

DENVER BOARD OF WATER COMMISSIONERS

Meeting Date: May 13, 2015

Board Item: II-A-5

Content Journalism Contract # 16021A

Action by Consent

Action

Information

Summary:

Denver Water's Communications and Marketing section is charged with two overarching objectives: 1) educating people about water so they have a higher appreciation for its value; and 2) raising awareness about Denver Water to enhance its identity as a reliable, trustworthy water steward and provider. In recent years, the methods used to accomplish these objectives have changed substantially as a result of a changing communications landscape made up of new channel preferences, technology and behaviors.

In response, many organizations are shifting from traditional PR/communications operations to a self-publishing/newsroom model. They rely less on traditional channels like news media and instead tell and share stories about their companies/organizations/issues/topics in ways that make readers want to know more. The stories aren't corporate-speak, marketing pitches, hard news or advertising copy; instead the intent is to spur conversations with customers, employees, stakeholders and industry professionals. Those who practice this approach are more effectively educating their constituents, sharing information, creating conversations and inspiring action among their publics. Known also as convergent journalism, content marketing and brand journalism, content journalism is a term frequently used to describe this approach. Denver Water is one of the first water utilities in the country to shift to this modern and measureable communication method.

Last year, staff members researched, participated in training and took initial steps toward the shift to a content journalism structure. The team determined that a more deliberate and well-designed approach, provided in coordination with expert guidance and counsel, would be beneficial. Specifically, the team identified a need for assistance in establishing content generation standards and strategies; building a news desk and editorial processes; creating editorial guidelines; assembling and structuring the team; training them in writing and editing for new media, video, photography and infographics creation; planning, designing and programming internal and external news sites; and refreshing other communications channels, such as our blog, intranet and website.

Budget Information:

2015 Budget	\$ 175,000.00
Amount Requested This Item	\$ 175,000.00
YTD Expenditures	\$ 0.00
Dollars Budgeted for Future Years	\$ 52,250.00
Revised Estimate	\$ 175,000.00
Budget Adjustment	\$ 0.00

Selection of Business Partner:

In March 2015, Public Affairs issued an RFP for content journalism consulting services to identify firms capable of providing assistance to the Communications and Marketing team. The RFP was issued via Rocky Mountain BidNet, denverwater.org and through a number of corporate communications trade associations. Ten firms responded, and of those, Ragan Communications emerged as the firm best qualified to meet the needs and criteria as established. Incorporated in 1975, Ragan is a Chicago-based, nationally recognized corporate communications consulting firm that specializes in developing and training communication professionals and teams, particularly in new media and content journalism. While Ragan Communications is not a certified SMWDBE, the firm has committed to achieving a 10 percent participation goal through its subcontracting on this project.

Recommendation:

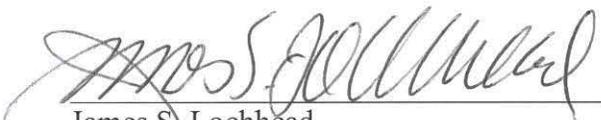
It is recommended that the Board approve Contract 16021A with Ragan Communications for content journalism consulting services, for the contract period May 13, 2015 through May 31, 2016, for a total contract amount not to exceed \$175,000.00.

Approvals:

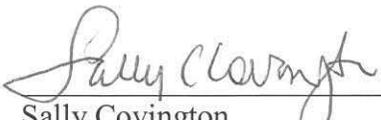
Respectfully submitted,



Patricia Wells
General Counsel



James S. Lochhead
CEO/Manager



Sally Covington
Director of Public Affairs



Terri Bryant
Controller