

BOARD MEETING DATE: December 6, 2024

AGENDA NO. 8

PROPOSAL: Amend Contracts for Legislative Representation in Sacramento, California

SYNOPSIS: The current contracts for legislative representation in Sacramento, California with Joe A. Gonsalves & Son and California Advisors, LLC expire on December 31, 2024. California Advisors, LLC, which is dissolving as of December 31, 2024, assigned its South Coast AQMD contract to Buckley Government Affairs. Ross Buckley, the principal for Buckley Government Affairs, has directly represented South Coast AQMD for California Advisors since 2019. South Coast AQMD continue to require their legislative lobbying services in Sacramento for Calendar Year 2025. These actions are to: 1) approve a one-year extension in the amount of \$143,836 with Joe A. Gonsalves & Son; and 2) approve the assignment of the South Coast AQMD contract from California Advisors to Buckley Government Affairs and approve a one-year contract for \$143,836 with Buckley Government Affairs. Sufficient funding is available in the Legislative, Public Affairs & Media FY 2024-25 Budget.

COMMITTEE: Administrative, November 8, 2024; Recommended for Approval

RECOMMENDED ACTIONS:

1. Authorize the Chair to execute a one-year extension of the contract with Joe A. Gonsalves & Son in an amount of \$143,836; and
2. Authorize the Chair to approve California Advisors' assignment of its current contract to Buckley Government Affairs and execute a one-year contract with Buckley Government Affairs in the amount of \$143,836.

Wayne Natri
Executive Officer

Background

The current contracts for legislative representation in Sacramento, California expire on December 31, 2024. As a leading air quality agency in California and an innovative leader in developing emission reduction programs, South Coast AQMD is an important contributor to the policy discussions in the state legislature. It is vital to ensure that South Coast AQMD's input continues to be conveyed in a timely and meaningful manner, and that South Coast AQMD is involved in the day-to-day policy discussions in Sacramento to promote cleaner air and protect the agency's authority, both through policy development and securing adequate funding. A legislative presence in Sacramento is critical to advancing Board policies and priorities.

Joe A. Gonsalves & Son (Gonsalves) represented South Coast AQMD in Sacramento in 2024 and performed at a high professional level. Gonsalves is a Sacramento lobbying firm with decades of experience and strong ties to legislators on both sides of the aisle. The firm has relationships with many cities throughout the state, including several within the South Coast region. With over 35 years of experience, the firm's principals are well-respected and knowledgeable on many local and statewide issues. On multiple occasions, while representing South Coast AQMD, Gonsalves' has secured access for staff and Board Members to elected officials and key staff at critical junctures in the legislative process, including the Governor's office, to help achieve positive legislative and budgetary outcomes.

California Advisors, LLC (California Advisors) also represented South Coast AQMD in Sacramento in 2024 and performed at a high professional level. However, California Advisors, LLC is dissolving with an effective end date of December 31, 2024, and has assigned its current South Coast AQMD contract to Buckley Government Affairs. Ross Buckley is the principal of Buckley Government Affairs and has been the prime representative of South Coast AQMD since 2019 through California Advisors. He has a comprehensive understanding of both politics and policy and an extensive history of successfully representing South Coast AQMD in Sacramento. Mr. Buckley's over 15 years of experience has led to effective solutions to legislative challenges on policy priorities and funding issues.

During the 2024 Legislative session, Gonsalves & Son and Mr. Buckley skillfully contributed to efforts that led to South Coast AQMD budgetary and legislative successes, including the following:

- 1) \$50 million in statewide monies from the Greenhouse Gas Reduction Fund (GGRF) for local air districts to fund implementation of community air monitoring and community emission reduction programs mandated by AB 617 (Garcia, 2017), with a significant portion of those funds to be directed to the South Coast region;

- 2) \$195 million in AB 617 incentive funding from the GGRF to be awarded to local air districts statewide to facilitate co-benefit criteria pollutant emission reductions. These funds support Community Emissions Reduction Programs by funding community priorities, such as accelerating the turnover of older, polluting medium- and heavy-duty vehicles to cleaner ones; and
- 3) South Coast AQMD sponsored bills enacted into law:
 - AB 2522 (W. Carrillo) which increases existing compensation limits for local air district board members by up to two times the current level and authorizes annual Consumer Price Index increases up to 10 percent going forward; and
 - SB 1158 (Archuleta) which amends the Carl Moyer Program to extend the liquidation time for Moyer funding from four to six years.

Gonsalves & Son and Mr. Buckley have worked together to create an efficient and effective consultant team for South Coast AQMD. Their policy and political insights inform South Coast AQMD and strengthen its presence, credibility, and ability to support the Board's policy priorities and pursue funding needs in Sacramento. At this critical point in time, it is important that the momentum be continued.

Proposal

The contracts with the two firms expire on December 31, 2024. The current contracts have options for two one-year extensions that may be exercised at the Board's discretion, pursuant to the original RFP. This proposal is to authorize the Chair to execute the first one-year contract extension for Gonsalves & Son for \$143,836, and to authorize the Chair to approve the assignment of California Advisors' current contract to Buckley Government Affairs and execute a one-year contract with Buckley Government Affairs for \$143,836. Utilizing the services of these two firms in Sacramento will maintain the momentum created by recent successes and current political and stakeholder partnerships and will continue to promote South Coast AQMD's mission and 2025 legislative and funding priorities.

Resource Impacts

The Legislative, Public Affairs & Media Budget for FY 2024-25 contains sufficient funds for this action.