



Town of Miami Lakes Memorandum

To: Honorable Mayor & Councilmembers

From: Edward Pidermann, Town Manager

Subject: Authorization to Execute a Contract for State Lobbying Services RFP No. 2020-09

Date: March 9, 2020

Recommendation:

It is recommended that the Town Council authorize the Town Manager to negotiate and execute contract(s) with The Southern Group ("Southern Group"), the highest ranked proposer and with Sun City Strategies ("Sun City"), for State Lobbying Services in an amount not to exceed \$2,000 per month (\$24,000 per year) each or \$48,000 per year. The contract(s) will be for a three (3) year period with two (2) one-year options to renew. In this fiscal year, funds are budgeted for these services from the Town Administration budget.

Background:

The Town of Miami Lakes ("Town") is concerned about the introduction and passage of state legislation that may impact the Town. The Town must be aware of legislation that will benefit the Town and be proactive in supporting such legislation and obtaining its benefits. Conversely, the Town is concerned about the introduction and passage of potentially harmful legislation that could affect its liability to exert local control, while protecting its local budget and mitigating the impacts of unfunded mandates.

The Town issued Request for Proposal ("RFP") 2020-09 for State Lobbying Services on December 5, 2019. The RFP was advertised in the Miami Daily Business Review, posted to DemandStar, Public Purchase, and posted in the Government Center Lobby.

To qualify for award, prospective Proposers were required to:

1. Have at least five (5) years of direct experience providing State representation on issues and objectives common to municipal clients similar in governance to the Town of Miami Lakes or have served as a State Representative;
2. Provide at least three (3) client references demonstrating the successful completion of at least three (3) lobbying services contracts with the last three (3) years, including at least one (1) client represented within Miami-Dade County and Broward County; and
3. Have no professional and/or ethical conflict with the Town's interest.

4. Have no outstanding open or liquidated claim by the Town against the Proposer for monies owed to the Town at the time of Proposal submission.

On the date of the proposal deadline, December 27, 2019, we received three (3) proposals from the following Proposers:

1. Becker & Poliakoff, P.A. (“Becker”)
2. Sun City Strategies (“Sun City”)
3. The Southern Group (“Southern Group”)

An Evaluation Committee was appointed, comprised of the following members:

1. Ismael Diaz, Chief Financial Officer, Town of Miami Lakes
2. Renee Wilson, Grants Administrator, Town of Miami Lakes
3. Omar Santos Baez, Public Works Engineer, Town of Miami Lakes
4. Tony Lopez, Deputy Town Manager, Town of Miami Lakes

Procurement performed a due diligence review of the proposals for responsiveness and found that review of each proposal did not reveal any material defects in the proposal, nor in the Proposers’ qualifications. Each Proposer has been in business for more than five (5) years, provided at least three (3) client references demonstrating the successful completion of at least three (3) lobbying services, and have no professional and/or ethical conflict with the Town’s interest. Procurement did not find any issues that would indicate any Proposer was incapable of performing the Services.

The Evaluation Committee was provided the responsive proposals and met January 28, 2020 to evaluate and rank the proposals. The Evaluation Committee did not feel comfortable ranking the proposals as some references had not been verified and decided to reconvene at a later date. All proposers except one, Sun City Strategies, submitted the required (3) verified references. Sun City Strategies submitted (1) verified reference in writing and (1) reference provided feedback via telephone which was shared with the Committee. The Committee met once more on February 10, 2020 to rank the proposals.

At the conclusion of this meeting, the Evaluation Committee moved to establish the following ranking:

1. The Southern Group (“Southern Group”) – 392 pts
2. Becker & Poliakoff, P.A. (“Becker”) – 300.68 pts
3. Sun City Strategies (“Sun City”) – 297.32 pts

The Southern Group f/k/a Southern Strategy Group, Inc. has been the Town’s state lobbyist since 2014. The Southern Group has employed the services of Sun City as a sub-contractor since 2014. During that time, both firms have aided the Town in securing approx. \$4 million of State funding for canal stabilization and drainage projects.

Southern Group has been in business for 20 years with over 40 lobbyists. Southern Group has proposed Nelson Diaz and Kate DeLoach to lead the effort to secure appropriations for the Town. Mr. Diaz has more than 15 years of experience lobbying on behalf of municipalities and Ms. DeLoach served for 6 years as a Legislative Aide in the Florida House of Representatives before joining The Southern Group.

Sun City is a business and consulting company established 2013 and is located in Miami-Dade County. For this proposal, Sun City proposes Eduardo “Eddy” Gonzalez and William McRea will be the key staff. Eddy Gonzalez served on the City of Hialeah’s water & sewer board from 1998-1999. In 1999, he was appointed as Councilmember of the Hialeah Council. He served until 2006, when he was elected to the Florida House of Representatives. He in the House until 2014. Will McRea served as Deputy City Clerk, for the City of Hialeah Gardens and later served as a legislative assistant in both the Florida House and Senate. Will McRea later attended law school, and is a Florida Bar licensed attorney.

The Town of Miami Lakes has an outstanding claim for recovery of damages, including attorney’s fees & costs, against Becker as a result of misconduct by one or more of its lobbyists which resulted in extensive litigation with

former mayor, Michael Pizzi, Jr., which is still on-going. For these reasons and as stated in C12, paragraph 4, of the RFP and #4 at the top of page 2 above, I find that the Becker proposal is non-responsive and cannot be considered.

Based on the Evaluation Committee's established ranking and in the best interest of the Town, it is recommended that the Town Council authorize the Town Manager to negotiate and execute a contract(s) with The Southern Group and Sun City in an amount not to exceed \$2,000 per month (\$24,000 per year) each or \$48,000 per year.