

# County of Sonoma

## Agenda Item

### Summary Report

Clerk of the Board Use Only  
Meeting Date

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Agenda Item No:  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Department: Sonoma County Agricultural Preservation and Open Space District**

**( X ) 4/5 Vote Required**

**Contact:**  
Peggy Flynn

**Phone:**  
(707) 565-7347

**Board Date:**  
9/01/09

**Deadline for Board Action:**

#### AGENDA SHORT TITLE:

**Sonoma County Agricultural Preservation and Open Space District Legislative Program**

#### REQUESTED BOARD ACTIONS:

- 1) Authorize the President to execute a one-year Agreement, from September 1, 2009 through September 1, 2010 between the Sonoma County Agricultural Preservation and Open Space District (District) and the Carmen Group Incorporated, for Federal Legislative Advocacy Services in the amount of \$130,000.
- 2) Resolution of the Board of Directors of the Sonoma County Agricultural Preservation and Open Space District, authorizing budgetary adjustments to the 2009-2010 final budget for the Sonoma County Agricultural Preservation and Open Space District Operations Fund, in the amount of \$130,000. (4/5 vote)

<u>EXPENDITURES</u>	<u>CURRENT YEAR FINANCIAL IMPACT</u>		<u>SOURCE OF ADDITIONAL FUNDS REQUESTED</u>
Estimated Cost	\$ 130,000.00	Contingencies	\$ 000.00
		(Fund Name: )	
Amount Budgeted	\$ 00.00	Unanticipated Revenue	\$ 000.00
		(Sources: )	
Other Avail. Approp.		Other Transfer(s)	\$ 130,000
(Explain below)	00.00	Total Source of Funds:	\$
Additional Requested:	\$		

Explanation (if required): Additional appropriation in 697029-6570 is required to process this expense; fund balance will be appropriated with Board approval

#### Prior Board Action(s):

**Alternatives - Results of Non-Approval:** Federal Legislative Advocacy Program for Agricultural Preservation and Open Space District will not occur.

**Background:**

**NOTE:** Agreement is on file with the Clerk of the Board.

**Overview**

In May 2009, the District solicited Request for Proposals (RFP) for Federal Legislative Advocacy services to support and strengthen its work to permanently protect the diverse agricultural, natural resource, and scenic open space lands of Sonoma County for future generations.

Based on the response, the Carmen Group, Inc. (Consultant) was selected due to the results they have achieved for their clients, including the California State Coastal Conservancy, and their extensive experience with successful water, environment and infrastructure lobbying—securing billions of dollars in federal funding. Additionally, they have established relationships with federal agencies including the USDA, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Department of Energy, Department of Interior, National Park Service, and NOAA.

The Carmen Group is a full-service, bipartisan lobbying and government relations firm based in Washington, D. C. They have secured hundreds of millions of federal dollars for water resources and environmental restoration projects in Northern California. The Carmen Group’s Water Resources, Environment, Energy, and Transportation practice leads the industry and has served a range of public and private sector clients for more than 25 years. This practice area is one of their core specialties.

**Justification**

Despite the proliferation of land trusts in California and throughout the nation, there are still relatively few County-level special districts that have funding streams dedicated to open space, habitat, and agricultural land protection. The District has a unique story to tell. The District’s adopted Strategic Plan and acquisition plan, *Connecting Communities and the Land*, set forth initiatives, objectives, and policies to promote livable communities through conservation of land and natural resources.

The District believes that this is a critical time to take a more visible and active role at the state and national level. Current policy and law affect many of the District’s operations, and the District will work with Consultant to identify policy obstacles and opportunities to further the District’s mission. The District’s proposed Federal Legislative Advocacy Program is also a necessary component to implement the District’s Strategic and acquisition plans, and leverage the District’s existing funding. The District anticipates program opportunities with federal agencies, climate change legislation, and grant funding and policy issues related to public access, acquisition, agricultural land protection, and fishery and watershed conservation.

Additionally, by establishing a federal program, the District will have an opportunity to identify and secure economic stimulus dollars available through the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009, specifically those through the Department of Transportation, USDA, Department of Interior, and NOAA. This potential funding would provide a needed boost to key District projects and those of our partners.

**Attachments:** Resolution

**On File With Clerk:** Agreement

**CLERK OF THE BOARD USE ONLY**

**Board Action (If other than "Requested")**

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**Vote:**

**Background (continued):**

**Proposed Scope of Services**

The agreement with the Carmen Group, Inc directs the firm to serve as the District's legislative and administrative agency advocate in Washington, D.C. and to perform various tasks, including the following:

1. Develop a detailed strategic plan to identify and evaluate potential federal funding sources that would meet the needs of the District.
2. Monitor legislation relevant to the District and notify the District of bills or amendments to bills that may impact District operations. Initiate appropriate actions to advocate the interests of the District regarding federal legislative or administrative issues.
3. Serve as a principal contact between the District and the District's Sonoma County legislative delegation, providing members of the delegation with information on topics affecting the District and District's point of view on legislative issues.
4. Coordinate implementation of the District's legislative and administrative strategies with representatives of other agencies or organizations on issues of common interest.
5. Work with District staff to write, secure sponsors for, support and achieve enactment of new legislation that addresses District needs or increases District effectiveness in carrying out its mission.
6. Facilitate formal and informal communication with legislators and staff members, agency officials and staff, and maintain regular contact in order to better anticipate federal actions that may affect the District.

The Agreement provides a monthly retainer of \$10,000 per month for the 12-month term of the Agreement, effective from September 2009 through September 2010. The total amount for the 12-month period is not to exceed \$130,000.

For activities under this contract, the District will coordinate with the County's Government Affairs Coordinator. On August 6, 2009, the Open Space Authority passed a Minute Order supporting the District's recommendation to contract for its Federal Legislative Advocacy services.

**Requested Board Actions**

The Interim General Manager recommends that the Board: (1) authorize the President to execute the agreement between the District and the Carmen Group Inc., substantially in the form on file with the Clerk. Any modifications to the Agreement shall be subject to approval by County Counsel; and (2) approve Resolution authorizing budgetary adjustments to the District's 2009-2010 final budget.