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January 30, 2024

DECISION MEMORANDUM

TO: Council members

FROM: Bill Edmonds
Executive Director

SUBJECT: Authorization to contract for government affairs services

PROPOSED ACTION: Seek authorization to extend our contract with Bluestone Strategies through the end of the current FY for an amount not to exceed \$90K.

BACKGROUND

The Council contracted with Chris Huckleberry of Bluestone Strategies after this was authorized by the Council in the July, 2023 meeting. This eight month contract was necessary after the departure of Ann Gravatt, our Public Affairs divisions director who left the Council in mid-July.

Mr. Huckleberry has provided invaluable services for the Council including helping us deliver on a highly successful Congressional staff tour, leading ongoing contacts with policy makers, and in providing a useful government affairs perspective for the Council and staff.

The first short-term contract ends in the beginning of February and the staff is recommending that we extend this contract for eight months to the end of the current fiscal year (through September 2024). The contract to cover both Bluestone's retainer and any potential travel specific to council responsibilities will be in an amount not to exceed \$90,000.

Our current plan for replacing retirements within the Public Affairs division is to hire two communication professionals. We expect these two people eventually to perform some of the functions traditionally associated with “government affairs,” including providing information to and fielding requests for information and assistance from congressional offices. We do not have current plans to hire an FTE to focus directly on government affairs responsibilities, but we will continue to assess this need and our options for covering this need. At the current time, an extension of our contract with Mr. Huckleberry best meets this need.