clifford Moss was determined by the review team to be the most responsive proposal to the RFP, and is proposing to team up with True North Research to conduct voter opinion

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polling and research services. Clifford Moss is an experienced leader in the election planning, political strategy, public affairs and strategic communications services field, especially with local revenue measures. True North Research, who conducted voter opinion polling for the City in 2019, is a full service survey research firm providing research and analysis on opinions, perceptions, priorities, and concerns of residents and voters. Both Clifford Moss and True North Research claim to have a 95.7% and 95% ballot measure success rate over the past decade, respectively.

Proposed Schedule

Some lessons learned from the unsuccessful ballot measure in November 2022 include starting earlier with polling, message testing, and investing in increased public engagement. Clifford Moss has proposed to begin feasibility analysis, strategic electoral planning and community feedback work as soon as possible in August with analysis continuing into September and October alongside development of the public opinion survey (“polling”) with True North Research. True North Research proposes to conduct voter opinion polling in November and December of this year with a presentation of results to City Council in January 2024.

Based on polling results, and should the Council provide direction to proceed with a ballot measure in November 2024, an expanded public engagement, outreach, and education strategy would be implemented in February 2024 and continue up until May/June 2024 when Council adopts a resolution calling for the November 2024 general municipal election. State Law prohibits public agencies from participating in advocacy efforts for items placed on the ballot. The City’s standard Professional Services Agreement has been modified to make clear under the “Term” of the contract, that the City Council shall determine the feasibility of moving forward after the Public Opinion Survey Report and presentation to the City Council has been completed under the Scope of Work, and be responsible only for costs incurred to date should the Council decide not to move forward.

Cost Considerations

Clifford Moss proposed a total project budget of \$104,850 for consultant services, feasibility analysis, strategic electoral planning, public engagement planning and implementation, voter opinion polling and research, and optional travel. Within the public engagement planning and implementation component are proposed community meetings and an online community survey.

Consistent with proposals received from the other firms, this budget does not include hard costs such as direct mail printing and postage, digital advertising or video production services. The consultant estimates an additional \$38,500 for these services, which is approximately \$30,000 over the projected and approved project budget (\$115,000 budgeted - \$104,850 proposed budget - \$38,500 additional costs). Staff have identified approximately \$10,000 in additional funding within existing budgets such as printing,

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postage, and election supplies to dedicate to these project hard costs, should they be needed.

As discussed during several City Council meetings over the past three years, the City is facing significant financial constraints due to its current revenue sources not keeping pace with increasing costs of services, supplies, and capital projects. During the City Council goal-setting study session held on March 2, 2023, the City Council identified funding, including a potential revenue measure, as a top priority for the City's upcoming budget cycle. To help support this goal, staff recommends approving an agreement with Clifford Moss to begin work with their firm and True North Research on voter opinion polling, strategy building and message testing in preparation for a potential revenue measure in November 2024.

ALTERNATIVES:

The following alternatives are provided for the Council's consideration:

1. Approve an Agreement with Clifford Moss for Voter Opinion Polling and Public Outreach and Education services for an amount not to exceed \$115,000 in substantially final form;
2. Modify and approve the Agreement with Clifford Moss; or
3. Provide other direction to staff.

ADVANTAGES:

Moving forward with an agreement for voter opinion polling and public outreach services will allow the City to begin work towards identifying community perspectives on services, and potential support of a future ballot measure, and developing a public engagement strategy.

DISADVANTAGES:

Contracting with a professional research and public education team is expected to cost at least \$115,000.

ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW:

The approval of the proposed Professional Services Agreement for Voter Opinion Survey and Public Education Services with Clifford Moss is not a project subject to the California Environmental Quality Act ("CEQA") because it has no potential to result in either a direct, or reasonably foreseeable indirect, physical change in the environment. (State CEQA Guidelines, §§ 15060, subd. (b)(2)-(3), 15378.)

PUBLIC NOTIFICATION AND COMMENTS:

The Agenda was posted at City Hall and on the City's website in accordance with Government Code Section 54954.2. An RFP was posted on the City's website on June 14, 2023.

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Attachments:

1. Proposed Professional Services Agreement for Voter Opinion Survey and Public Education Services
2. RFP for Voter Opinion Polling and Public Education and Outreach Services