



Memorandum

TO: HONORABLE MAYOR
AND CITY COUNCIL

FROM: Emily Lam

SUBJECT: See Below

DATE: October 14, 2025

Approved

Date:

10/20/2025

COUNCIL DISTRICT: Citywide

SUBJECT: Agreement Between the City of San José and Manatt, Phelps & Phillips, LLP for Federal Legislative Advocacy Services

RECOMMENDATION

Adopt a resolution authorizing the City Manager, or her designee, to:

- (a) Negotiate and execute an agreement with Manatt, Phelps & Phillips, LLP to provide federal legislative advocacy services for a term retroactive from October 6, 2025 through June 30, 2030, with a maximum compensation amount not to exceed \$728,000, subject to the appropriation of funds; and
- (b) Exercise up to two one-year options to extend the agreement, with the last option ending on June 30, 2032 to provide ongoing services for an estimated annual cost of \$156,000, subject to the appropriation of funds.

SUMMARY AND OUTCOME

City Council's approval will provide the City of San José (City) a continuity in representation at the federal level to provide strategic advocacy on the City's top legislative, funding, and regulatory priorities.

BACKGROUND

The City has used Holland & Knight LLP for strategic advocacy services for federal legislative, funding, and regulatory issues since 2019. In January 2025, the City issued a Request for Proposals for federal legislative advocacy services and received one qualifying proposal to the Request for Proposals solicitation from Holland & Knight LLP. In June 2025, the City entered into a contract with Holland & Knight LLP for \$780,000

for a five-year term beginning July 2025 through June 2030, with two one-year contract options. The evaluation team was impressed by the depth of the firm's team experience with local government, a proven track record on raising the profile of its clients and delivering results, and the existing synergies with the firm's other clients, including the cities of San Francisco, Cleveland, Phoenix, San Diego, and Seattle.

The City's liaison with Holland & Knight LLP's team throughout both contracts has been Ms. Leslie Pollner, Senior Policy Advisor. Ms. Pollner has provided advisory services to the City since 2019, and has a unique and extensive understanding of the City's advocacy needs. Given the significant changes occurring with the federal government due to the new Presidential Administration, Ms. Pollner's services have been invaluable and in high demand. On September 29, 2025, the City was informed that the point of contact and primary representative for this contract, Ms. Pollner, would be departing Holland & Knight LLP on October 3, 2025 to join Manatt, Phelps & Phillips, LLP on October 6, 2025.

ANALYSIS

When the City entered into the contract with Holland & Knight LLP for strategic advisory services, one of the core reasons in selecting the firm was Ms. Leslie Pollner and her intimate knowledge of the City of San José's issues and priorities. Her expertise in federal affairs, coupled with institutional knowledge which no other consultant possesses, was determined to be critical for the City to advance its federal priorities. With Ms. Pollner departing Holland & Knight LLP, that expertise and institutional knowledge no longer exists. As a result, Holland & Knight LLP is no longer able to meet the requirements specified in the current contract. In order to continue with Ms. Pollner's representation, the City would need to enter into a contract with Manatt, Phelps & Phillips, LLC.

Ms. Pollner's unique experience was gained over the past six years as the City's federal legislative advocate. In addition to weekly meetings with the City Manager's Office of Administration, Policy, and Intergovernmental Relations, Ms. Pollner has presented to the City Council on an annual basis, provided issue-specific briefings to the City Council and departments, and represented the City in meetings with federal agencies and at national conferences. Ms. Pollner has built relationships with the City's four Congressional offices and is well versed in the City's projects and priorities, including advocating on pending legislation such as Surface Transportation Reauthorization and Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act reauthorization.

The City currently has \$6.5 million pending in Congressional Directed Spending (earmarks) in the draft Fiscal Year 2026 appropriations bills. Additionally, the City has tens of millions of dollars in federal discretionary and formula funding that is currently at

risk due to negotiations on contract terms and conditions as a result of the new Presidential Administration.

Ms. Pollner's exclusive experience and qualifications are necessary for the City to continue effective federal advocacy services and protect the City's existing and potential federal funding. Due to the ongoing uncertainty at the federal level through rapidly changing priorities and policies and the federal government shutdown that commenced on October 1, 2025, the City seeks to maintain continuity and preserve institutional knowledge by retaining Ms. Pollner's advisory services through contracting with Manatt, Phelps & Phillips, LLP.

EVALUATION AND FOLLOW-UP

The Administration will monitor and evaluate the performance of the federal advocacy services contract. At the end of the contract term, the Administration will conduct a Request for Proposals process for federal legislative advocacy services.

COST SUMMARY/IMPLICATIONS

The annual cost for this contract is \$156,000 and funding has been included in the City Manager's Office Non-Personal/Equipment appropriation in the various funds listed in the Budget Reference Table below. If the City Manager, or her designee, exercises the two, one-year options, the estimated cost would remain the same per year, subject to the appropriation of funds.

BUDGET REFERENCE

The following table identifies the fund and appropriations to fund the contract recommended as part of this memorandum.

Fund #	Appn. #	Appropriation Name	Total Appn.	Amount for Contract	2025-2026 Proposed Operating Budget Page*	Last Budget Action (Date, Ord. No.)
001	0112	City Manager's Office Non-Personal/Equipment	\$3,709,710	\$90,730	406	6/17/2025 31230
346	0112	City Manager's Office Non-Personal/Equipment	\$18,375	\$17,800	906	6/17/2025 31230
513	0112	City Manager's Office Non-Personal/Equipment	\$18,375	\$17,800	941	6/17/2025 31230
523	0112	City Manager's Office Non-Personal/Equipment	\$24,500	\$23,740	848	6/17/2025 31230
541	0112	City Manager's Office Non-Personal/Equipment	\$6,125	\$5,930	944	6/17/2025 31230

* The 2025-2026 Adopted Operating Budget was approved on June 10, 2025 and adopted on June 17, 2025 by the City Council.

COORDINATION

The Administration coordinated this memorandum with the City Attorney's Office and City Manager's Budget Office.

PUBLIC OUTREACH

This memorandum will be posted on the City's Council Agenda website for the November 4, 2025 City Council meeting.

COMMISSION RECOMMENDATION AND INPUT

No commission recommendation or input is associated with this action.

CEQA

Not a Project, File No. PP17-010, City Organizational and Administrative Activities resulting in no changes to the physical environment.

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PUBLIC SUBSIDY REPORTING

This item does not include a public subsidy as defined in section 53083 or 53083.1 of the California Government Code or the City's Open Government Resolution.



EMILY LAM

Director, City Manager's Office of
Administration, Policy, and
Intergovernmental Relations

For questions, please contact Jessica Lowry, Senior Executive Analyst, Open Government Manager, City Manager's Office of Administration, Policy, and Intergovernmental Relations, at jessica.lowry@sanjoseca.gov.