



## SUMMARY REPORT

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**Agenda Date:** 9/22/2020

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**To:** Sonoma County Agricultural Preservation and Open Space Board of Directors  
**Department or Agency Name(s):** Sonoma County Agricultural Preservation and Open Space District  
**Staff Name and Phone Number:** Karen Gaffney, 565-7344  
**Vote Requirement:** Majority  
**Supervisory District(s):** Countywide

**Title:**

Legislative Services Consulting Contract - R Marcus Government Strategies

**Recommended Action:**

Authorize the General Manager of the Sonoma County Agricultural Preservation and Open Space District to enter into a three-year agreement, not to exceed \$189,626.76, with R Marcus Government Strategies for consulting services related to legislative advocacy and funding development.

**Executive Summary:**

The Sonoma County Agricultural Preservation and Open Space District seeks to continue its legislative program by entering into a Professional Services Agreement with R Marcus Government Strategies for work related to environmental and land conservation policy, funding, legislative research, and strategic support on issues that affect the agency's mission.

**Discussion:**

The Sonoma County Agricultural Preservation and Open Space District (Ag + Open Space) seeks to continue its legislative program by entering into a Professional Services Agreement with R Marcus Government Strategies for work related to environmental and land conservation policy, funding, legislative research, and strategic support on issues that affect the Ag + Open Space's mission. These include, but are not limited to:

- Securing and leveraging state funding for Ag + Open Space projects and programs by:
  - ☐ Developing and maintaining state partnerships for conservation funding.
  - ☐ Obtaining land acquisition, conservation planning, and stewardship funding,
  - ☐ Influencing potential upcoming bonds and implementing legislation to include agricultural and natural resource conservation.
- Actively participating in Sonoma County and California Climate Change Programs, with a focus on:
  - ☐ Implementation of A.B. 32 scoping plan and investment plan for cap and trade revenues (e.g., land conservation funding via auction revenues).
  - ☐ Climate adaptation and extreme event resiliency funding and demonstration projects focused on natural and agricultural lands (e.g., a green infrastructure approach to climate and extreme event resiliency).
  - ☐ Local government innovation programs, in close collaboration with Sonoma Water, Regional Climate Protection Authority (R.C.P.A.), Sonoma County Transportation Authority (S.C.T.A.) and

Sonoma County Regional Parks on projects related to land conservation, climate action, and extreme event resiliency.

- Securing reliable state and regional funding for protection and stewardship of park and open space lands in Sonoma County by:
  - Supporting legislation that provides funding for land acquisition (easement and fee) and land stewardship.
  - Supporting state funding for integrated operations and management of state, regional, and local park systems and open space lands.
- Developing and implementing state policy recommendations resulting from Ag + Open Space-led and other conservation initiatives (e.g., Vital Lands Initiative, Climate Action through Conservation, Healthy Lands & Healthy Economies).
- Creating and supporting new financial and legal incentives for conservation of agricultural and open space lands (i.e. greenhouse gas emissions reductions, climate change and extreme event resiliency benefits).

Ag + Open Space does not have the capacity to conduct this work in-house as it requires experienced representation at the State level and regular contact with State agencies and legislative committees. The Ag + Open Space State legislative platform will continue to be coordinated with and included in the County's legislative platform, and because of the specialized nature of the work focused on conservation issues, is expected to substantially complement and leverage the County legislative platform. Ag + Open Space will continue to coordinate closely with other County agencies to ensure complementary agendas and efficient use of resources.

All work under this Agreement will be initiated by Ag + Open Space staff through the Conservation Planning program. Specific details of each work assignment will be determined during contract initiation and regularly updated and approved in writing as new legislation and funding opportunities arise.

Ag + Open Space is requesting Board approval for an agreement not to exceed \$189,626.76 for a three-year term.

The legislative objectives listed above are consistent with previous Board direction and Board approved documents, including the Ag + Open Space Vital Lands Initiative (anticipated acceptance Fall 2020), Three Year Work Plan (2012-2015), Strategic Plan, Fee Lands Strategy and Acquisition Plan.

### **Competitive Selection Process**

Ag + Open Space conducted a Request for Proposal (RFP) process in November 2019 to identify and screen

qualified contractors for the work described above, consistent with County procurement practice. The RFP was distributed to 977 individuals and businesses, and advertised on the Ag + Open Space and County Purchasing websites. Seven candidates submitted proposals. A committee comprised of internal Ag + Open Space staff and legislative staff from Sonoma Water and the County of Sonoma independently evaluated and ranked all proposals according to pre-established criteria, and selected the top ranked candidates for interviews. Four firms were interviewed and R Marcus Government Strategies was selected. This candidate submitted a professional and responsive proposal that clearly addressed the needs of Ag + Open Space, provided documented relevant experience, and thoughtfully responded to all the elements described in the RFP.

### **Background: R Marcus Government Strategies**

R Marcus Government Strategies has specialized capacity related to land conservation organizations such as the Sonoma County Agricultural Preservation and Open Space District, and has represented entities including the American Farmland Trust, the Carbon Cycle Institute, Food and Water Watch, and the California Climate and Agriculture Network. Principal Rebecca Marcus has over 20 years of experience in state and national politics, and has developed the necessary institutional knowledge and established relationships to effectively advance clients' interests. She is known by many in the State Capitol and other forums as a technical expert, an effective negotiator, and a pragmatic problem solver.

As a Chief of Staff for 13 years in the California State Assembly for several distinguished legislators including Assembly members Mark Stone, Mike Feuer and Johan Klehs, Rebecca Marcus has successfully advanced legislation across a diverse array of policy areas. As a result, over 100 of these Members' bills became law ranging from landmark green chemistry legislation to a transformative transportation tax for Los Angeles County. Ms. Marcus also served as a policy expert in many industry areas, working directly with the Governor's office, Assembly and Senate leadership, and other key decision makers on key policy and budget matters.

### **Prior Board Actions:**

January 24, 2017: Board Action No. 1, Authorize the General Manager of Ag + Open Space to execute a professional services agreement with Conservation Strategy Group, LLC (CSG) for the total amount of \$121,500 for a period of two calendar years.

February 11, 2014: Board Action No. 7, Authorize the General Manager of Ag + Open Space to execute a professional services agreement with Conservation Strategy Group, LLC (CSG) for a total amount of \$180,000 for a period of three years.

October 16, 2012: Board Action No. 4, Authorize the General Manager of Ag + Open Space to execute a one year agreement with Conservation Strategy Group, LLC (CSG) for \$60,000 to continue state legislative advocacy services for the period of October 16, 2012 through September 30, 2013.

January 24, 2012: Board Action No. 7, Approve and authorize General Manager of Ag + Open Space to sign the Assignment and Consent Agreement, consenting to assignment between John McCaull and Conservation

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Strategy Group, LLC (CSG).

September 27, 2011: Board Action No. 4, Authorize the General Manager of AG + Open Space to execute a second contract amendment between Ag + Open Space and the Law Offices of John McCaull that adds \$60,000 to the contract for a contract total of \$205,000 for State legislative advocacy services on behalf of Ag + Open Space through September 30, 2012.

**FISCAL SUMMARY**

<b>Expenditures</b>	<b>FY 20-21 Adopted</b>	<b>FY 21-22 Projected</b>	<b>FY 22-23 Projected</b>	<b>FY 23-24 Projected</b>
Budgeted Expenses	\$45,900.00	\$62,727.00	\$64,608.84	\$16,390.92
Additional Appropriation Requested				
<b>Total Expenditures</b>	\$45,900.00	\$62,727.00	\$64,608.84	\$16,390.92
<b>Funding Sources</b>				
General Fund/WA GF				
State/Federal				
Fees/Other	\$45,900.00	\$62,727.00	\$64,608.84	\$16,390.92
Use of Fund Balance				
Contingencies				
<b>Total Sources</b>	\$45,900.00	\$62,727.00	\$64,608.84	\$16,390.92

**Narrative Explanation of Fiscal Impacts:**

This amount is appropriated in the FY20-21 budget, and will be incorporated in the projected years' budgets.

<b>Staffing Impacts:</b>			
<b>Position Title (Payroll Classification)</b>	<b>Monthly Salary Range (A-I Step)</b>	<b>Additions (Number)</b>	<b>Deletions (Number)</b>

**Narrative Explanation of Staffing Impacts (If Required):**

**Attachments:**

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**Related Items “On File” with the Clerk of the Board:**

1. Agreement with R Marcus Government Strategies