



Legislation Text

File #: 2977-2018, **Version:** 1

BACKGROUND: This legislation authorizes the Finance and Management Director to enter into a contract with Strategic Public Partners LLC for consulting services related to early voting education, information, and associated public service announcements.

Since 2006, the Franklin County Board of Elections has voted, in a bipartisan manner, to provide information about early voting opportunities via public service announcements. This information has assisted new residents and new voters as they learn about our voting system, including opportunities to vote early in person or by mail. This nonpartisan information was provided without regard for the partisan information broadcasted regarding the candidates or issues on a given ballot.

The Franklin County Board of Elections planned to expend \$280,000 for public service announcements for the general election. As in previous years, the Board's proposal would use bipartisan media consultants to implement this plan. However, for the first time in over a decade, the Franklin County Board of Elections has failed to provide this information because of a party-line tie vote.

In response to this partisan tie vote, the Franklin County Board of Commissioners sought to directly expend these funds. However, they have been advised that, as a statutory political subdivision, they lack the express authority to make this expenditure directly.

Columbus is a home rule municipality which has previously enacted city code that foresees the need to use public funds to "...promote, enforce and protect the fundamental right to vote..." (CCC 2321.55(C)(2)). In addition, the Columbus City Attorney has advised that the use of city funds is legally permissible for this purpose.

Mayor Andrew J. Ginther has proposed the use of city funds to implement the same voter information announcement the Franklin County Board of Elections originally planned for 2018. This will ensure Columbus voters, as well as voters in other areas of Franklin County, continue to receive nonpartisan information about their fundamental voting rights.

This ordinance also requests waiver of the competitive bidding requirements of City Code Chapter 329. This waiver is necessary due to the limited time remaining until the November 6, 2018 general election and the time necessary to establish a contract and provide the needed voter information services prior to such election. It should also be noted that the City of Columbus could not have foreseen the issues that occurred at the County level that prevented this contract from being implemented thereby. As such, the City of Columbus wishes to enter into this contract as a means to provide the needed voter information in an expeditious manner in order that Columbus voters, as well as voters in other areas of Franklin County, can continue to receive nonpartisan information about their fundamental voting rights.

Strategic Public Partners, LLC 27-3545626

Fiscal Impact: This legislation authorizes an expenditure of \$280,000.00 from the General Fund with Strategic Public Partners LLC for consulting services related to early voting education and information. These funds are available within the 2018 General Fund budget.

Emergency Action: Emergency action is necessary given the need to immediately expend these funds prior to the November 6, 2018 general election.

To authorize the Director of Finance and Management to enter into a contract with Strategic Public Partners LLC in

support of public service announcements for the 2018 general election; to authorize the transfer of \$280,000.00 between departments within the General Fund; to authorize the expenditure of \$280,000 from the General Fund; to waive the competitive bidding provisions of City Code; and to declare an emergency (\$280,000.00).

WHEREAS, since 2006, Columbus and Franklin County voters have received nonpartisan public service announcements regarding opportunities to vote early in person or by mail; and

WHEREAS, this information has previously been provided by the Franklin County Board of Elections in a bipartisan manner; and

WHEREAS, for the first time in a decade, a party-line tie vote has deprived voters, including new residents and first-time voters, of this information; and

WHEREAS, trusted, nonpartisan information about voting is critical to our democracy now more than ever; and

WHEREAS, it is necessary to expend \$280,000 in city funds to ensure Columbus and Franklin County voters continue to receive nonpartisan public service announcements about voting options; and

WHEREAS, such funds will be used, in a bipartisan manner, to implement the plan previously proposed by the Franklin County Board of Elections; and

WHEREAS, it is in the best interest of the City to waive the competitive bidding provisions of City Code Chapter 329 to allow Strategic Public Partners LLC to provide services related to early voting education, information, and associated public service announcements; and

WHEREAS, an emergency exists in the usual daily operation of the Department of Finance and Management in that it is immediately necessary to authorize the Director to enter into said contract for the preservation of public health, peace, property, safety and welfare; **NOW, THEREFORE**

BE IT ORDAINED BY THE COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF COLUMBUS:

SECTION 1. That the Finance and Management Director is hereby authorized to enter into a contract with Strategic Public Partners LLC for consulting services related to early voting education, information, and associated public service announcements.

SECTION 2. That the transfer of \$280,000.00, or so much thereof as may be needed, is hereby authorized within Fund 1000 General Fund, from Dept-Div 4501 Financial Management, Object Class 10 - Transfer Out to Dept-Div 4550 Finance-Director's Office, Object Class 03 - Contractual Services per the account codes in the attachment to this ordinance.

See Attached File: Ord 2977-2018 Legislation Template.xls

SECTION 3. That the expenditure of up to \$280,000.00, or so much thereof as may be needed pursuant to the action authorized in SECTION 1, is hereby authorized in the General Fund 1000, in Object Class 03 - Contractual Services, per the accounting codes in the attachment to this ordinance.

See Attached File: Ord 2977-2018 Legislation Template.xls

SECTION 4. That the funds necessary to carry out the purpose of this ordinance are hereby deemed appropriated, and the City Auditor shall establish such accounting codes as necessary.

SECTION 5. That the City Auditor is authorized to make any accounting changes to revise the funding source for all contracts or contract modifications.

SECTION 6. That this Council finds it in the best interest of the City to waive the competitive bidding provisions of City Code Chapter 329 for this contract.

SECTION 7. That for the reason stated in the preamble here to, which is hereby made a part hereof, this ordinance is hereby declared to be an emergency measure and shall take effect and be in force from and after its passage and approval by the Mayor, or ten days after passage if the Mayor neither approves nor vetoes the same.