



CITY OF SANTA BARBARA

COUNCIL AGENDA REPORT

AGENDA DATE: March 30, 2010
TO: Mayor and Councilmembers
FROM: Finance Department, Environmental Services Division
SUBJECT: Professional Services Contract For Survey On Single-Use Bag Tax

RECOMMENDATION:

That Council consider entering into a professional services agreement with Fairbank, Maslin, Maullin, Metz & Associates for an amount not to exceed \$23,319 to develop and conduct a voter survey regarding a possible tax on single-use bags.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

On December 15, 2009, Council directed staff to issue a request for proposals (RFP) to develop and conduct a voter survey about a possible tax on single-use paper and plastic bags, and the amount of tax that voters would be willing to pay. Council indicated an expectation that the survey should be significantly less than the \$50,000 cost estimate contained in the December 15, 2009 Council Agenda Report and directed staff to reduce the proposed square footage of retail establishments affected by such a tax from 30,000 to 10,000 square feet.

Environmental Services and Purchasing staff developed and issued an RFP, and received eight proposals in early March 2010. Staff found that the proposal from Fairbank, Maslin, Maullin, Metz & Associates (FM3) to develop and conduct the survey for an amount not to exceed \$23,319 best fit the City's needs. Not only did FM3's proposal come in significantly lower than the estimated cost, but the quality of the proposal stood out significantly on many levels. FM3 was also the only firm that had direct experience conducting surveys on single-use and reusable bag issues.

DISCUSSION:

A full discussion of the issues surrounding single use bags was included in the December 15, 2010, Council Agenda Report, and is therefore not repeated in this report.

Vendor Selection Process

Environmental Services and Purchasing staff identified approximately thirty firms that could provide the required services. Eight firms responded to the Request for Proposals and were evaluated and ranked by two separate staff panels based on several pre-determined screening parameters.

Fairbank, Maslin, Maullin, Metz & Associates (FM3) stood out among the proposals submitted in a number of ways, but the primary factors in selecting FM3 were:

- Experience conducting surveys on single-use and reusable bags issues (the only firm which responded to the RFP and had single-use bags experience);
- Knowledge, expertise, and extensive handling of ballot propositions, including local and state special tax measures;
- History developing and initiating surveys and studies in regards to environmental and local political issues;
- Extensive experience with municipalities;
- Expertise in regards to statistical analysis and research design; and
- Proposed cost and level of service (lower price than many of the proposals and a larger sample size than most).

Other City divisions have had positive experiences working with the firm in the past. FM3 has conducted voter phone surveys for the City regarding the Utility User's Tax and regarding the General Plan update.

Scope and Work and Cost

The proposed scope of services to be provided by FM3 includes:

- Drafting a survey instrument with Environmental Services staff and pre-testing;
- Surveying a random sample of voters (500 voters, 20 minute survey);
- Producing survey "topline" results and a cross-tabulation report; and
- Preparing a written report and Power Point presentation;

BUDGET/FINANCIAL INFORMATION:

The proposed services to be provided by FM3 are not to exceed \$23,319, and would be funded by solid waste funds designated for public education and outreach.

A tax on single-use bags has the potential to generate income for the City, the amount of which would depend upon the level of the tax and any increases in consumer use of reusable bags. Whether a tax would be a general tax or a special tax, used for a particular purpose, would need to be part of the decision making process. A general tax would require a simple majority approval of voters; while a tax that is designated for a specific purpose would require a two-thirds approval.

SUSTAINABILITY IMPACT:

A single-use bag tax has the potential to reduce the environmental impacts related to the manufacture and disposal of single-use bags by increasing consumer use of reusable bags.

PREPARED BY: Stephen MacIntosh, Environmental Services Supervisor

SUBMITTED BY: Robert Samario, Interim Finance Director

APPROVED BY: City Administrator's Office