

Request for Bids to Provide Legislative Lobbying Services for the City of Burlington

The City of Burlington seeks registered lobbyists to represent the City before the Vermont State Legislature for the 2014 Legislative Session. A written bid must be submitted to:

Eileen M. Blackwood, Esq., City Attorney
City Hall, 149 Church St.
Burlington, VT 05401
or electronically to eblackwood@burlingtonvt.gov.

Bids will be accepted through October 21, 2013, although extensions may be granted upon request.

Specifications

The lobbyists will be expected to:

- Work with the Mayor, his office, the City Attorney, and any other City representatives identified by the Mayor to
 - o Determine the City's legislative priorities;
 - o Discuss and develop legislation the City may wish to affirmatively pursue;
 - o Monitor legislation that may be of interest to or affect the interests of the City by attending appropriate committee meetings and hearings, meeting with individual legislators, and communicating with appropriate City staff;
 - o Coordinate testimony by City staff before the Legislature; and
 - o Develop strategy for and assist in accomplishing the City's priorities and representing the City's interests.
- Coordinate communication between the City and Burlington's legislative delegation, preferably on a weekly basis during the session.
- Communicate clearly with the City through periodic written summaries and oral reports as requested, on at least a weekly basis.
- Attend committee meetings and hearings, sessions of the General Assembly, and individual meetings with legislators as required to monitor legislation of interest to the City and to keep the City informed of legislative considerations.
- Meet with representatives of the Vermont League of Cities and Towns, appropriate executive branch agencies, and others as needed to represent the City's interests in the Legislature;
- Advise City when its presence at the Legislature is important to achieving our legislative objectives;
- Maintain a daily presence in the Legislature during the session;
- Shepherd through the Legislature any legislation specifically proposed or developed by the City.

The City will develop a list of priorities with input from the successful bidder, but it is expected that, at a minimum, the following issues will be monitored or addressed on behalf of the City:

- Economic development measures, downtown designation and program incentives, state matching for airport projects;
- Education funding reforms and amendments, in particular with respect to 0-5 early education funding and English language learner (ELL) funding;
- Education and special education funding, requirements for local schools, PILOTs for school districts and other issues affecting the interaction of municipalities and school districts;
- Telecommunications issues, particularly new developments with Burlington Telecom and franchise fee reforms;
- Gun violence legislation, including legislative approval of likely City of Burlington Charter changes;
- Public safety and mental health issues;
- Appropriations, particularly ensuring adequate funding for public safety, mental health, municipal planning grants, public transportation, and housing;
- Environmental protection, including monitoring permit reform and stormwater issues;
- Lakeshore protection;
- Public records and open meeting law reform, particularly law enforcement and policy development exemptions, as well as monitoring any changes to exemptions and procedures in the law;
- Department of Transportation policy and funding of Burlington International Airport (BTV) projects;
- Transportation initiatives, including downtown transit center funding, rail yard relocation, Champlain Parkway funding, Amtrak service from Rutland to BTV;
- Health care reform, particularly the effects on the City as employer;
- Local control issues, including regulation of taxis, local license fees, and revocation power for local control commissions;
- Expected City of Burlington redistricting charter changes;
- Election issues that would affect local administration of elections;
- Public safety issues, including funding incentives for government entities to regionalize services; increased accountability for offenders and development of a robust continuum of responses; developing new initiatives to partner prosecutors and corrections with community policing operations; ensuring swift access to substance abuse treatment beds and mental health treatment beds both in secure facilities and in structured/supervised settings; creating a state-funded service agency in or near the downtown/inner City district; continuing support for community justice efforts;
- Municipal ticket collections.

Conditions

The lobbyists are expected to

- Show a strong background and extensive experience in addressing some or all of the issues identified above;
- Maintain a sufficient physical presence in the Legislature throughout the session to ensure complete representation of the City;
- Have established, positive relationships with House and Senate leadership;

- Demonstrate the ability to create legislative strategic plans;
- Have sufficient flexibility to cover multiple committee meetings;
- Represent the City effectively in a positive and appropriate manner;
- Demonstrate a strong reputation for integrity in the community and among legislators such that their representation will reflect positively on the City's interests;
- Strive to maintain positive working relationships with the City's representatives and legislators;
- Clearly and accurately represent to legislative members and committees the City's positions, once those positions have been established;
- Avoid any conflicts or appearances of conflicts in public positions between the City and other clients of the lobbyist;
- Demonstrate knowledge and awareness of the City's interests, current legislative initiatives, and administration priorities.

The bid should propose a total fee for the Legislative Session, including preparation prior to the session and a summary of the efforts on behalf of the City at the conclusion of the session. If an issue of particular interest is not resolved and may carry over to the next Legislative Session, continued monitoring may be needed. The bidder should be prepared to negotiate its fee to comply with the City's budget constraints.

Bidders must comply with all provisions of state law, and the accepted bidder will have to comply with the City's livable wage and union deterrence ordinances, copies of which are available on the City's website (or may be supplied on request).

Pre-bid meetings are available to discuss these specifications. Any bids submitted prior to receipt of these specifications will be accepted automatically, but may be amended to comply with these specifications or to provide additional information, at the bidder's request.

Bids will be reviewed on a rolling basis as received, and the City reserves the right to discuss or negotiate any bid with any bidder prior to acceptance of the final bid.

The City intends to accept the bid it determines to be in the best interests of the City, based on the overall proposal, not exclusively on cost or any other specific factor. The City reserves the right to amend, modify, reject, negotiate, or accept any bid in whole or in part at its sole discretion.

The City of Burlington does not tolerate unlawful harassment or discrimination on the basis of political or religious affiliation, race, color, national origin, place of birth, ancestry, age, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, marital status, veteran status, disability, HIV positive status or genetic information. The City is also committed to providing proper access to services, facilities, and employment opportunities.