

MEMORANDUM

TO: Claire Powell, City Manager

FROM: James Kunke, Director of Community Relations & Tourism

DATE: January 27, 2025

SUBJECT: **Approval of an Agreement with Bird Advocacy and Consulting, Inc., in the Amount of \$72,000 Annually, for Government Relations Services; and Authorization for the City Manager to Execute the Agreement.**

BACKGROUND

Brandi Bird, principal of Bird Advocacy, has assisted the City with legislative advice and engagement since the 87th Legislature in 2021. Her previous agreement did not include a renewal beyond 2024, and her rate has not changed since the first agreement in 2021. This new agreement runs through December 31, 2026, with an optional two-year extension.

ANALYSIS

Beginning with the 86th Legislative Session in 2019, the City hired Bird Advocacy to assist with legislative changes related to DCTA. During the 87th Legislative Session in 2021, Bird Advocacy's responsibilities were expanded to monitor issues related to the annexation of Castle Hills and any changes related to sales tax collection. Because Bird Advocacy was in Austin on a weekly basis, Bird's responsibilities were expanded beyond the two designated areas. Starting with the 88th Legislative Session conducted in 2023, she has been the City's sole legislative advocate.

Bird Advocacy has a separate agreement with the City to continue advising on matters related to DCTA.

Community Relations & Tourism Director James Kunke handles our legislative program along with his many other duties. His workload does not permit the time to interact with legislators on a regular basis and form a relationship with them and their staff. Bird already has those relationships and she offices in Austin so is able to meet with Legislators and state officials on a regular basis.

Having an advocate based in Austin is a tremendous benefit during the hectic legislative session, and was extremely helpful during the 2023 session when Bird Advocacy shepherded our massage establishments legislation through the filing and approval process. As we are unable to place a full-time City employee in Austin throughout the session, it is unlikely this bill language would have passed without our having a legislative consultant on contract.

The proposed agreement with Bird Advocacy provides for a monthly retainer of \$6,000 (\$72,000 for the year) during 2025 and a 3 percent increase to \$6,180 monthly in 2026. Total value of the agreement is \$146,460.

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CITY STAFF'S RECOMMENDATION

That the City Council approve the agreement as set forth in the caption above; and authorize the City Manager to execute the agreement.