



REPORT TO THE CITY COUNCIL

DATE: Regular Meeting of July 9, 2024

TO: Mayor and Members of the City Council

SUBMITTED BY: Dante Hall, City Manager

SUBJECT: Authorization To 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 \$85,000 with Tripepi Smith for General Communications Support.

BACKGROUND:

The City is currently working with Tripepi Smith to assist staff with implementing effective strategies, plans, and tactics to better communicate and engage our community. Since February 2022, Tripepi Smith has been providing communication services for the City of Hercules, including social media support, press release writing, social media and news outlet media monitoring, graphic design support, and hosting the roundtable Quarterly Communication Meetings to allow for department heads to incorporate enhanced communication with the public as a core duty. Communications support from Tripepi Smith has increased operational transparency and enhanced public education/engagement in civic affairs. To continue the ongoing effort to effectively engage and communicate with the residents of Hercules, staff recommends continuing services with Tripepi Smith to assist the City with communication strategies, and media relations for FY 2024-2025.

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).

Council Agenda Monitoring: Our work also includes reviewing upcoming council agendas to develop additional ideas worthy of social media or press releases.

News Articles & Press Releases

Tripepi Smith can draft news articles, press releases and/or official statements, which are typically up to five hundred (500) words in length. The City would direct the allocation of stories with Tripepi Smith's suggestions, making internal subject matter experts available to aid the development of the stories when needed. Additionally, this assumes the City would provide a media and external agencies notification list for use by Tripepi Smith where a press release scenario is desired. The City would also facilitate timely approval of quotes in the release when connected with City Staff or City Councilmembers.

Monthly Dashboard Metrics Report

Each month, Tripepi Smith will provide 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 us evaluate the success of our efforts as well as serve as an ongoing feedback mechanism for gathering valuable insights that can help inform ongoing communication strategy.

Quarterly Communications Calendar Planning Sessions

The main goal during these two-hour meetings is that each department identifies key communication opportunities and wins to celebrate in the next 6-12 months. We document all this into a shared spreadsheet/editorial calendar that can then serve as a roadmap for the organization to track communication opportunities—or to hand off to the communications team to execute. The exercise breaks down barriers between departments and often helps senior staff recognize communication opportunities they

were simply unaware of before. The process also includes Tripepi Smith preparing and giving a presentation that covers notable communication wins to review what has worked well. We conduct these meetings on a quarterly process to refresh our 12-month calendar and stay apprised of the upcoming communication priorities. Additionally, Tripepi Smith will curate a content calendar with staff that can be shared with media contacts.

FISCAL IMPACT:

There are sufficient funds available in the adopted FY 2024-2025 City Manager's budget for this expenditure.

ATTACHMENTS:

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