

City of Coral Gables City Commission Meeting
Agenda Item I-2
August 29, 2017
City Commission Chambers
405 Biltmore Way, Coral Gables, FL

City Commission

Mayor Raul Valdes-Fauli
Vice Mayor Pat Keon
Commissioner Vince Lago
Commissioner Frank Quesada
Commissioner Michael Mena

City Staff

City Manager, Cathy Swanson-Rivenbark
Assistant City Manager, Peter Iglesias
City Attorney, Craig E. Leen
Deputy City Attorney, Miriam Ramos
City Clerk, Walter J. Foeman
Deputy City Clerk, Billy Urquia
Finance Director, Diana Gomez
Government Affairs Manager, Naomi Levi-Garcia

Public Speaker(s)

Ronald Book
Nelson Diaz
Fausto Gomez
Joseph Salzverg
Genaro “Chip” Iglesias

Agenda Item I-2 [0:00:00 p.m.]

A Resolution accepting the recommendation of the Chief Procurement Officer to award the Legislative Consulting Services contract to Southern Strategy Group of Miami, LLC, with Ronald L. Book, P.A., the top-ranked proposer, in an estimated

City Commission Meeting
August 29, 2017

Agenda Item I-2 – Resolution accepting the recommendation of the Chief Procurement Officer to award the Legislative Consulting Services contract to Southern Strategy Group of Miami, LLC, with Ronald L. Book, P.A., the top-ranked proposer, in an estimated annual amount of \$72,000, for a Period of two years with options to renew for two additional one year periods.

annual amount of \$72,000, not to exceed the budgeted available funds, for a period of two (2) years with options to renew for two (2) additional one (1) year periods exercisable at the option of the City Manager, pursuant to Section 2-828 of the Procurement Code entitled "Contract Award" and Request for Proposals (RFP) 2017.05.PK; should negotiations fail with the top-ranked proposer, negotiations shall commence with the next ranked proposer until an agreement and contract amount acceptable to the City has been reached.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Okay, next item we'll have, Item I-2, resolution accepting the recommendation of the Chief Procurement Officer regarding the Legislative Consulting Services.

Finance Director Gomez: Good afternoon. The purpose of this RFP was to solicit proposals for Legislative Consulting Services from qualified, experienced and licensed firms or individuals specializing in state, federal and regional legislative lobbying services. The timing to this RFP allows the City to have a new contract in place for the 2018 legislative session, including requisite time for planning and preparation. Ten proposals were received in response to the Legislative Consulting RFP. The evaluation committee convened to value the proposals and shortlisted the firms to three. And, they reconvened for oral presentations and questions and answer -- and a question and answer session with the three shortlisted firms. The evaluation committee ranked Southern Strategy Group of Miami with Ronald L. Book, PA as the top-ranked firm and recommends approval of award.

City Manager Swanson-Rivenbark: And Mr. Mayor, if I may. The evaluation committee was Naomi Levi-Garcia, Government Affairs Manager from our office, Javier Betancourt, who had done Tallahassee lobbying and Downtown Development Authority, Miriam Ramos, Deputy City Attorney, Richard Kuper, who was the League of Cities executive director, and Joe Roscoe, who is the Intergovernmental Relations Director for Miami-Dade County. And we have the top-ranked here to make a presentation, if the Commission would entertain. And we also have many members of the evaluation committee, if you'd like. I deliberately took myself out of this

process from the very beginning. We recognized that the lobbying contract is a difficult and high-pressure contract, and I felt it was better for me to stay out of it rather than be involved in the evaluation. So, Procurement has taken the lead in terms of soliciting responses. And the evaluation committee, which most of them are here, are available to answer whatever questions. And, then I understand the top-ranked firm is here for a brief presentation, if the Commission is able.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Alright. Do you have anything to say? I mean -- yes, sir. Identify yourself and...

Ronald Book: If I could. Mr. Mayor, members of the Commission, Madam Manager, Mr. City Attorney, and Mr. Clerk, thank you. For the record, my name is Ron Book, of Ronald L. Book, PA, 18851 Northeast 29th Avenue, Suite 1010, Aventura, Florida, as well as 104 West Jefferson Street, in Tallahassee. I'm joined today by two of the lobbyists from my firm, both Kelly Mallette and Ron Brown, and of course, Nelson Diaz, from Southern Strategies. Mayor, members of the Commission, we are extremely proud to be in front of you. We're extremely proud to have had the opportunity to jointly propose to represent you and your citizens and the taxpayers of your community. We don't often get a chance to joint bid. What you have in front of you are two of the top five ranked firms every time a ranking comes out in Tallahassee. These aren't self-made rankings. These are rankings that are done by the media. They are done based on successes. They're based on volume of business. They're based on a lot of characteristics that they do. It is rare that any local government gets an opportunity to get two A-rated firms for the price of one. What it assures you, Mayor, Commissioners, is that no matter what, you will not only be aggressively represented -- and you know, I've had a question asked about some of the other local governments we represent. Mayor, Commissioners, and specifically, to the lawyers on the Commission, as well as your City Attorney, I run my practice as a law firm. All we do is governmental affairs work, and that is so that we can stand here in front of folks like you and tell you that we are bound by the code of professional responsibility. We are bond by all of the edicts in that code. It includes carrying malpractice coverage. We have never been sued.

But it, -- we wouldn't have applied to represent you if we did not believe we could do so aggressively, effectively and without conflict. So, that's first of all. Second of all, the value of having two top-ranked firms represent you at the same time for the same price is that in the remote chance that there is a conflict, you have one or the other of the firms who stands in place of the other. It occasionally happens. It doesn't happen very often. But, it will occasionally occur where you've got something. We were quizzed, Mayor, Commissioners, by your selection committee. We were quizzed aggressively by your selection committee on our other client representations. In fact, Mayor and Commissioners, we got a call after the process was done. Someone had raised a question, because we are lead for 7-Elevens from, if you will, the Treasure Coast down to Key West, from the east coast to the west coast. There are assignments that get sent to other firms we are engaged in. A question was raised about our 7-Eleven representation. A, we do not represent a 7-Eleven in the geographic boundaries of the City of Coral Gables. And if a 7-Eleven calls us for a representation of one of their existing stores or any store and it is not okay with the City, we will pass on the representation and they will bring somebody else in. We have been clear and unequivocal about that. We also said to your staff that called about that that should there be an issue and you want us to intervene with 7-Eleven, we are prepared to do that. But, we are not going to take somebody that conflicts with our representation of the City. We take our representation seriously. I've been doing local government work for a really long time. I haven't missed a regular session with the Legislature in 44 years. I have not missed a special session in 44 years. I take what we do seriously. I continue to do what I do for a living, Commissioners, Mayor, because I love what I do. Because I get up every day and there's something that someone calls us about that no one else has ever done. We do that. That's what we do. I worked for a Governor. I worked for a Governor for four years, from 1978 to 1982. I was special counsel in Cabinet Legislative Affairs. I was an acting chief of staff for a period of time. Ladies and gentleman, I spent that four years learning the budget process. You bring us in to be parochial and selfish on your behalf, and I've said this to Richard Kuper, who was on the selection committee. You know what, there's a reason you pay dues to the League of Cities. It's so that on global issues, issues of -- that affect hundreds of cities across the state, that's what the League's job is. Our job is to support. Our job is to

support their agenda, but our job is to take the priorities you lay out for our two firms, that we work with you in a proactive way. It is our job to represent those issues aggressively and to be supportive of those (INAUDIBLE). And I laugh look, red-light cameras, that's an issue that without the outside lobbyists representing cities, would have never passed. You have issues related to CRAs. You have issues that are affecting local governments like never before on issues of home rule, on issues of taking away your ability to do the things that you were set up under Home Rule Charter powers to do; they are taking away. You have never been threatened - in the 44 years that I'm doing what I do, local governments have never been under more scrutiny than they are now. And, you don't have to take my word for it. Simply look at the issues you spoke about this morning. You spoke about homestead exemption. You spoke about Clerk of the Courts issues, Commissioner Quesada, about the fairness and the unfairness of it. And, while that's not a pure local government issue, it's a partial local government issue. It may not be intruding on Home Rule powers, but it still affects what happens at home in local communities. You want to talk about issues that the City Attorney raised, which, you know, using the small cell issue from the telecommunications world, you want to talk about plastic bags, you want to talk about minimum wage, but the fact of the matter is, the fight on homestead exemption, the fight on CRAs, the fight, if you will -- and I think Commissioner Lago raised the question, Mayor and Commissioners, related to medical cannabis. I've spent five years understanding the issue. I know what the issue is. Our advice to our local governments last January was adopt ordinances, don't put long-term moratoriums in place unless you plan to ban it, but do it preemptively before the Legislature, if you will, looks at the issue of preemption. So, you know what they did? What they did was what I call -- and to the folks in the room, I apologize, but it's the best way to describe it. It's a bastardized form of preemption. Because let's face what they did. They told you, you can ban MMTCs in your cities. You can ban them in your counties. You can ban them. But if you don't ban them and you provide any level of regulation, you no longer have control of your destiny. You can't limit how many. And Mr. City Attorney, you know the deal. You not only can't set a number if you allow them, but you can't treat them differently than you treat a local Walgreen's or a CVS, or for that matter, a Publix Supermarket that has a pharmacy. You can't change the zoning. And Mayor, I listened

to your conversation and the comments you made on the School District issue. I would simply say to you cities and counties have never been treated in -- I don't want to use the word disrespectful toward what you were referring to this morning when you were talking about the presentation that was made, but if you respect local governments and you respect the doctrine of home rule and if you respect the edict of what is espoused from a policy perspective less government. Well, less government means you don't reach in from the state level down to cities and counties and tell them the what, where, when. And, I know that an issue relating to school funding was raised. I am happy to talk about 7069. I am happy to talk about public school funding, charter school funding. We represent two school districts in the state. We're happy to cover that. I simply want you to know that we are proud to be standing in front of you as the recommended firm. I believe that if not all of your selection committee supported us at the top of the ranking, but certainly, 99 percent did, if 100 percent didn't. And we just look forward to having the opportunity to serve your needs, to meet the goals that you look at. And I again reiterate, I spent the bulk of those 44 years in the appropriations process. I won't tell you we win everything, but I will tell you we get more than our fair share out of the process. So, thank you.

Nelson Diaz: What he said. I did want to say just one thing. I want to congratulate the selection committee and the City Manager, and the City, really, on putting together a selection committee that wasn't just a group of people, it was a group of people who really knew the process in Tallahassee. It's one thing to review an RFP response on paper and see something that looks nice and sounds nice. It's another thing to really know what you're reading is accurate and what you're reading is true, and to know who has juice in Tallahassee and what can happen and what - and how the process works in Tallahassee. And you guys really selected a group of people who all knew how the process works up there and were able to go through those RFP responses well. So, congratulations on that and congratulations to the selection committee.

Commissioner Quesada: So, I'll start.

Mr. Diaz: (INAUDIBLE) answer any questions.

Commissioner Quesada: You know -- and you probably don't realize this. I don't think we've ever actually met, but I attended a class from Kay Sorenson when I first got elected, and you spoke. I think it was maybe in Fort Lauderdale or Hollywood, you know, the Good Government initiative for newly elected officials. So, that was great and you came and you spoke. And obviously, you're very well-known. And Nelson, I mean, I know you a little bit. I don't know you that well. So, here's my biggest issue. I have two issues going on in my mind. Number one is wholly related to you guys, the fact that I feel like Fausto's done a good job for us. He has. He's the only experience I've had with lobbyists representing the City. And, every time we've needed something, in my opinion, I feel like he's been able to achieve that -- achieve those goals. So, I'm -- you know, I -- we've had issues with our pension in our system. When I first got elected -- it's kind of crazy, but I'm the most senior one here. We had some serious pension issues, and he was able to work with the State Legislature to make a few minor revisions that really only helped us, and he was able to achieve that. But really, my biggest concern -- and I need to hear a response from you and it helps me a little bit. I didn't realize you were an attorney and the ethical rules that you have to live up to, which the attorneys up here understand that. Here's my biggest problem -- and you can change my mind on this, but here's where I'm stuck. Home Rule, the Mayor's comments at the beginning today, you know, what I -- as I was -- before you guys came up and I was just Googling your client list and just seeing what would pop up, who you guys represent, we have been very strong when it comes to polystyrene. We've been very strong when it comes to plastic bags. You know, I credit Commissioner Lago on that. I believe, Mr. Book, you represent the Associated Industries of Florida, which has been contrary to the plastic bags. Is that -- that's what I saw on the Internet. I don't know if that's true or not. I'm asking you. My concern is -- so, that's point one. The second one is, we have issues with signage in the City and with our Zoning Code. And the issue with the School Board that we were discussing earlier today -- and then I came across an article that you guys rep -- that Nelson, you represented Sunshine Gas issues with the zoning. And again, it's pure hearsay. I've read it on -- I don't know if it was blogs or substantiated news sources. Those are kind of concerns that are in the back of my mind. If you're going to help me get to a point that -- you

have to help me overcome that, because I see us as being very aggressive on certain points. With the School Board, we were talking today of suing the School Board today, which is a very drastic measure that I don't think many municipalities would have the gumption to do. But we see these problems and we want to take them on because we think they're important for our community and so we do it. So, I'm afraid that if you guys are with one client representing saying, hey, a municipality should not have control over certain aspects, and then you represent us in the same breath, it's almost an issue of -- you know, the litigators up here will say I can't go and argue, you know, X position and then go argue Y position for another client in another place. Help me -- help resolve that concern for me.

Mr. Book: Great -- and Mr. Mayor, if I can, through you. Thank you. First of all, on Associated Industries, if you go back, if you look historically, we have not represented Associated Industries in over a decade, maybe a decade...

Commissioner Quesada: Okay.

Mr. Book: And a half.

Commissioner Quesada: Alright, so that's...

Mr. Book: We got hired this year on a one-piece issue that had nothing to do with plastic bags. We would have declined the representation if it dealt with plastic bags. In fact, you had a conversation about 35 or 40 minutes ago about water issues. We got brought in on a single, small focused water-related issue, which was consistent with the comments made here. We are extremely sensitive to water issues. We are aggressive on water issues. And in the spirit of disclosure, quite honestly, I avoided a lot of issues in that arena, because my daughter was chair of the Senate Substantive Committee that was shepherding all that water stuff on behalf of the Senate President through the process, so I avoided that. But they brought us in on a small targeted piece, and that was all -- and the -- frankly, the fee agreement is extremely clear that that

was all we were taking, because we did not want to buy issues of conflict on other things that they have in their myriad stable of issues and lobbyists that are registered on their behalf.

Commissioner Quesada: Thank you. Here's another one, FPL. FPL, we are always at odds with, with the powerlines. And we feel -- I won't speak for everyone, but I feel that we lost at the legislative level. I feel like we got beat up -- well, really, at the executive level is really where it was. Do you represent FPL?

Mr. Book: I do, I do. But again...

Commissioner Quesada: Is that -- now, here's the part that I'm having trouble with is you represent a lot of municipalities.

Mr. Book: That's correct.

Commissioner Quesada: So, we're not unique in these positions that we take. I'm sure FPL has tension with every municipality.

Mr. Book: We belong to the cities...

Commissioner Quesada: So how do you deal with that?

Mr. Book: We belong to the cities and the counties on all issues where there is a conflict in our representation of utility companies, period, end of story. It's worked that way...

Commissioner Quesada: So, how does that work?

Mr. Book: Over ten years.

Commissioner Quesada: How does that work?

Mr. Book: That's the understanding we have with them on their representation of them versus our representation of the local government. We belong to the cities.

Commissioner Quesada: What if it's a bigger issue, like Amendment 4 that came up a few years ago? Was it two or three years ago?

Mr. Book: You're referring to the solar one?

Commissioner Quesada: Yeah, the solar.

Mr. Book: We were not a party or a player in the issue. That's not what we're hired to do.

Commissioner Quesada: Okay.

Commissioner Lago: But I mean, again...

Mr. Book: (INAUDIBLE)...

Commissioner Lago: But if you are -- Mayor, if I may. But if you are representing FPL -- and again, everybody understood through Amendment 4 who was the main culprit behind that, you know, pushing the opposition of it. They were spending close to \$30 million basically, you know, pushing information out there that was misleading and that, you know, basically confused as many people as possible. So, I agree with Commissioner Quesada. Listen, I have the utmost respect for both of you. I think we have a great group of individuals to choose from. My biggest concern is I want somebody who's going to go to Tallahassee and fight for us. I want somebody who's not going to be conflicted out. I want somebody who's going to have the best interest of the City of Coral Gables -- you know, and I have to give a lot of trust to staff on this issue

because, again, I'm not dealing with lobbyists on a day-to-day basis. I've been to Tallahassee, I think, maybe two times, and I've never dealt with, you know, legislators in that format. And I know things are done a little bit differently outside of the Sunshine over there in Tallahassee. So, you know, it's a little bit concerning when you talk about major players, like what Commissioner Quesada was saying about FPL, about 7-Eleven. I don't want to see the person that we go with have to be constantly back and forth in regards to whether there's going to be a conflict or not. All I can tell you, Commissioner, Mayor, through you, if I can.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Please, please.

Mr. Book: All I can say to you, Commissioner, is records speak for themselves, and I haven't had a conflict in a local government representation. My local government clients, they're a significant part of our representation. Twenty-five years ago when nobody represented cities or counties, we were out there representing -- and nobody represented cities and counties. We were out there on behalf of cities and counties. I think reputations precede us in the business. I'm going to say it again to -- our job is to go there and fight for your selfish parochial interests, period. Our job is to support the League's agenda, the small cell stuff, if you will, is a League issue. The CRA issues were League issues. Red-light cameras were the League issues. Our job was to support. Homestead exemption, to me, was different. While it was the League-owned interest and issue, we talked to every one of our local governments and any local government that took a formal position opposed, we made darn certain that we were in the faces of every lawmaker for those communities that were opposed. I would say to you -- and I did not know the impact for Coral Gables. I do now. I believe it was cited at \$1.4 million of impact, and of course, that's recurring. But what I will tell you is that a substantial number of cities and counties, starting with Miami-Dade, took a hands-off neutral position on the issue during the session. As we got down to the end, and we were looking for runs, and we were looking for anything we could, Madam Manager, that would tell people what it was going to cost you in your budget. We had over, over, over, over, well over half of our local governments didn't want to participate, didn't want to give us that data. It was tough getting it. It was tough. I mean, we

finally got some runs out of the Dade League, but it was tough getting it out of the Broward League, I can tell you that. So, it was tough getting it out of the St. Lucie folks. It was tough getting it out of the Brevard County folks. It was tough getting it out of Pinellas, because of where they were. But our job is to go with your selfish agenda, which, by and large, while bags were being issues tomorrow or the day after or yesterday, your issues are basically appropriations and money issues. It doesn't mean that you're not looking for other things. I would say to you -- and I'll go back a long time. I think you've got to live off of today and tomorrow, not on yesterday, but I'm going to use a yesterday example of where we make a difference. And, I'll go back to the City of Miami -- and most of you are too young to remember -- the Mayor will well remember as a banker. When the City of Miami got into its financial crisis, they didn't send us back -- Mr. Clerk, you will recall very well from your city days. They didn't send us to go get them a bailout. They said, come sit down with us and let's plot out a strategy. And so, the parking surcharge that you still pay in Miami was our creation. It's something we went and got proposed and we went -- and the bailout of the City came on the backs of the people in the City, in the geographic boundaries. And by the way, we didn't pass the parking surcharge once. We told Representative Lacasa, we told Senator Gutman at the time, don't put a date in there, which ended the financial emergency. You're going to make it a local bill. No, no, no, we know what we're doing. Well, the Courts threw it out. You will remember that. Passed it a second time. We said, you don't want to do that amendment. It's going to create a problem. They threw it out a second time. Third time around, we got it all right. We had it right at the beginning. Sometimes lawmakers don't always follow what you want them to follow. It's our job to keep pushing it up the road. And I will tell you, you don't have to take my word for it. Ask the people that were brought in to oversee the City. Go up to Broward County and see -- Bertha Henry, the County administrator. She will tell you because she was the numbers person that was assigned to the City back then, you will recall. It was what made the difference. It's what got them out of it. Our job is to work with you to do that. And you know what, Mr. Gomez is a good lobbyist. You're not wrong. But he didn't survive the process. He didn't come out of your process. You've had a process. There's a reason you bid the process, and there's a reason that you have a ranking system. Right, wrong, good, bad or indifferent,

we've competed and we were your top-ranked firm. It doesn't mean that he didn't do a good job in his representation of your city. But we are good at what we do. We're real good at what we do. Reputations precede all of us and simply pick up the phone and call any one of our clients. I suspect that your selection committee, your due diligence folks, did exactly that. Reputations are what they are. And we are aggressive at what we do, and we're good at what we do. And there's a reason we're considered the hardest working folks at the state capital, not just me, but the other members of my team and the other members of his firm. There's a reason we turn the lights on in the morning and turn them off at night. It doesn't mean that someone else -- any one of the firms that you had is good at what they do. You had great firms that came to compete. We came to the top of your selection process. And I will simply say to you, if you're not happy with us, fire us. Fire us. We'll stand on our own two feet. If you don't like the approach you get from us, if you don't like the end results, fire us. Fire us. I can tell you this, that I went to a place -- I went to a city about a week and a half -- about two weeks ago. A check presentation was made. They were not clients of ours. That city that got a million and a half dollar appropriation had never before gotten an appropriation. They were represented by the same lobbying firm for two decades. I'd rather give you your money back, Commissioner, than take you -- take your taxpayers' money and not bring you back what you sent us to the Capital to do. And, it doesn't mean we will get it all done every year, but I can tell you, we'll leave it on the marble floors at the Capital. We will leave every bit of energy, every bit of our sweat, every bit of our aggressive approach to representing you on the marble floor. It won't be coming back here. I've got to come back here. I've got to live here for 305 days until I can go back and fix what I didn't get done and what we didn't get done collectively. And you're getting the resources of two top firms. You didn't get that from anybody else that bid. They got it from us, two...

Mr. Diaz: If I could jump in. The conflicts issue has existed for the City of Coral Gables in the past. You guys have had conflicts in the past. In this situation, if he's got a conflict that for some reason he can't work, we exist and vice versa. You guys have had conflicts in the past. The difference is, now you have two firms where you could balance that conflict off of one to the

other. So, I really want to throw that out there. And I want to reiterate on the successes. The successes that we've had are in the tens of millions of dollars in appropriations that have survived the gubernatorial veto for our clients. Some people say, you represent too many cities. Well, they're all extremely happy and they're all getting a lot more money than they otherwise would or that they had in the past. The City of Miami asked us for a million dollars to get them a water project. A million dollars is a pretty sizable water project. We got them one point one. These are the kinds of things that we shoot for, we overshoot, and we try to work harder than everybody else, stay up later than everybody else and wake up earlier than everybody else, and that's exactly what we do. And this is why, you know, when Ron called me and said, let's team up on this, I said, by all means. I've never seen two A-rated firms get together and go after a contract, never. I've never seen that. In fact, I've seen the opposite. They go after each other. But we decided, let's do it. I mean, this is a great city. We love Coral Gables. And I think that together we can really knock it out of the park and I think we will. And I know that given the opportunity, you guys would be more than happy -- and like Ron said, throw us out the day after session ends if you don't -- if you're not happy. I've got no problem with that. We'll shred our contract. I'll happily let you -- you know, release the City from it.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Thank you.

Mr. Book: Ask Miami Gardens if they're happy with the \$18 million they got for two tunnels and two bridges this year when people said that kind of thing couldn't get done. Or go ask the folks in North Miami, where we created an economic opportunity by taking what otherwise was collapsed in 2014, which were enterprise zones, take a look at what we've stuck into the tax package that allows the maps that were repealed in 2015 to continue to live and allow cities and counties to create economic opportunity. Or go over to North Miami and ask them what it means to the project that they're building on the old (INAUDIBLE) property.

Commissioner Mena: I mean, I think the two for one nature of this really can't be understated. I think that's -- you know, these are two firms that standing alone would be worthy candidates in

this type of RFP and we're getting both of them together. I think that's important. You know, I've seen people today -- we have an incredible response to this. I've seen people from pretty much every firm -- some of you are still here -- who bid in this process that are excellent. I think we understand that. But you know...

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: (INAUDIBLE)

Commissioner Mena: We're lucky to have this type of recommendation.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Why don't we hear other presenters and then, you know, we can discuss it among ourselves?

Vice Mayor Keon: Yeah. Could I -- since you've never teamed up before, what made you team up this time?

Mr. Diaz: Well, we -- Ron and I have worked together on other clients that cities are -- for example, the City of -- the County of -- Broward County has hired individually separate lobbyists, not as part of a team, and I've gotten a chance to work with Ron. I've actually -- when I worked in the Legislature more than a few years ago, I got to know Ron really well. And there is, you know -- Ron is almost a mentor to me. I saw how hard he works, how he wakes up -- he's always the first one in the Capital and the last one to leave. He's there after legislators leave. And I always kind of wanted to live up to that. And so, I've worked with Ron over the last few years and there's just no better team. That's why we decided to do it together.

Vice Mayor Keon: But this is the only -- is this the only -- this is the only municipality, though, that you have actually formally teamed up?

Mr. Book: Bid together on.

Mr. Diaz: Yes.

Vice Mayor Keon: Or bid together.

Commissioner Lago: I'll answer that question for you; because it's prestigious to represent the City of Coral Gables.

Mr. Diaz: One hundred percent.

Vice Mayor Keon: Well, you know...

Commissioner Lago: I mean, again...

Vice Mayor Keon: I mean, you're both -- you know, you are both top...

Commissioner Lago: It is the truth.

Vice Mayor Keon: Tier lobbying firms. You have done well by your communities. I think the only thing, you know -- one of the things with lobbyists that I would like to see as few as possible is conflicts, you know. And, my concern is that because of the number of conflicts you may potentially have, it's easier to team up together, so you have someone to move over things to. But, it also maybe speaks to the number of conflicts that may possibly be there, which I have a concern about. Not about your reputations or your quality or anything else. It really deals with the number of conflicts you have. And we all know that, you know, when you sit in -- you're up there in Tallahassee and you are looking for appropriations for each one of your cities, when you represent so many of us, there are trade-offs as to what you can get for who and who you can get for what and whatever else, because there is a limited number -- amount of resources. So, I think it's -- you know, that issue of conflicts is a concern of mine, and maybe it's because you are so good that you have that many conflicts.

Mr. Book: Let me attempt to take a shot at it. First of all, it matters not what firm or firms you have representing you -- and I apologize, Mayor, through you -- is it...

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: (INAUDIBLE)

Mr. Book: I apologize. Matters not which firm. All of us -- you could go through every firm that applied here, and you can take every A rated and every B rated firm. I won't get to the Cs and the Ds. But take any of the A and B and you look at their client list, you're going to find something that you will have somewhere down the road, you will have something that's a potential. The good firms are all sought after. We've all got a lot of clients. The value of us doing a joint bid -- and we don't do a lot of joint bids. We've been working by ourselves. We're -- the three of us, we do a good job by ourselves. We lead a lot of teams. We're the captain of a lot of teams. We will direct a lot of other lobbyists that work on a team, we don't do a lot of joint submissions. We have worked together on behalf of several clients over the years. We just have not jointly bid something together. The value of the two is "a", we both have the same work ethic; "b", we're both aggressive; "c", we believe you've got to have a plan for every matter; and "d", you've got resources. And, they've got a whole lot more human resources when you get into that battle, whether it's bags, or it's a CRA issue or whatever where you've got to have -- you want to dump 15 or 20 bodies on a matter, you get that with the two firms. You don't get it with me alone. Three of us may work like we're 15 or 20, and we've been accused of working like we're 15 or 20, but now you've got all of their human resources and they've got 25 or 30 bodies in their Tallahassee office that we can throw at a matter that you can't otherwise. The value is you do get the tradeoff. You can assign a matter to one or the other of the firms and do it -- and you know what. I'll use Miramar. I'll use Miramar because it's a good today example. We happened to represent White Rock Quarries on some matters. Nothing specific inside the legislative process, but Miramar had an issue they wanted to get a study done on, and I happened to share that client with another firm. I share them with the Reuben Group. The city took and had their assignments on the rock stuff, went specifically to the Reuben Group. Their

appropriations on that went with them. But you know what? You think that's all they got? No, because we went out and we got them a fire station on top of it this year, \$750,000 for a fire station. And by the way, fire stations were fashionable in the last cycle. We sort of set a trend. You know, you go after something, and then, all of a sudden, everybody else feels they can go do it. So, we go out and move to something else. We try to set the curve. We try to lead in a direction that creates new opportunities. And I don't know if that fully answers it for you, Commissioner, but it doesn't matter which of our firms. All firms that are really good at what we do are going to have some level of a potential down the road.

Mr. Diaz: And I will say this. In twelve years of lobbying, I've never left a legislative session without a budget item -- at least one, if not more -- budget items for each governmental entity. It's never happened. I've never left session without something in the budget for a governmental entity. And I've never had a client -- municipal client fire us. I mean, that just -- that speaks to the level of service that they get, the successes that -- and the happiness of those clients that I've never had -- I can't speak for Mr. Book, but at least in my -- in terms of me, I've never had a municipal client fire us. They've always been very happy with our level of success.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Thank you very much. Let's see if there's somebody else, and then I'll call you back if you want to -- anybody else want to talk? Okay, the public session is closed, and let's discuss it among the city.

Vice Mayor Keon: I think...

Commissioner Lago: Fausto wants to...

Vice Mayor Keon: Fausto wants to talk.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Well, you told me no. Come on.

Vice Mayor Keon: He raised his hand, yeah.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: I thought you said no.

Vice Mayor Keon: No. I think he was raising his hand yes.

Fausto Gomez: Mr. Mayor, Madam Vice Mayor, Commissioners, Manager, et al, thank you so much for allowing me to speak in front of you today. Let me start by saying that Mr. Book, Mr. Nelson -- I mean, Ronnie, Nelson and Chip are all friends of mine. They're all very, very good lobbyists. You will be very well served if they represent you. They are good. I am much better. And let me tell you the reasons why. Mr. Book was eloquent in his presentation, was animated in his presentation. And frankly, you saw why he's so well respected and he's so well. But he doesn't understand Coral Gables. And why do I say that? Because it focused exclusively on appropriations, and Coral Gables has significant policy issues today and it had significant policy issues in the past that have had to be addressed. Let me give you some examples of my performance on your behalf since 2012. If you look at appropriations alone, I have gathered in the state budget over \$36 million for the City of Coral Gables. That averages more than \$2 million per session. The rate of return, which Mr. Book absolutely talked about and that is necessary to effectively represent a city, is over 3,000 percent to 1. I challenge that rate of return to any lobbyist that comes in front of you. I challenge getting you 36 -- over \$36 million. I have the exact number, as a matter of fact, which averages \$2 million a year. But, let's talk about the policy issues that are important to Coral Gables today and have been important to Coral Gables in the past. When I was retained, the first thing that the then-Commission told us and the Manager told us is we have a problem because, essentially, we funded the police and fire communications equipment --, which is an issue that was up today with the new building -- with money from the general revenue and we need to pay ourselves back. And, they went to the Attorney General's office and the Attorney General said you cannot pay yourself back. So, what did we do? We crafted a very innovative solution that is every year language in the implementing bill of the budget in order for you to pay yourself back. And since 2012, every

single year, that innovative solution has gotten you over \$100,000 per year. In addition to that, we talked about the fire department. There was a proposal advanced by the Palm Beach County Fire Union, okay, for Miami-Dade County in order to eliminate the independence of the fire departments, and there were five; Coral Gables, Miami Beach, Hialeah, Key Biscayne and the City of Miami. I represent three of those cities. And, the proposal was either the citizens of those cities would pay a 1 percent surtax for the privilege of maintaining their independent fire department, or the County was going to take over; the independent fire departments would be part of the County structure. So, what did we do? The County had not taken a position on the issue. Again, it was being advanced by the Palm Beach County Fire Union. So, we crafted a very innovative solution that said no county could have more than two permanent surtaxes. It only applied to two counties, Miami-Dade and Lafayette. Your fire department is independent today, because of that language that we crafted. That was a policy issue. Let's talk about the Chapter 175/185 that Commissioner Quesada talked about. The pension program for the City of Coral Gables was established by the Florida Legislature in 1927. There are only a number of other cities that have it. That's Jacksonville, City of Miami, City of Miami Beach and Coral Gables. By us being -- going back to and amending the statute from 1927, okay, and changing the date by four days, we were now exempt from the state requirements on police and fire pensions and that was what led, essentially, to your being able to negotiate with police and fire and started addressing your pension issues. And let's talk about your trolley funding. Your trolley funding essentially is from the half-penny sales tax that the County imposed. When new municipalities were established which I represent, like Cutler Bay and Pinecrest, the County proposed to take the money from the legacy municipalities for the half-penny rather than take it from the unincorporated UMMA area. We fought that. We won. You got your trolley money. Just look at the bridge from the University of Miami. I got that money for you. That's part of the \$36 million that I've gotten for you. And finally, let's talk about the policy issues that are facing you today. The worst thing that's happening in Tallahassee today is preemption. As a matter of fact, there's a national study that says Florida is one of the five top states for legislative preemption. Believe it or not, state number one is North Carolina, state number four is Florida. So, preemption is the issue. And what do we have in preemption for Coral Gables? We have

plastic bags. We have Styrofoam. We have the Air BnB issue. We have local minimum wage. We have the sign ordinance that Commissioner Quesada raised on the legislation by Sunshine Distributors. You have the paint ordinance. You have preemption after preemption. So, let's talk a little bit about the plastic bag issue, if I can, Mr. Mayor, because I know that was an issue.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Okay.

Mr. Gomez: I have no conflicts. I have never represented nor do I currently represent nor will I ever represent anybody that has a conflict with the City of Coral Gables, period. As a matter of fact, I resigned from Florida Power & Light, resigned, in order for me not to have a conflict with the cities that I represent in this corridor, which are South Miami, Pinecrest, Coral Gables and Cutler Bay. In order not to have a conflict, I gave up a client. It isn't a question of sending clients back and forth. It is a question of giving up money and giving up a client, because I value my municipal representations to that extent. Mr. Mayor, you asked me a question with regards to plastic bags. Let me tell you my history of plastic bags. I was the first lobbyist and the only lobbyist that took the first plastic bag legislation to Tallahassee during the 2013 legislative session. I did that on behalf of Cutler Bay and the mayor of Cutler Bay at that time. As a matter of fact, on November 24, 2009, by an email, which I have a copy here, I sent an email to then-Mayor and then-Manager of the City of Coral Gables and I asked them specifically what interest did they have in the plastic bag issue and the response was, frankly, none. Notwithstanding that, in -- during the 2013 legislative session, the Mayor of Cutler Bay sought legislation which was introduced. I got Senator Bullard and Representative Kionne McGhee to file bills and the bill number was Senate Bill 722 and House Bill 957, and that was the first plastic bag bill filed in the state of Florida, okay. In preparation for that, on June 27, 2012, I reached out to the Sierra Club, Clean Water Action, Audubon Society, Nature Conservancy and other environmental groups saying what interest do you have in plastic bags. Let's get together to develop a joint legislative strategy and approach. The response from them, again -- and I have the emails here -- is we don't think the Legislature is going to take action on that, and so, therefore, we don't believe it's an issue of import. That was on June 27, 2012. I also reached out on June 27, 2012 so the

Mayor of Cutler Bay would go to the Florida League of Cities and put the plastic bag issue on their legislative agenda. The Florida League of Cities rejected putting plastic bags on their legislative agenda in preparation for the 2013 legislative session. So, 2013, it was filed; 2014, the plastic bag bill was filed again, Senate Bill 830, House Bill 1257. And for the first time, the plastic bag issue received a hearing in the Senate committee, although not a vote, it received a hearing and it was "agendaed". In 2015, again, Senator Bullard filed and we approached Representative Richardson to file the bill, 966 and 661. The bill again was heard in the Senate and it received a vote. In 2015, it was the first time -- 2015 and I had been working on this issue since 2013 and I alerted the City in 2009. I received an email from Naomi Levi communicating that Coral Gables was now in support of a pilot program to prohibit and regulate plastic bags. And obviously, in 2015 -- we filed a bill in 2016. The bill was filed and approved in the Senate committee. And 2017, after Senator Bullard is no longer in Senate, Representative Rodriguez -- I mean, Senator Rodriguez is now filing the bill. And, you saw him here this morning and he discussed how closely he works with me, as well as Representative Baez. So, let me just -- in conclusion, let me just say something. Number one, my commitment -- my sole commitment is to the City of Coral Gables. I was a 30-year resident. I have lived here. I have strong ties, familial ties, social ties and recreational ties to Coral Gables. I have no conflicts with regards to my representation of Coral Gables. It isn't I'm sending an issue here, I'm sending an issue there, number one. Number two, I am your sole point of contact. You have an issue, you call me. I have a four-member firm that includes democrats, republicans and independents. We cover the waterfront. And Mr. Mayor, you well know that when the chairman of the Senate Appropriations Committee came here, I invited you to go have dinner with him. Okay, and we discussed appropriations for Coral Gables. You also know that this last legislative session, for example, we've put in over \$7 million in transportation improvements for this city, as well as significant other funding for other cities that we represent. Waiving a \$3 million obligation for North Bay Village is one example. Getting the loans for Surfside in order to convert from septic to sewers, which I know is an issue here. My commitment is to you. I live here. I work here. I know this city intimately, and I would appreciate your consideration.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Thank you. Thank you, Fausto.

Commissioner Quesada: Haven't you also represented FPL at some point?

Mr. Gomez: As I said, I resigned from my representation of FPL simply to not have a conflict with Coral Gables, Pinecrest, South Miami and Cutler Bay with regards to the US-1 corridor.

Commissioner Quesada: Got it.

City Attorney Leen: Yes. FPL is a significant issue for us, because when we had the hearing -- the administrative hearing, at that time, you did represent FPL, so you had to recuse. And we did end up hiring a lobbyist from Akerman, so that's an important issue for all the lobbyists. If there's going to be any sort of conflict with FPL because, as you know, I had -- I went up to Tallahassee and I spoke regarding a bill related to FPL recently, which the Senator mentioned today was on hold, and so it may come up again in the next session and it's something that we're going to be opposed.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Alright, thank you very much, Fausto.

Mr. Gomez: Thank you, Mr. Mayor.

Commissioner Lago: Let me -- Mayor, if I may. I know that we have other firms here, and we're going to make a serious decision about this today. I'd like to hear from every firm that's here. I know Joe's here from Gray Robinson. Maybe they want to just give us a quick synopsis of their expertise...

Joseph Salzverg: Thank you, Commissioner.

Commissioner Lago: And their interest in becoming involved with the City.

Mr. Salzverg: Thank you, Commissioner. Thank you, Mayor, Vice Mayor, staff and Commissioners. First of all, I want none of my comments to be perceived as talking ill of any other lobbying team or any other lobbyist in this room. I've worked with almost every single lobbyist in this room, whether on an issue or against them on an issue. And I'm just going to speak to the benefits of our firm. Gray Robinson is a top five firm, just like Ronald Book, PA, just like Southern Strategy Group and several others. We are a top five firm. Our team consists of two former speakers. It consists of a former senator, a former deputy chief of staff, several agency heads, and most recently, since turning in this RFP, the immediate past chief of staff to Governor Scott, as well as the immediate past general counsel to Governor Scott, who's on the Constitutional Revision Commission, but still very much available for executive strategy and stuff like that. Local government representation is a part of our firm's DNA and has been for 40 years. To cover a couple of items, two major things. Number one is we are a heavy-hitting firm. We do (INAUDIBLE) and we have access. We have the juice. Several firms in this room have that as well. When it comes to local government representation, we do not represent FPL. We battle FPL. We actually represent the Florida Municipal Electric Association. So, when it comes to utilities, we have a municipal point of view. AT&T -- prior to being Gray Robinson, the firm Capital Insight, started by my boss, Dean Cannon, we represented AT&T. We haven't represented them in two years, because of a conflict. We didn't shy away from it. We dropped them. And I will sit here and tell you that of the small cell attachment legislation last year, five private entities that we represented by lobbyists were carved out; four of those -- I say again, four out of the five entities carved out that were represented were Gray Robinson clients. First committee, Florida Electric Association and Jacksonville Electric, carved out. Second committee in the Senate, the Villages, carved out. Third committee in the Senate, Town of Longboat Key, retained us three weeks before that committee hearing and were carved out as a coastal barrier island. We took on AT&T. We didn't torpedo their bill. We worked with them and we were able to carve out our clients' best interests. Plastic bags. We represent Target on one issue, alcohol licensing, because we're their alcohol attorneys as well. The City of West Palm Beach, Village of Islamorada, City of Key West, plastic bags is a big issue to them. So, in

closing -- and I'm here to answer any questions -- we are a top-five powerhouse firm and local government representation is part of our DNA and part of our core and will continue to be so. I invite you to bring open our representation of our clients, and I'd be happy to explore any conflict, but I don't see any there, especially with FPL.

Commissioner Lago: Can I ask you just a quick question? Do you feel your strength is in the State House or in the State Senate?

Mr. Salzverg: I feel that our strength is all over, and I'll tell you why. Our firm does a great job of bringing individuals with inside experience, whether it be former speakers who've served with a lot of the senators now, or whether it be me, who's a former committee staff on the Regulatory Affairs Committee. I know my personal relationships here in Miami-Dade County cover both, but I would say both, both the Senate and the House. But, I think what really sets us apart is our executive branch representation, the fact that we have Governor Rick Scott's first speaker who heads our government affairs practice. Then we have the chief of staff to the Governor and the former general counsel to the Governor who are a part of our team, a combined 150 years executive level experience, not even talking about legislative. And, we have 13 offices across the state. We have the home field advantage if you need to deal with a state agency, if you need to deal with the Governor's office, if you need to get past the veto pen. I think what really sets us apart from all the other firms in the room is our executive branch expertise. And by the way, we're on par legislatively with everybody else in this room. But, I think we've made a conscious effort in recent years to beef up our executive level practice for a couple reasons. One is agency work, so you don't have to deal with the Legislature. And two is, you can get \$6 million for a project...

Commissioner Lago: You get vetoed.

Mr. Salzverg: But if you get vetoed, you're done, and that's why...

Commissioner Lago: And that's -- I mean, we've had some instances where we've had to deal with...

Mr. Salzverg: And by the way, that happens across the board.

Commissioner Lago: Of course.

Mr. Salzverg: But we have a great...

Commissioner Lago: Especially in tough years, especially in tough years.

Mr. Salzverg: But we've built our team with that mindset.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Thank you, sir.

Commissioner Lago: Thank you.

Mr. Salzverg: Thank you, guys.

Vice Mayor Keon: Do you have -- excuse me, do you have a local -- where is your local office here?

Mr. Salzverg: Sorry, 333 Southeast 2nd Avenue, Suite 3200.

Vice Mayor Keon: Oh, so you're downtown?

Mr. Salzverg: Yes, ma'am. And in Tallahassee, we're 301 South Bronough Street, 5th and 6th Floor. Coincidentally, our landlords are the Florida League of Cities. We are in the same building. We coordinate with them on everything. I mean, we're right there. But I'll tell you

this, we coordinate with them on strategy and we coordinate with them on what we're going to do. But when we go in to speak to a member, we're not talking for 500 municipalities. We're speaking for the City of Coral Gables. And, the CRA issues or the telecom issues or the energy issues, not as a one size fits all, but what is specific to your city. And, that's why we don't represent the League of Cities and rather represent the individual interests.

Vice Mayor Keon: Is your -- your office here, is that just a branch of your law firm or is that -- you have lobbyists in there?

Mr. Salzverg: All...

Vice Mayor Keon: Imbedded in that firm...

Mr. Salzverg: Yes, ma'am.

Vice Mayor Keon: Or are your lobbyists in Tallahassee?

Mr. Salzverg: Yes, ma'am. So, our 13 offices are both law and lobbyists. And we actually have a 14th in Washington, D.C. We have a federal practice. Down here, I'm based down here full-time, and I split my time in Tallahassee. I spent too much time in law school up there, so I just do four months of the year up there. But our lobbyists are able to work from, whether it be legal or lobbying, any of the 13 offices. Two weeks ago, I was in Tampa. I represent the City of Tampa on (INAUDIBLE) defense and I worked out of the City of Tampa's office effectively in my lobbying practice for five days. There's no sense in having 14 offices if you can't be fluid in utilizing them for the benefit of your clients.

Vice Mayor Keon: Okay, thank you.

Mr. Salzverg: Thank you, ma'am.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Thank you.

Commissioner Lago: Mayor...

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Anybody else?

Commissioner Lago: I just wanted to get also Mr. Iglesias, out of respect for Ballard and Partners.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Sure.

Commissioner Lago: If you can maybe...

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Go ahead, sir.

Genaro "Chip" Iglesias: Mr. Mayor, Vice Mayor...

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Good afternoon.

Mr. Iglesias: Commissioners, Madam Manager. My name's Chip Iglesias, with Ballard Partners. I'm the managing partner of the Coral Gables office, offices at 2 Alhambra, Suite 102, just down the street, City Beautiful. So, we're really happy to be here. And, we're very excited and appreciate the opportunity to be part of your process. And we appreciate, you know, the committee's deliberations. Today, obviously, you consider things outside of what the committee may consider during, you know -- while they take care of, you know, their process. And so, you may look at other things outside of it. What I offer you today, if I speak less than they do, can we get the contract? Because I'll be very brief and save a little bit more time, because I know you still have some more items on your agenda. Listen, at the end of the day, I'm going to be

very brief, because I'm not going to retry this case necessarily. Everybody in this group has spoken before and has a great reputation. Obviously, they have a great track record. You will find conflicts here and there. Why? Because when you're successful, people want to hire you for your abilities. And I will -- as a top-ranked firm, you don't get there without being -- having access, being smart about your process, working hard. I mean, the issue of who works harder, it, to me, is irrelevant. Obviously, you know, your success is evident by how you're ranked and how you're viewed. So, our firm is very happy to be a part of the process. We feel we have a lot to offer this city in your representation. You know, interestingly enough, outside of a 60-day legislative session, you probably spend more time on your local issues as a whole with your annexation and the issue of your School Board issues, which was discussed here today, maybe more than what you spend in Tallahassee issues. So, sometimes, as a 33-year local government employee, somebody who has served in different positions, I understand your city issues, your municipal issues, which we carry that forward in your representation at Tallahassee. And I've served as a firefighter/paramedic, never thought that I'd rise to be a Village Manager and a Deputy Mayor for this county, and so I'm -- I came over to the dark side three years ago, and so now I'm happy to use my skillset in representing clients. But our firm and Mr. Ballard, we're very committed to part of this process. We don't chase a bunch of municipal clients. That's not what we do. We're very selective in that. And, that was stated during the committee process, because it was asked. We don't have a laundry list of municipal clients, and that's done very strategically, precisely. But Mr. Ballard being here, it is our backyard and our office is here in Coral Gables, was very committed to being a part of this process. So, we are here in the event that you consider things outside of what your committee looked at or deliberated, we're happy to be part of any additional conversation or process that you may have today. But, since the others spoke about success and what they can do, let me just say that Ballard Partners, you know, has without question the reputation, the reach on the executive side, on the legislative side, on both sides of the aisle to represent you to its fullest and be successful in what you need to do. Nothing to speak about the other firms. They're all very good. And everybody here, obviously, that has participated has done so, because they'd like to partner with a city like Coral Gables and so -- to your benefit, obviously. We felt that we did not need to partner with anyone at the time. You

know, our firm will have 20-plus employees in Tallahassee working on your behalf. Mr. Ballard assigns those employees as he sees fit to further your goals. And locally, as a local person whose boots on the ground is here and it's me, I would work as a liaison for you. So, we have the resources internally as an office, so we're small enough that we can cater to you, but we're big enough that we have the resources with people to assign folks to do what it takes during a very crazy session. And even locally, you know, my services to help you in dealing with the County, of which I've worked there three different times. I have represented two County Commissioners as their chiefs of staff and worked on this annexation issue. So, it goes back -- I used to be 6'2 and had a full head of hair back then. And so, I understand those issues, and that's what I bring to you also to work locally, so we appreciate the opportunity to be part of your process. Obviously, we weren't happy with the outcome, but not necessarily not happy with the process, just the outcome. And if we were happy then, you know, we shouldn't be here today, right? But I know that you consider things that could be outside of the committee. And if that's your desire, we're certainly willing and open. And if not, we'll be down the street and still be available to help the City in whatever we can. So, I appreciate this opportunity.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Thank you very much, sir.

Commissioner Lago: Thank you, sir.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Anybody else from any other firm? Alright, the public hearing is closed. And we'll...

Commissioner Quesada: Can we just hire everyone?

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Go ahead.

Commissioner Lago: Well, how about we just do this. How about we just split it and we hire two firms?

Vice Mayor Keon: No.

Commissioner Lago: Listen (INAUDIBLE) on the fence. We could maybe hire three firms.

Commissioner Quesada: I'm going to go back to my original comments. I think Fausto's done a great job, I really do. I pulled his last legislative end of session report that he gave to us back in June, and he's always given them to us. And I feel like every time we've ever asked for something -- the only place we ever got caught up is with the Governor is really been where it stuck, which actually when Gray Robinson was talking about the executive -- but I also assume the others have very good contacts with the executive branch as well. And that's something that popped into my mind. And you know, I think about some of the funds that we've tried to get for like the Coral Gables Museum, which I know are some of the smaller impact issues that, you know, are not the big, you know, street improvement grants and those kind of things, which are the larger number items. And I know we've been successful in those in years past. You know, we got close to \$7 million recently this past year related to street improvements that I was going through in this memorandum that, yeah, the money hasn't come in yet, but I see it's allocated and it made it all the way through. So, yeah, it's tough. Like -- in hearing these individuals speak, I see why they're some top-ranked lobbyists in the state. They convey a message very effectively. So, you know, that's my feeling. My feeling is to -- you know, I don't disagree with Commissioner Lago. I don't know if you were saying that in jest or not.

Commissioner Lago: No, I wasn't. I was being serious. I'd be in favor of splitting this. And again, if you -- just think about it. You're thinking -- we're discussing \$7 million of appropriations wins this past year, correct. We're talking about investing \$72,000, you know. If you want to really make a dent and maybe have two teams or three teams running, I don't have a problem with it. Again, why do we have to be status quo. Let's think outside the box. Let's look at the different options that we have.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Can I make a comment on that? I think it'd be extremely difficult for them to split who's going to lobby which legislature, who's going to lobby the Senate, who's going to lobby the House, who's going to lobby whatever. I think it'd be very, very difficult for them to do a good job for us by splitting.

Commissioner Lago: Well, I mean, with due respect, I disagree. I mean, we do it every day in our daily lives, I mean, when we deal with people. I have ten different projects that I'm running and I have people -- you know, ten different project managers, ten different superintendents, and I have to deal with all these people and they're in charge of getting a goal accomplished. We have weekly meetings. We have monthly meetings; every quarter, every six months, every year. So, it's -- there's a goal that's placed and we execute a plan and ensure it gets delivered. Listen, I'd rather cover my bets -- hedge my bets and make it a sound investment and see what our returns are.

Commissioner Mena: But I mean...

Commissioner Lago: I'm just saying -- yeah, I'm just putting it out there.

Commissioner Mena: But, the only thing I don't really understand about that though is the recommended team is already doing that. You have two firms, two top-five firms.

Commissioner Lago: I'll tell you exactly why.

Commissioner Mena: And the other thing I would say is, you know, the process here is important. I mean, I'm looking at the score sheet. They got -- out of five people, they got three 99s. Nobody else got a single 99, and the other two were 97s. I mean, they were head and shoulders, scoring wise, ahead of everybody else. And so, I mean, unless we're, you know, saying there was something unfair about the process or anything of that nature, you know, we're talking about splitting it now in a third direction, essentially. We only have \$72,000 or 70

something thousand dollars allocated towards this. I just don't see how you could do that. I appreciate what you're saying. It's great to have a lot of different avenues, but what I liked about this recommendation actually is that we are getting two for one.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Yeah. We're getting -- you know, nobody has to win the World Series. We can split it, I think, or have...

Commissioner Mena: I mean, are you suggesting -- I mean, allocating additional monies towards yet another?

Commissioner Lago: Yeah, I would.

Commissioner Mena: I mean, I think -- again, I think -- why not see how it goes, and if there's an issue, you can always go out and get somebody else to...

Commissioner Lago: I'm going to supplement because I'm going to be very up front with you, okay. I think Fausto has done a very good job, but I know what Ron Book and what Nelson Diaz bring to the table. I know their reputation. I know that they're a great team. Well, I don't know about them being a great team, but I know that they're great lobbyists and that their reputation precedes them. So, I'm...

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Make a motion.

Commissioner Lago: Again, I don't have a problem making a decision. That's why I'm on this dais and I've been here for four years. But if I had it my way, I'd have both of those guys -- both of those teams working for me. And if I could afford to have Gray Robinson, too, I mean, you know, that's a different story. But I mean, if I had to do it, I would -- that's what I would do.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: (INAUDIBLE)

Commissioner Lago: We're just having a discussion. I want to hear what Commissioner -- Vice Mayor Keon has to say, what you have to say, and maybe you have a difference of opinion. But by the way...

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: We're paying...

Commissioner Lago: I agree with you...

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: About one and a half times more than other cities are paying for lobbying services.

Commissioner Mena: Say that again. I'm sorry?

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: From what I see here, we're paying one and a half times more for lobbying services than what other cities are paying.

Commissioner Quesada: What do cities typically pay?

Vice Mayor Keon: They're paying lower than we are paying.

Commissioner Lago: Can we get Mr. Book or the gentleman from Gray Robinson or...

City Manager Swanson-Rivenbark: Well, our procure...

Commissioner Lago: Fausto come up?

Vice Mayor Keon: I think it's a negotiated number.

City Manager Swanson-Rivenbark: I suspect our Procurement Department...

City Attorney Leen: Wait, wait, wait. We need a -- there's a record.

City Manager Swanson-Rivenbark: Did that research.

City Attorney Leen: We're making a record of this.

City Manager Swanson-Rivenbark: And they can speak to it.

Commissioner Quesada: Oh, okay, yeah.

Mr. Book: They did, they did.

Unidentified Speaker: Let's keep it...

City Manager Swanson-Rivenbark: (INAUDIBLE) we have that information...

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: I have it here somewhere.

City Manager Swanson-Rivenbark: Okay, so we only have it on one firm. But if you'd like us to research (INAUDIBLE)...

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: We have it in references, yeah.

City Manager Swanson-Rivenbark: We're happy to do it.

Vice Mayor Keon: Well, I -- and I don't not appreciate what Fausto has done for us. So, you know, my feeling is if we want to maintain the status quo, you continue with Fausto. I do think

all of the other firms that have presented and have spoken to us today, you know, I think we are in a position to have at least two of the top-ranked lobbying firms in the state here in front of us. So, if I look at Ron Book and Florida Strategies and I look at Ballard, you know, for me, it's do I want two people or do I want one person that maybe doesn't have as much -- many conflicts or whatever, that's local and that's here in the City of Coral Gables. And if the issue is -- and I think it is a very big issue -- is that we can lobby all we want. If we don't have influence in the executive suite of the state, it doesn't -- you know, what we're appropriated doesn't hold. So -- and I'm sure that my understanding from speaking with people that know lobbyists and know lobbying, that Brian Ballard is -- has a very strong presence in the executive suite of the state, as does Ron Book. So, for me, it's whether I want one person or do I want two people. I tend to want one person. I tend to have one person. I want somebody that has fewer conflicts than anybody else because, you know, lobbying is a messy business, and there's a lot of mixing at the end. And so, I'd want somebody that has fewer things to mix.

Commissioner Quesada: It sounds like we all have a completely different opinion.

Vice Mayor Keon: So, you know -- I mean, so, that's my feeling, you know. If you're going to stay, then stay with Fausto. If we're going to move, we're going to move to someone that has more experience and more sway in the executive branches of government, is one of those top tier lobbying firms, then I would go with Ballard.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Would you like -- anybody want to make a motion?

Vice Mayor Keon: So, anybody can...

Commissioner Quesada: Well, what's your opinion?

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: My opinion is that Fausto has done a very, very good job. My opinion is that Ron Book is a wonderful, wonderful lobbyist. But I think Fausto has done a good job. I think that Fausto has done a good job and why change if he's doing a good job.

Vice Mayor Keon: So, why did we have an RFP?

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: What?

Vice Mayor Keon: So, why did we have an RFP?

Commissioner Lago: So, it seems to me there's no -- there's not enough votes to...

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: I mean, would you like -- do you want to make a motion?

Commissioner Quesada: Well, I -- okay, so while we're on this topic and being completely honest here, you know, we have gotten dinged up at the executive level. We have, in the past. I'm not saying that (INAUDIBLE)...

Vice Mayor Keon: We always get beat up at the executive level.

Commissioner Quesada: We do.

Vice Mayor Keon: I mean, that's -- you know, that is one of the things that the top tier lobbying firms tend to bring.

Commissioner Quesada: So...

Vice Mayor Keon: So...

Commissioner Quesada: Do we need to do something about that? And I'm -- I don't have a solution to it.

Commissioner Mena: It's also not a -- you know, I don't know if it was Mr. Book that made the point, but it's not a ten-year award, you know. If you think we've gotten dinged up at the executive level and you want to try something new, see if it improves that for us or not, and then revisit it if it doesn't. I mean, this is not some sort of long-term commitment, I think.

Commissioner Lago: Commissioner, what do you -- explain to me a little bit. I couldn't hear you.

Commissioner Quesada: What he was saying is (INAUDIBLE)...

Commissioner Mena: That this is not a ten-year -- we're not awarding them a contract...

Commissioner Lago: No, I know.

Commissioner Mena: For ten years.

Commissioner Lago: I just didn't hear what you were saying.

Commissioner Mena: So, if -- I wasn't here, but if, as Commissioner Quesada is saying, you've had a history in the past of getting dinged at the executive level and there's any sort of belief that the recommended firm or firms would help improve that...

Commissioner Lago: We make it to the Governor, and then we hear back that the Governor has slashed us, basically.

Commissioner Mena: Well, maybe that changes if he's dealing with both Ron Book and Southern Strategy Group, I don't know.

Vice Mayor Keon: Or Ballard.

Commissioner Mena: Or Ballard, yeah. I don't know.

Vice Mayor Keon: (INAUDIBLE) they're both top tier firms, so it's a matter of dealing with two firms or do you want to work with a single firm. That's -- I mean, that -- to me, that is an issue.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Okay. Do I hear a motion? And if not, we will table this until sometime in the future.

Commissioner Lago: You know...

Vice Mayor Keon: Well, I think -- when does the legislative session -- when do we start? When are we...

(COMMENTS MADE OFF THE RECORD)

Vice Mayor Keon: September 12. I mean, we...

Commissioner Lago: When's our next meeting?

Vice Mayor Keon: We should make a decision...

Commissioner Quesada: Yeah. We need to...

Vice Mayor Keon: By the time the...

Commissioner Quesada: Make a decision.

Vice Mayor Keon: The legislative session starts so there is somebody there that has our interest at heart.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Okay, so somebody make a motion.

Commissioner Mena: I'll make a motion to accept the recommendation from the City.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Alright.

Commissioner Lago: When is...

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Is there a second?

Commissioner Lago: When is our next Commission meeting?

Commissioner Quesada: Two weeks from today.

City Attorney Leen: Motion on the table. Is there a second?

Vice Mayor Keon: Wait, wait, wait.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Motion has been made to accept the recommendation of the City Manager. Second?

Vice Mayor Keon: I'll second it for discussion.

Unidentified Speaker: Okay.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Okay. Discuss.

Vice Mayor Keon: Is there any appetite for anyone other than Ron Book and Southern Strategy?

Commissioner Quesada: I'm sorry?

Vice Mayor Keon: Is there an appetite for anyone other than Ron Book and Southern Strategies?

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Is there what?

Commissioner Lago: Appetite.

Vice Mayor Keon: Is there an app -- is anyone interested...

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Yeah, you've heard...

Vice Mayor Keon: In anyone else?

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: That we want to keep -- some of us want to keep Fausto.

Commissioner Lago: I'll be honest with you. And I was also impressed by the comments made by the gentleman in the back from Gray Robinson.

Vice Mayor Keon: They're all good.

Commissioner Lago: Yeah.

Vice Mayor Keon: Which doesn't...

Commissioner Lago: But I mean, you're asking for my...

Vice Mayor Keon: But you got to make a decision here.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Or we can continue for one year with Fausto and then revisit this next year.

Unidentified Speaker: I don't know if that...

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Huh? We have to do something. Otherwise, we don't have a lobbyist for this legislative session.

Commissioner Lago: Why don't we just table it. The meeting -- our next Commission meeting is what, three days after session starts?

Commissioner Mena: But what are we tabling it for? I mean, we just finished saying that we're here to make decisions. I mean, this -- we've gone through...

Vice Mayor Keon: So you could be further...

Commissioner Mena: We've gone...

Vice Mayor Keon: So you could be further lobbied.

Commissioner Mena: Through a whole...

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: The motion has been made and seconded to...

Commissioner Mena: We've gone through a whole selection process. I mean, what's...

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Accept the recommendation. Will you call the roll, please?

Commissioner Mena: What is your concern with -- I guess, my question is, you know, you've seen the results of the selection committee, and I understand we're not bound by that. But I mean, are we giving that any weight because...

Vice Mayor Keon: No, they're not.

Commissioner Mena: I mean...

Commissioner Lago: Yeah. I...

Vice Mayor Keon: They're not.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Okay.

Commissioner Lago: Of course I give it some weight. I mean, there's professionals who gave a lot of their hard-earned time...

Commissioner Mena: Right.

Commissioner Lago: To be on the selection committee. But I also have faith, you know, in what Mr. -- Fausto has done for us over the last few years. But again, like I mentioned before, reiterating my same statement, I also think that Ron Book and Nelson Diaz would do a great job for us. So, at this moment right now, I'm a little torn between my decision. So, I mean, and that

-- and I think it's okay to be torn, because there's been people on this dais that have taken hours to make decisions, and I'm not a person who usually takes hours to make decisions.

Commissioner Quesada: I'm one of those.

Commissioner Lago: But -- and I'm happy you mentioned that. I'm happy you admitted it. So, the point...

Commissioner Quesada: Because you were alluding to it, so I figured I'd just come out and say it.

Commissioner Lago: So, the point is that, you know, I think I'm entitled to...

Vice Mayor Keon: Okay. Are you saying that you're not comfortable...

Commissioner Lago: I'm entitled.

Vice Mayor Keon: Voting on that motion?

Commissioner Lago: No, no, no. Listen, if you want to vote on the issue then we can vote.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Okay, let me -- will you call the roll, please on the motion to accept the recommendation of the City Manager?

Commissioner Quesada: No.

Vice Mayor Keon: No.

Commissioner Lago: No.

Commissioner Mena: Yes.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: No.

(Vote: 1-4)

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Alright, do I hear another motion?

Commissioner Quesada: So, what I have been thinking about and I haven't made up my mind on it is to see if we could do a blend. You're saying you think it's impossible. I tend to agree with Commissioner Lago. What does it hurt to try to see if we can work it out? Because it doesn't mean that those people that we blend together would want to do that, know that.

Vice Mayor Keon: I think you...

Commissioner Quesada: If it was up to me, we would have never gone out to RFP in the first place on this because, again, I think I've said my statements clearly from the beginning, because of the successes that Fausto has had on our behalf. However, I would like to see additional bolstering and support in the executive level. That's that. So, I don't...

Vice Mayor Keon: Well, then you vote for someone that you know has that support at the executive level. I mean, it's either that...

Commissioner Quesada: Yeah, but...

Vice Mayor Keon: You vote for someone that you believe has that support at the executive level...

Commissioner Quesada: But that's not...

Vice Mayor Keon: Or you don't.

Commissioner Quesada: But here's the thing. That's not to say he hasn't had success getting through the executive level. It's just obviously some things get vetoed. And, it's almost like we're making this decision in a vacuum, because we don't know the experience of the other municipalities when they get to that point when they're successful in the legislative side, but at the executive level, they don't -- we don't know what those numbers are. Are we having a similar experience to everyone else? Are we better than everyone else or are we worse than everyone else? I don't know the answer to that.

Vice Mayor Keon: Would you like to continue this item until the first meeting of September...

Commissioner Quesada: Well, the problem for that...

Vice Mayor Keon: So that you can ask?

Commissioner Quesada: You know what the problem with that is? Unless someone from the selection committee has that information or you guys went through that information, we are putting ourselves at a disadvantage going into that meeting. You know, I voted no to the recommendation not because I don't think they're competent...

Commissioner Lago: Hundred percent.

Commissioner Quesada: I think they're incredibly competent. That was -- it was in jest, but at the same time, I agree. I wish we could have -- we could use all of them, which makes it so hard. I think we're all struggling with this because we want all of them.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Can I make a motion, then, that we accept Fausto's -- no, no. The first thing is to reject the recommendations of the committee. Is that correct?

City Attorney Leen: You would do two things.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Alright, go ahead.

City Attorney Leen: So, if you've given up -- if you want to appoint Fausto, what you would do is you would reject all bids and appoint Fausto Gomez. That requires a four-fifths vote.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Okay.

City Attorney Leen: Now, if you just want to reject all bids and ask the Manager to come back or you want to create a new process, you can do that by a three-fifths vote, but that would not appoint anyone specifically.

Vice Mayor Keon: Well, in what period of time is this? For a term -- or for one term or for...

Commissioner Lago: What is it...

Vice Mayor Keon: Five years?

Commissioner Lago: Let me ask you a question.

Vice Mayor Keon: What is the -- what are we doing?

Commissioner Lago: Just going off what Frank -- what Commissioner Quesada is saying, what does it hurt if it's a split. The City of Miami does it. The County does it. A lot of other municipalities do it. It's still a one-year trial run. Let's see what happens, and we'll come and we'll revisit it in a year. We're splitting dollars here. I mean, guys, if this is about true blue representation...

Vice Mayor Keon: Two years?

Commissioner Lago: If this is about true blue representation at the state level and you're asking for executive support, you've got Ron Book. I mean, what else do you want?

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Can we ask...

Commissioner Lago: I mean, I'm telling you...

Commissioner Mena: I don't want anything else.

Commissioner Lago: If you want to have the best, let's pay for the best, right? I mean, willing to split it.

Commissioner Mena: But you could -- I mean, I could say what you just said about accepting the recommendation and seeing how it goes for a year, and then if we think we need somebody else, we can add them on.

Commissioner Quesada: Yeah, but...

Commissioner Mena: Without spending the money this year on a third...

Commissioner Quesada: But the difference -- yeah, but there's a big difference there.

Commissioner Lago: There's a big difference.

Commissioner Quesada: The big -- the flaw in your argument is that we've had the experience already.

Commissioner Lago: We have.

Commissioner Quesada: The things that we have actively pushed for, it had been achieved by Fausto, which is the big difference.

Commissioner Mena: But, I don't have any reason to believe that the recommended firm...

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Can I make a suggest...

Commissioner Mena: Couldn't do just the same job.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: I'd like to make a motion that we reject the recommendation of the panel and that we appoint Fausto Gomez as our lobbyist. Is there a second?

Commissioner Quesada: Second.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Alright. Will you call the...

City Attorney Leen: Mr. Clerk, because this involves a waiver of the Procurement Code, it will require a four-fifths vote.

Commissioner Quesada: Oh, it's not two votes, just one?

City Attorney Leen: It's just one.

Commissioner Quesada: Okay.

Vice Mayor Keon: No.

Commissioner Lago: No.

Commissioner Mena: No.

Commissioner Quesada: Yes.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Yes.

(Vote: 2-3)

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Alright.

Commissioner Quesada: So, now what?

Commissioner Lago: Let's split it.

City Attorney Leen: Well, another thing that you could do, based on what you've said, is you can reject all bids and ask the Manager to take your input and come back with a recommendation. You can also provide guidance.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Alright. I make that motion.

Commissioner Lago: Alright, I'll make a motion. I'll make a motion.

Commissioner Quesada: No. I'm sorry. I thought you were going to take the gavel.

Commissioner Lago: No, no, no. No, no. I was just fixing it.

Vice Mayor Keon: How do you (INAUDIBLE).

Commissioner Quesada: He really wants it.

Commissioner Lago: Hold on, hold on. You want to be the Vice Mayor again?

Commissioner Quesada: No, no, no.

Commissioner Lago: Pass it over there, Commissioner -- Vice Mayor Keon.

Vice Mayor Keon: Thank you very much.

Commissioner Lago: I make the motion to let's split the baby and we'll let the Manager deal with the issues of the finances between Fausto Gomez and Ron Book and Nelson Diaz.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Let me ask a question then. Let me ask you a question. Is that acceptable to you?

Commissioner Lago: If it's acceptable, if it's acceptable.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Yeah, but if it isn't (INAUDIBLE)...

Commissioner Quesada: I think they've got to think about it.

Commissioner Lago: Think about it.

Commissioner Quesada: I think they've got to discuss it. Yeah, I don't...

Vice Mayor Keon: Now you have three firms representing you.

Unidentified Speaker: It's okay.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Is it acceptable to you guys?

Vice Mayor Keon: Now you have three firms.

Mr. Book: Mayor, if I could, through you, the Commissioners, the Attorney and the Manager, I think it will be up to what discussion/negotiation we have with the Manager to see whether we can make it work. We will prepare -- we gave you a bid, Mayor...

Commissioner Quesada: Yeah.

Mr. Book: And we are splitting our fee 50/50. We don't have any room to move in our dollars and cents, so it will simply depend on what we're able to negotiate or work through with the Manager before I can really tell you that we're prepared to -- we'll work with you.

Commissioner Lago: Mr. Book, with all due respect -- and I have the utmost respect for both of you -- I'm asking for an increase in fees. I would never ask you...

Mr. Book: Thank you, thank you.

Commissioner Lago: I would never ask for that to happen.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Fausto, would that be acceptable to you?

Mr. Gomez: Mr. Mayor, let me give you some history, which I think is important here. In 2002, when the City of Coral Gables hired a lobbyist the last time, the budget was \$120,000, okay, and you hired two firms.

Vice Mayor Keon: Fifteen years ago.

Mr. Gomez: You hired my firm and you hired Floridian Partners, okay. So -- and the budget was \$120,000 at that time, okay. Now, we are 15 years later and the budget now is \$75,000. So, I am absolutely willing to work with my friends, Ron Book and Nelson Diaz, but I do think, you know, the compensation is an issue. Let me just say something else. If you're looking at the

level of resources that Coral Gables receives on an annual basis, if you're looking at the policy direction that Coral Gables seeks on an annual basis, I think not increasing the fee perhaps to a level similar to what you had in 2002 is being sort of pennywise and pound foolish.

Commissioner Lago: May I ask you a quick question, through the Mayor, please? I know I have a motion on the floor. What are -- give me on averages, the fees that other municipalities similar to us are paying, or larger municipalities.

Mr. Book: If I could, Mr. Mayor, through...

Commissioner Lago: Which are public record. I don't want you to disclose...

Mr. Book: They are. They're all public record. Mayor, through you, to Commissioner Lago. Your staff actually did a full analysis.

Commissioner Lago: Okay.

Mr. Book: Our fees -- and they're all publicly disclosed. Our fees run a range of 60 to 150, 175, in some cases. It varies. I mean, I'll use the City of Tallahassee. I believe we're compensated at \$90,000 a year in Tallahassee. North Miami/North Miami Beach are in the 60 to 70 a year range, a single firm. That's why what we were saying to you was you were getting two for the price of, in effect, one, which we would get from others. I would not disagree with what Fausto has said. I mean, many local governments have a significantly more robust budget than what you've got. And Commissioner, I did hear what you said, and I appreciate that. So, as long as we can work the...

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Thank you.

Mr. Book: Dollars out, we'll figure it out.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Alright. So, there's a motion on the floor.

City Attorney Leen: We should wait until -- respectfully, Mr. Mayor --, because this might require a four-fifths vote. What exactly are you moving?

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: We are rejecting the recommendation and the motion is for us to authorize the City Manager to negotiate with the two firms or the three firms that we're talking about to reach an agreement.

City Attorney Leen: And, that could lead to an increase in total fees.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Right.

Commissioner Lago: And, what I'm going to do next is -- through the Mayor, if I may. I'm going to ask the City Manager to do an extensive study and analysis of neighboring municipalities and cities and seeing what they're compensating their lobbying teams to make sure that we fall in line with the value that we may be getting today.

Commissioner Quesada: You know...

City Attorney Leen: Because we're changing...

Commissioner Lago: (INAUDIBLE) make sense?

City Attorney Leen: You know, here. Here's what I would like to say, but I do -- I would like the Vice Mayor here as well because if you're going to be changing the amount of fees, it's better to waive the Procurement Code as part of the vote.

Commissioner Lago: That's fine.

City Attorney Leen: But you would be basically doing -- you would be following -- it's in the Procurement Code under -- let me get the Code for the record, just so everyone knows exactly what we're doing. Pardon me. It's 2-768(h)(2)(e), reject all proposals and instruct the City Manager to enter into competitive negotiations with individuals or firms possessing the ability to perform such services and obtain information from said individuals or firms relating to experience, qualifications and the proposed cost or fee for said services and make a recommendation to the City Commission. That would include a waiver of the Procurement Code, which we should try first to see if there's four votes. If not, then you would just do that, and that would require three votes. But Mr. Mayor, let me get the Vice Mayor.

Commissioner Lago: Okay, you want to say something, Mr. Gomez?

Mr. Gomez: Mr. Mayor, I just want -- to his point, I just wanted to make sure that in your deliberations and your final vote that you actually took that into account, because your RFP had certain figures in there and discussed about what you needed to keep it at. So, if you change those figures, you might be changing what the RFP stipulated...

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Right, right.

Mr. Gomez: And so, just take that into account in your...

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Thank you.

City Manager Swanson-Rivenbark: Sir, I think that's why they're saying...

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Yep.

City Manager Swanson-Rivenbark: Waiving the Procurement Code.

Mr. Gomez: Understood.

City Manager Swanson-Rivenbark: It's at the discretion of the Commission...

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Okay. There's a motion on the floor. Is there a second? Let's finish this. Is there a second? Second?

Commissioner Quesada: I'm sorry. I didn't hear all of it. Repeat it, please.

Commissioner Lago: Basically, it's that you're going to give your salary at work, and you're going to give it so that we could fund -- so we can fund the other part of the...

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Alright. There is a motion on the floor.

Commissioner Lago: There's a motion on the floor to split the baby between both...

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Waive the Procurement Code.

Commissioner Lago: Waive the Procurement Code, have the Manager review all neighboring municipalities in reference to what they're paying their lobbying teams. That's basically the gist of it.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Is there a second? There's no second? It dies for lack of a second. Okay, I would like to continue this discussion until next time.

Unidentified Speaker: Okay.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: We will not have a lobbyist when the session starts, and we have been unable to reach a conclusion. Let's take a five-minute break.

Commissioner Lago: Okay.

(AT THIS TIME, THE COMMISSION TOOK A BREAK FROM THE DISCUSSION.)

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: We have a quorum. Okay, procedurally, what we have to do -- from a procedural point of view, we have to reject all of the recommendations in order to allow the City Manager discretion to negotiate. And I would like a motion to do that in order to allow us to accomplish what we set out to do.

Vice Mayor Keon: To negotiate what?

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: To negotiate something to bring before us, to negotiate the three agreements, to reject the request for proposals in order to reach a new agreement.

Vice Mayor Keon: Okay. I'll make that motion.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Will you second?

Commissioner Lago: But shouldn't we have -- but shouldn't we wait for Commissioner Mena and Commissioner Quesada to be here?

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Okay, here they are. Alright, a motion has been made to reject the recommendations of the -- to reject all of the proposals in order to allow the City Manager discretion to negotiate an agreement along the lines that we have discussed in this. A motion has been made by Vice Mayor. We need a second, and then we'll take a vote.

City Attorney Leen: Can I add something to that, Mr. Mayor, if it's okay?

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Please.

City Attorney Leen: Because you've rejected the first recommended applicant already, to just table the matter leaves the status quo and really limits the options of the City Manager or the City to go forward. So, what I would recommend -- and I don't usually make recommendations, but I don't think tabling achieves anything except to have the same thing come before you next time. What I would recommend is, at the very least, you reject all bids and instruct the City Manager to enter into negotiations consistent with what I said before and to come back to you with alternatives for your adoption.

Commissioner Mena: Can I ask you a question, though?

City Attorney Leen: Yes.

Commissioner Mena: If the goal of some of my colleagues is to add another -- I would call it a third firm, but another one of the people who bid, what stops us from accepting the recommendation and then...

Vice Mayor Keon: And then adding to it?

Commissioner Mena: So, we don't have to waive procurement or do any of what you're describing and then separately negotiate with somebody that we want to add on?

Vice Mayor Keon: I have no desire...

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Because that is not consistent with the RFP that was put out to which they responded.

Commissioner Mena: Why not?

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Because it isn't. The RFP said -- you know, the RFP...

Vice Mayor Keon: In a procedural matter, you have to reject all of this to move to another one.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: You have to reject all and...

City Attorney Leen: Well, our...

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Then the City Manager will...

City Attorney Leen: Our Code allows the rejection of all bids, and it allows you to direct the City Manager to enter into negotiations with anyone who's susceptible to accepting the award. It allows that expressly. And then they...

Finance Director Gomez: (INAUDIBLE).

City Attorney Leen: Can bring -- I don't interpret it that way, Diana. That you could -- she has a range of options and could bring it back to you and give you a list of alternatives.

City Manager Swanson-Rivenbark: I'm sorry, sir. With respect, if I can just hear...

City Attorney Leen: Sure.

City Manager Swanson-Rivenbark: What the Chief Procurement Officer...

City Attorney Leen: I understand that.

City Manager Swanson-Rivenbark: Is recommending. Perhaps, you and she can reach some sort of agreement.

Finance Director Gomez: So, the RFP did allow for more than one firm to be selected. It's not what the evaluation committee recommended, at the end of the day, but it -- the RFP did allow for multiple firms to be selected.

City Attorney Leen: Under the same...

Finance Director Gomez: Under the RFP.

City Attorney Leen: But so, with an additional expense...

Finance Director Gomez: That...

City Attorney Leen: Beyond what was provided?

Finance Director Gomez: It was just whatever is -- the amount -- there was a suggested budget, because that is what we have budgeted for, but it does allow for an amount that would be budgeted. So, it didn't give a finite amount. It's just there was a suggested amount.

City Attorney Leen: And, you feel comfortable with them doing that?

Finance Director Gomez: In terms of -- the RFP did allow for additional...

City Attorney Leen: Okay.

Finance Director Gomez: More than one firm to -- firm to be selected. It's not what the evaluation committee came back with, but...

City Attorney Leen: Okay.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Yeah, but we would be rejecting the suggestion of the evaluation committee.

Finance Director Gomez: Right. And so, what was suggested -- what I thought I heard was that accept the recommendation, but modify the recommendation to include an additional firm.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Can we do that?

Finance Director Gomez: That's what I thought that I heard.

Commissioner Mena: That's my question. Is if we can do it that way to avoid...

City Attorney Leen: Well, if the Chief Procurement Officer is comfortable with that, you could add the firm, but you would still -- but my understanding of your view is...

Finance Director Gomez: It would modify the recommendation.

City Attorney Leen: That you will -- but remember, they want to pick potentially the number six or seven applicant.

Finance Director Gomez: Again, it's the recommendation of the evaluation committee. It's what they decide that the Commission, I believe...

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: And that's what we're rejecting

Finance Director Gomez: Has discretion to do whatever.

City Attorney Leen: Well, I would need to hear the motion.

Commissioner Mena: And so, why can't we table that at that point?

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: No. Let's not table anything. Come on.

Commissioner Mena: That's what you had recommended.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: We'll have the same discuss -- no, no. I'm not recommending anything. I'm recommending that we reject the -- all of the bids and allow the City Manager to reach an agreement based on what we have suggested, that is Ron Book, Southern Strategies and Fausto Gomez and bring it to us at the next Commission meeting. That's what I'm suggesting.

Commissioner Mena: But are you...

City Attorney Leen: They're bringing alternatives.

Vice Mayor Keon: I'm prepared to hire a lobbyist, a lobbyist, or a lobbying group and not this partnership out of loyalties or whatever else.

Commissioner Quesada: I'm going to make a motion.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Alright.

Commissioner Quesada: Did you make that motion?

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Go ahead.

Commissioner Quesada: If not, I'm going to make a motion. I'm going to make two motions. The first one is, is to exactly what you said, put aside the recommendations given to us by staff. Because if we're going to do any kind of mixing of anything or do anything at all, that's the first step in the process. So, my motion now is to reject all bids.

Vice Mayor Keon: That was the motion. Okay, I'll second.

Commissioner Quesada: But...

Vice Mayor Keon: That was the motion.

Commissioner Quesada: Got it.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Will you call the roll, please?

Commissioner Quesada: But if there's going to be anything further, it'll be subsequent.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Will you call the roll?

Commissioner Quesada: So, I second your motion.

Vice Mayor Keon: Okay.

Commissioner Mena: But...

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Will you call the roll, please?

Vice Mayor Keon: Then you'll make a new motion.

Commissioner Mena: But everyone in here believes that...

Commissioner Lago: But can we have a discussion on the issue?

Commissioner Mena: Yeah, can we have a discussion?

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Come on.

Commissioner Mena: It's...

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: We have rejected -- we voted against Ron Book...

Vice Mayor Keon: What do you want to have a discussion on?

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: We voted against Fausto.

Vice Mayor Keon: Yeah, we can do whatever you want.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: We voted against everybody.

Vice Mayor Keon: I think the thing was if we're not going to accept what the...

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: (INAUDIBLE) not going to accept...

Vice Mayor Keon: Selection committee has said...

Commissioner Lago: But hold on, hold on.

Vice Mayor Keon: Which we can't get to...

Commissioner Lago: I'll make...

Vice Mayor Keon: Then we'll reject it all...

Commissioner Lago: I'll make it real easy, okay. Every item that I have on the agenda today, scratch it. I don't want to discuss it. Move it to the next Commission meeting.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: (INAUDIBLE)

Commissioner Lago: Does that help everybody? No, no. It was just to buy a little time.

Vice Mayor Keon: Absolutely.

Commissioner Lago: Let's discuss this. Let's discuss this. The only one that I want to discuss is the metal roofs, please for a few moments.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: I think we have -- we have discussed this for an hour and a half.

City Manager Swanson-Rivenbark: Excuse me.

Commissioner Lago: The poor people have been here all day.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: And, we have reached...

City Manager Swanson-Rivenbark: So, Smart Parking, we're going to tell them to go?

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Consensus...

Commissioner Lago: Yes, yes.

City Attorney Leen: But if you...

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: We have...

City Attorney Leen: But Mr. Mayor, if you don't reject all bids, then...

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: No, no, no.

City Attorney Leen: You can't explore all options.

Commissioner Mena: I don't think we've reached consensus. I disagree with that.

City Attorney Leen: You can always...

Vice Mayor Keon: I'm asking for the legal opinion...

City Attorney Leen: By the way, even if you reject all bids...

Vice Mayor Keon: Of the City Attorney.

City Attorney Leen: Even if you reject all bids, you can always award it to anyone you'd like. You have that power. You...

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: We're going to award it to the three firms...

City Attorney Leen: Ultimately decide who the lobbyist is...

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: That we've been talking about.

City Attorney Leen: Or split it up.

Commissioner Mena: But, I don't think everybody agrees on that.

Vice Mayor Keon: Or is it that you're rejecting the recommendation of the Procurement Department; is that what it is?

City Attorney Leen: It's rejecting -- what happened -- because otherwise, you subject the City to potential suit. I mean, I don't know how else to say it because the issue is that we still -- we have not waived the Procurement Code. We haven't rejected all bids, and yet, we're providing it to someone who wasn't the recommendation of the Procurement Department.

Commissioner Mena: And yet, everybody -- if I'm hearing everybody right, is in agreement that even if we do this modified approach with another firm, that they -- if I hear everybody right -- still have the recommended firm in that group.

Unidentified Speaker: Yes.

Commissioner Mena: So, again...

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: (INAUDIBLE).

Commissioner Mena: I don't understand why we're not accepting the recommendation...

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: We have changed...

Commissioner Mena: And, then additionally hiring another firm. That's what I'm not understanding here, because I haven't heard anybody say they don't think that this firm should be in the group.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: The RFP said we will choose one firm and we are rejecting that one firm.

Commissioner Mena: It didn't say that, though.

Finance Director Gomez: I'm sorry. The RFP did not say we were selecting only one firm.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Okay, I (INAUDIBLE)...

Finance Director Gomez: The RFP said that...

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: This is ridiculous.

Finance Director Gomez: We can select as many firms as we need. However, the evaluation committee made the recommendation to the City Manager to select the one firm, which is two firms together, but it's one -- as one. So, the RFP itself, the document itself allows for the possibility of multiple firms being selected. It was just not the recommendation of the...

City Attorney Leen: Yes.

Finance Director Gomez: Evaluation committee that way.

City Attorney Leen: But, Mr. Mayor...

Finance Director Gomez: Is that clear?

City Attorney Leen: The issue would be then you would pick the number one and the number two. I mean, the issue is you don't want to pick the number two -- one and two. You want to pick number one and number six, I think.

Commissioner Mena: So, I don't think that we're in agreement on that.

City Attorney Leen: Well, there may not be a consensus. The other thing to consider is that maybe the Commission should just make the decision -- I mean, can I say one other thing, Mr. Mayor? Maybe based on the fact that you don't all agree that the Commission should just make the decision who the lobbyist, so you reject all bids, you do a new process, where they apply to you. You hold a hearing. You let each of them speak, and then you pick the lobbyist, by a three-fifths vote.

Vice Mayor Keon: I think they all spoke to us.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Either, whatever.

Vice Mayor Keon: They all spoke to us. You know -- I don't know. I know that my responsibility is to the residents of the city. I know that I believe, based on the information that has been provided to us, I have an obligation to provide the very best lobbying team available to us to lobby on behalf of this city for the benefit of the residents of this city. Now, I am -- and I agree with you, yes, you know, we are grateful for those that have helped us. We will be grateful going forward to those who helped us. But we look at -- we should never have gone out for an RFP if there was no need for an RFP. I mean, we should have directed the Manager in the very beginning to not go out for an RFP, because we were satisfied with the lobbyist that we have. I think that lobbyist is still -- is that contract still in -- has it expired or is it still in place?

City Manager Swanson-Rivenbark: No. This -- it's in its last renewal period.

Vice Mayor Keon: It's in its last renewal period. And how long does it renew for?

City Manager Swanson-Rivenbark: The -- December.

Vice Mayor Keon: Through December?

City Manager Swanson-Rivenbark: Yes. I don't know if it's the beginning of December or the end of December, but I'm hearing December.

Unidentified Speaker: So...

City Manager Swanson-Rivenbark: But, what we wanted to do was have -- because the contract had -- with all of the options had -- will be exhausted, we wanted to get a lobbyist identified moving forward for this session. And in the evaluation process, the evaluation committee presented their rank. They interviewed what they believed as the top three and ranked those top three.

Vice Mayor Keon: And the top three are?

City Manager Swanson-Rivenbark: The top three are...

Vice Mayor Keon: Ronald Book.

City Manager Swanson-Rivenbark: Ron Book/Southern Strategies...

Vice Mayor Keon: Strategies.

City Manager Swanson-Rivenbark: Becker Poliakoff and Ballard.

Vice Mayor Keon: And Ballard, okay.

Commissioner Quesada: So, procedurally, I'm confused. I'll be honest with you. What the motion I was going to make was going to be throw out all the bids, and then I was -- speaking with Gray Robinson, they were willing to do it at a reduced rate. I was impressed by their contacts and connections and their exposure to the executive branch, which I've indicated I've felt we've been dinged up in the past and I was going to make a follow-up motion saying that -- to combine the two of them for a fee of 94 or \$96,000, whatever that math works out to, and then do that. That was...

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Who's the two of them?

Commissioner Quesada: Fausto and then Gray Robinson, to focus on the executive branch.

Vice Mayor Keon: I think that if you feel that you need someone else that has some influence at the executive branch, you should hire that person.

Commissioner Mena: So, you're going...

Commissioner Quesada: But my...

Commissioner Mena: You don't want any of the top three.

Commissioner Quesada: Correct.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Can we reject all bids and then take the second one first?

City Manager Swanson-Rivenbark: I'm sorry, Mayor?

Commissioner Quesada: Well, I think we have a motion and second on rejecting all bids.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Okay. Will you call the roll, please?

Vice Mayor Keon: What is the motion?

Commissioner Quesada: Rejecting all bids.

Commissioner Lago: Is this to reject all bids?

Commissioner Quesada: Correct.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Yeah.

Commissioner Quesada: It's just to reject all bids.

Commissioner Lago: No.

Commissioner Mena: No.

Commissioner Quesada: Yes.

Vice Mayor Keon: No.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Yes.

(Vote: 2-3)

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Okay. Then we're not rejecting all bids.

City Attorney Leen: Okay, well, at this point then you should just table the matter. But there's no ability to negotiate.

Vice Mayor Keon: No. There is no ability to negotiate and we need a lobbyist team in...

Commissioner Lago: Oh, we have a lobbyist team until December, but we got to figure out before next Commission what we do. We can bring it back.

Commissioner Quesada: Does the con -- I need to -- here's the legal question I need to ask. Does the contract continue on a month to month basis or is there an automatic termination? Is it an at-will type of contract or is it just dead?

City Manager Swanson-Rivenbark: It's my understanding -- and I'm going to ask -- have you reviewed the actual contract or am I going to rely on Naomi? It's my understanding that I would -- the contract that we have today continues until December 16 -- what, 12, 2017.

Commissioner Quesada: So...

City Manager Swanson-Rivenbark: I have to -- I can affirmatively cancel it prior to then, because it's on a month to month, but the outside...

Government Affairs Manager Levi-Garcia: It's not on a month to month. We exercised a one-year extension for that contract, but there is a termination for convenience clause in the contract.

City Manager Swanson-Rivenbark: So, December -- mid-December 2017 is the...

Commissioner Quesada: When does session end?

Unidentified Speaker: March.

Vice Mayor Keon: Next spring.

Government Affairs Manager Levi-Garcia: March.

Mr. Book: (INAUDIBLE) if I could, Mayor and Commission. The question has been asked several times. Committee meetings start...

City Manager Swanson-Rivenbark: I'm sorry. We're going to need to have it in the microphone, because dissecting this verbatim is going to be...

Commissioner Quesada: Past December is all I needed to hear. All I needed to hear was past December.

Mr. Book: I just simply want you to be aware you've got a set of committee meetings in September, two in October, three in November, December. January 9 is opening day of the legislative session.

Commissioner Quesada: Got it.

Unidentified Speaker: Official legislative session.

Mr. Book: You should want -- if I could, Mayor and Commissioners. You should want to get a firm in place certainly in the next -- whoever it is, whatever combination, you want them in place in the next 30 days. You don't want someone else out guessing who the sponsors of your issues are. So, whatever you do, you just ought to bring it to a head in the next 30 days. That's my only advice to you.

Commissioner Quesada: Alright, thank you, Mr. Book. So, here's the problem. If I'm not hearing that we'd like to throw out all the bids, it means we do not have a consensus on Fausto. That means we're stuck at this point. If that's the case, come December, that contract's going to end and we're going to be left with no one up there. So, because there's no consensus with

Fausto, because there's really not any consensus with anyone else, I'm going to change my vote to the staff recommendation, because it's more important for us to have representation than no representation. It's not my first choice. I still think that Fausto should be our guy. I do not have the support. But we need representation. It is incumbent on us representing our residents to have some sort of representation. Again, I would love to have everyone in this room, and this is wacky the way it's played out. But we'd better have something rather than nothing. With that, motion to approve staff's recommendation.

Commissioner Mena: Second.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Alright. Will you call the roll?

City Attorney Leen: Can I speak to one legal issue? Because he was in the majority --, because you were on the prevailing side of that vote, you can make that motion. It acts as a motion for reconsideration. It'll merge with the motion to appoint staff's recommendation.

Commissioner Quesada: Call roll.

Vice Mayor Keon: There was a second, Mike.

Commissioner Mena: I second.

Vice Mayor Keon: Mike Mena. Commissioner Mena did.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: What is the motion?

City Attorney Leen: What did he say?

Commissioner Mena: To accept the staff recommendation.

Vice Mayor Keon: Okay.

Commissioner Mena: Yes.

Commissioner Quesada: Yes.

Vice Mayor Keon: Yes.

Commissioner Lago: Yes.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Yes

(Vote: 5-0)

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Alright. Next item, an ordinance, F-1, amending Section 101-182, Qualifications and...

Mr. Book: Mayor and Commissioners, thank you very much.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Thank you, sir.

Mr. Gomez: Mr. Mayor, Commissioners, I just want to thank you for the many years of service that I've provided to the City. Thank you.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Thank you.

Commissioner Mena: Thank you.