

Mayor and Council Communication

DATE: 06/10/25

M&C FILE NUMBER: M&C 25-0478

LOG NAME: 02MARILLAGROUPCONTRACT

SUBJECT

(ALL) Authorize Amendment to Contract with the Marilla Group, LLC d/b/a Sunny Black for Services in Support of Reorganization and Service Delivery Enhancements of the Communications & Public Engagement Department to Increase Initial Six-Month Term by \$89,000.00 for a New Total First Term Amount Up to \$189,000.00 and Two Six-Month Renewal Term Options Up to \$189,000.00 Each for a Total Contract Amount Up to \$567,000.00

RECOMMENDATION:

It is recommended that the City Council authorize the City Manager or his designee to amend City Secretary Contract No. 63264 with The Marilla Group, LLC d/b/a Sunny Black for services in support of reorganization and service delivery enhancements of the Communications & Public Engagement Department to increase the contracts initial six-month term by \$89,000.00 for a new total first term amount of up to \$189,000.00 and two six-month renewal term options up to \$189,000.00 each for a total contract amount of up to \$567,000.00.

DISCUSSION:

The purpose of this Mayor and Council Communication (M&C) is to authorize amendment to City Secretary Contract No. 63264 with The Marilla Group, LLC d/b/a Sunny Black (The Marilla Group) to: (1) increase the contracts initial six-month term by \$89,000.00 for a new total first term amount of up to \$189,000.00, and (2) authorize two six-month renewal term options up to \$189,000.00 each for a total contract amount of up to \$567,000.00.

The Marilla Group is a marketing and communications consultancy focused on empowering public organizations to achieve their communication goals, elevate their presence, and build positive relationships with their community.

In December 2024, City of Fort Worth engaged The Marilla Group to do a strategic review of the Communications & Public Engagement Department (CPE). In the months that followed, The Marilla Group conducted dozens of interviews with key internal stakeholder groups on strategy, coordination, and key objectives of communications in the department and citywide.

The Marilla Group's assessment resulted in recommendations to restructure CPE to better serve the City's strategic and crisis communication needs. Successfully implementing the reorganization of the department and related goals will require significant support and leadership, however, the department director (Chief Communications Officer) and key leadership positions are currently vacant.

To support the effective implementation of the department's reorganization, it was proposed the City of Fort Worth enter a new 6-month contract with The Marilla Group, renewable for up to two 6-month terms not to exceed 18 months. The original contract with The Marilla Group, LLC d/b/a Sunny Black was executed on May 13, 2025 to provide professional services as full-time strategic and operational support as the contracted Chief Communications Officer for the City, leading the reorganization of the Communications and Public Engagement Department, establishing policies, processes, and a media relations vertical, and developing the Strategic Hub for Outreach and Production (SHOP). Additionally, the vendor will deliver crisis communication support, staff training, content creation, and community outreach, ensuring alignment with the City's branding and strategic goals, and such other services as detailed in the contract.

Funds for this contract will be allocated from the CPE departmental budget from salary savings accrued from the vacant positions. No additional funding is required.

Funding is budgeted in the Consultant & Other Prof Services account within the General Fund for the City Managers Office and funding will be budgeted in Consultant & Other Prof Services account within the General Fund for Fiscal Year 2026 and 2027.

This project was approved for a waiver per the Chapter 252 exemption, as personal, professional, or planning services by the Law Department. This solicitation was reviewed by The Business Equity Division for available business equity prospects according to the City's Business Equity Ordinance. There were limited business equity opportunities available for the services/goods requested, therefore, no business equity goal was established.

This project will serve ALL COUNCIL DISTRICTS.

FISCAL INFORMATION / CERTIFICATION:

The Director of Finance certifies that upon approval of the above recommendation funds are available in the current operating budget, as previously appropriated, and upon adoption of the Fiscal Year 2026 and 2027 Budget by the City Council, funds will be available in the Fiscal Year 2026 and 2027 Operating Budget, as appropriated, in the General Fund. Prior to an expenditure being incurred, the City Manager's Office has the responsibility to validate the availability of funds.

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Additional Information Contact:

Expedited