



Agenda Item No. \_\_\_\_\_  
File Code No. 290.00

# CITY OF SANTA BARBARA

## COUNCIL AGENDA REPORT

**AGENDA DATE:** March 9, 2010

**TO:** Mayor and Council Members

**FROM:** Fire Prevention Bureau, Fire Department

**SUBJECT:** Agreement With SCI Consulting Group For Engineering Services To Renew The Wildland Fire Suppression Assessment District

### **RECOMMENDATION:**

That Council authorize the Fire Chief, subject to approval as to form by the City Attorney, to negotiate and execute a five-year professional services agreement with SCI Consulting Group (SCI) in the amount of \$34,375, which includes a 10% contingency, for the purpose of providing engineering services necessary for the annual renewal of the Wildland Fire Suppression Assessment District (WFSAD).

### **DISCUSSION:**

In June 2006, the City Council established the Wildland Fire Suppression Assessment District (WFSAD) to expand vegetation road clearance, implement a defensible space inspection and assistance program, and implement a vegetation management program within the Foothill and Extreme Foothill Zones.

The assessment district must be renewed on an annual basis. In accordance with Proposition 218 (The Right to Vote on Taxes Act), a certified engineer's report is required to determine whether the benefit of the assessment is special to each parcel in the District and whether the assessment is proportional to the special benefit.

As part of the initial work and formation of the assessment district, the City contracted with Shilts Consultants Inc. (SCI), to undertake the studies, engineering and balloting work necessary under state law to form an assessment district.

Since the formation of the WFSAD in June 2006, the Fire Department has used SCI each year for the renewal because of their expertise with assessment districts, knowledge of the local community, and legal understanding of Proposition 218 requirements.

In addition to routine renewal of the WFSAD, SCI also provided the following services in the past year. Several important judicial opinions challenging the formation to assessment districts under Proposition 218 required SCI assistance, in consultation with the City Attorney's Office, to ensure that the assessments met the requirements for special benefit and proportionality. When the City was faced with the challenge of the Tea Fire, which affected property values, the City decided to reimburse levied assessments for property owners that had lost their homes. SCI provided the City with the mechanism to move forward with the reimbursements, required property calculations, reviewed the public letter to property owners and helped explain the reimbursement process to the City.

SCI is widely recognized as a leader in this highly specialized field and is the only firm hired by the State of California as a sole source for their Proposition 218 expertise. The Fire Department believes that SCI's expertise and professionalism continue to make them the best value.

### **Scope of Services**

The specific scope of services provided by SCI for administration and renewal of the assessment district include:

- Provide initial planning, property research and assistance with preparation of assessment budgets.
- Complete acquisition and validation of current property data, comparison with other property data sources and data accuracy validation services.
- Complete comprehensive research and confirmation of all levies on a parcel-by-parcel basis, and submittal to Santa Barbara County Auditor.
- Prepare notices, Council Resolutions, and City of Santa Barbara review items.
- Prepare an annual Assessment Report that will meet all legal requirements for the continuation of the assessments and provide the specific assessment amount for each parcel.
- Levy collection reports and confirmation of the accuracy of the Auditor's Tax Roll for the District.
- Use SCI's toll-free 800 phone line for inclusion with tax bills and directly respond to property owner inquiries regarding their proposed assessments or other questions about the Wildland Fire Suppression Assessment or the services and improvements it funds.
- Keep the City apprised of any legal changes to Proposition 218 policies and procedures that may affect the Wildland Fire Suppression Assessment.

**BUDGET/FINANCIAL INFORMATION:**

The costs for SCI's services for a contract period of 5 years are as follows:

FY 2010-11	\$ 6,650
FY 2011-12	\$ 6,150
FY 2012-13	\$ 6,150
FY 2013-14	\$ 6,150
FY 2014-15	\$ 6,150
10% Contingency	<u>\$ 3,125</u>
	\$34,375

The total contract cost is \$34,375, including incidentals and a 10% contingency. The single year contract cost for SCI services has historically been \$6,500, plus \$650 for incidentals. The net savings to the City to enter into a professional services agreement with SCI for 5 years is \$4,500.

Pursuant to the proposed professional services agreement, the Fire Chief is authorized to execute, subject to Council's approval of the assessment district renewal each year, the annual renewal of the contract based on the assessment district's fiscal year budget.

Based on the cost savings, and SCI's exemplary record, the Fire Department requests approval for the Fire Chief to execute a five-year professional services agreement with SCI for the annual renewal of the Wildland Fire Suppression Assessment District through 2015.

The funds for engineering services are budgeted in the Wildland Fire Suppression Assessment Fund. These costs are added to the final assessment amount and recovered through the assessment to property owners.

In the upcoming months, the annual renewal of the assessment district will return to Council with the determined assessment value.

**PREPARED BY:** Joseph Poiré, Fire Marshal

**SUBMITTED BY:** Andrew DiMizio, Fire Chief

**APPROVED BY:** City Administrator's Office