



REPORT TO THE CITY COUNCIL

DATE: Regular Meeting of July 8, 2024

TO: Mayor and Members of the City Council

SUBMITTED BY: Dante Hall, City Manager

SUBJECT: Authorization To Approve A Contract With Tripepi Smith For General Communications Support

RECOMMENDED ACTION:

Staff recommends that the City Council adopt a resolution authorizing the City Manager to execute an agreement for an amount not to exceed \$93,588 with Tripepi Smith for General Communications Support.

BACKGROUND:

The City is currently collaborating with Tripepi Smith to help staff implement effective strategies, plans, and tactics to improve communication and community engagement. Tripepi Smith has provided communication services for the City of Hercules in the past, including social media support, press release writing, media monitoring of social media and news outlets, graphic design assistance, and hosting quarterly communication roundtable meetings to help department heads incorporate better public communication as a key duty. The support from Tripepi Smith has increased transparency and improved public education and engagement in civic affairs. To sustain this effort to effectively communicate with Hercules residents, staff recommends contracting services with Tripepi Smith to assist the City with communication strategies and media relations for FY 2025-2026.

DISCUSSION/ANALYSIS:

Enhancing media relations is a key aspect of being open and transparent with residents and the community, since residents are typically receiving their news from local media outlets and not the City directly. Continuing with Tripepi Smith will continue to benefit the City, its residents, and businesses by maintaining the following efforts:

Bi-Weekly Check-In Calls & Content Planning

To coordinate our efforts with City Staff and sustain momentum on projects, Tripepi Smith will schedule a recurring, 30-minute bi-weekly phone call that will include a City-designated lead for our engagement. These calls will help drive content planning for press releases, social media posts and stories for a potential digital as well as any additional needs that may arise. This will be a working call during which Tripepi Smith will manage an agenda and provide notes for each call. After each call, the client will receive an action summary email about decisions made on the phone call and related action steps. We will produce work, such as article drafts, in a shared workspace where the City can see our progress in real time and provide instant feedback as needed. These tools allow for enhanced collaboration and expedite the production process.

Social Media Management

Content Creation: Social media content creation involves: planning, fact-checking, sourcing graphics, grammar checking and scheduling the post. Tripepi Smith will create up to three (3) posts per week over the course of a month (or generally 12 a month) and distribute them on up to five (5) platforms (e.g. Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, LinkedIn, Nextdoor).

News Articles & Press Releases

Tripepi Smith can create news articles, press releases, and official statements, usually up to five hundred (500) words. The City would guide story assignments, incorporating Tripepi Smith's suggestions, and make internal subject matter experts available to assist with story development as needed. Additionally, this assumes the City provides a media and external agency notification list for Tripepi Smith to use when a press release is planned. The City would also support timely approval of quotes in the release when coordinating with City Staff or City Councilmembers.

Monthly Dashboard Metrics Report

Each month, Tripepi Smith will deliver a summary report of the basic metrics (reach, posts, engagement, etc.) related to City-controlled social media platforms and other key metrics if available, such as website visits and e-newsletter platform metrics. This will help the City evaluate successes and serve as an ongoing feedback mechanism to gather valuable insights that can inform our communication strategy.

Quarterly Communications Calendar Planning Sessions

The main goal during these two-hour meetings is for each department to identify key communication opportunities and wins to celebrate in the next 6-12 months. We document all of this in a shared spreadsheet or editorial calendar, which then serves as a roadmap for the organization to track communication opportunities or to hand off to the communications team for execution. The exercise breaks down barriers between departments and often helps senior staff recognize new communication opportunities. The process also includes Tripepi Smith preparing and delivering a presentation that highlights notable communication wins and reviews what has worked well. We hold these meetings quarterly to update our 12-month calendar and stay informed about upcoming communication priorities. Additionally, Tripepi Smith will curate a content calendar with staff that can be shared with media contacts.

Annual Report

The City of Hercules' Annual Report highlights the City's achievements, financial health, and strategic priorities for the past fiscal year. It usually includes updates on City services, infrastructure projects, community development, public safety, environmental initiatives, and financial performance. Tripepi Smith will collaborate with City staff to create a 12-page report showcasing the city's yearly accomplishments for distribution to the community.

FISCAL IMPACT:

Tripepi Smith possesses specialized expertise in government communications and has established deep familiarity with the City's operations, policies, and ongoing projects, which reduces onboarding time and risk of missteps. There are adequate funds available within the adopted FY 2025-2026 City Manager's budget to accommodate this expenditure.

ATTACHMENTS:

1. Resolution
2. Tripepi Smith Proposal for General Communications Support Services