



CITY OF NEWARK
DELAWARE

October 13, 2023

To: Honorable Mayor and Council

From: Jeff Martindale, Chief Purchasing & Personnel Officer *JM*
Tara Schiano, Director of Legislative Services *TS*
David Del Grande, Finance Director *DD*
Jayme Gravell, Chief of Community Engagement *JG*

Via: Tom Coleman, City Manager *TC*

Subject: Recommendation to Award a Contract Associated with Request For Proposal No. 23-04 (Lobbying and Intergovernmental Consultant Services)

BACKGROUND

Each year, the City contracts a lobbying and intergovernmental consulting services firm to promote the City's interests on the county, state, and federal level. The previous contract term for this service with Armitage DeChene & Associates, which stemmed from RFP 20-02, is set to expire on December 31, 2023. The contract term for RFP 23-04 extends from January 1, 2024 to at least December 31, 2026. By mutual consent of the awarded vendor and the City, the service term may be renewed or extended for up to two (2) years through one-year extensions, not to exceed a total agreement term of five (5) years. This option shall be exercised only if agreed to in writing by both parties and approved by the City Manager and/or City Council.

PROPOSAL & REVIEW PROCESS

The Purchasing Division advertised RFP No. 23-04 in The News Journal, on the City's website, and emailed copies of the RFP to several firms following research on appropriate vendors.

The Purchasing Division received one proposal in response to the RFP by the October 10, 2023 deadline from Blue Hen Strategies. Blue Hen Strategies is a new lobbying firm headed by James DeChene, one of the City's current lobbyists. With Rick Armitage's retirement and the dissolution of Armitage DeChene & Associates, Blue Hen Strategies is viewed by staff as a continuation of the City's current lobbyist firm.

Blue Hen Strategies' proposal was distributed to and reviewed by the evaluation committee,

which consisted of City Manager Tom Coleman, City Secretary Tara Schiano, Finance Director David Del Grande, Chief of Community Engagement Jayme Gravell, and Chief Procurement and Projects Officer Jeff Martindale. With prior experience with James DeChene and positive review of the proposal, the review committee is confident in Blue Hen Strategies' ability to provide services to Newark.

FUNDING

Barring any budgetary changes to the Legislative Department's lobbyist contractual services expense line (0111134.8161), \$56,000 will be available for this service in 2024. \$57,000 will need to be budgeted for this account in 2025 to support the second year of this contract term; and \$58,000 will need to be budgeted for this account in 2026, 2027, and 2028 (if 2027 and 2028 services are agreed upon by the City and vendor).

RELATED DOCUMENTS

1. Blue Hen Strategies Proposal Cover Letter
2. Blue Hen Strategies Proposal
3. Blue Hen Strategies Proposal Appendices

RECOMMENDED MOTION

I move that Council award a contract stemming from Request For Proposal 23-04 for Lobbying and Intergovernmental Consultant Services to Blue Hen Strategies of Newark, Delaware as outlined in the October 13, 2023 staff memo.