

June 5, 2017

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Humboldt County Board of Supervisors
825 Fifth Street
Eureka, California 95501

Attention: Virginia Bass, Chairwoman

Subject: Consultant Services for Cannabis permitting- Planning and Building Services
(June 6, 2017, Agenda Item 21)

Dear Chair Bass and Supervisors:

We are writing to respectfully request that LACO be included in the list of qualified environmental consulting firms to provide cannabis permit-related support to the County.

LACO was responsive to the Request for Qualifications (RFQ) and was informed that we met the criteria stipulated in the RFQ with a very high ranking. The RFQ stated that all Respondents meeting the qualifications would be placed on a qualified list. Although we ranked very well in terms of qualifications, we were informed we were not selected due to the fact that we are acting as agent for a limited number of private clients with cannabis-related projects in the County. LACO disclosed this limited potential conflict in our response and included information about how we would inform the County of these clients and not accept any work from the County related to these specific applications.

LACO's conflict related to cannabis applications in Humboldt County is very limited. We are associated with less than a dozen applications. Considering the County has received 2,337 applications, LACO would be conflicted on less than 1 percent of these applications. The applications also represent less than 1 percent of LACO's total business.

While we, like County Staff, are sensitive to conflict of interest issues, we do not feel that this very limited conflict would impede LACO's ability to successfully serve the County in processing the multitudes of CEQA documents and staff reports related to cannabis projects. On the contrary, our local presence, knowledge, and familiarity with the Humboldt County Medical Marijuana Land Use Ordinance (CMMLUO) will increase our responsiveness and ability to add value to the projects we are assigned.

According to the Board Report for this item, no local firms have been selected to participate in this master service agreement. The Board Report indicates that the master contracts will be between \$100,000 and \$300,000. Although these fees will be paid by applicants rather than County funds, this still amounts to upwards of \$1 million of income

generated in Humboldt County of which the majority will be lost to the local economy as out of town firms are paid to perform these services. In turn this option is also less supportive of local job creation.

LACO has proven our qualifications based on the response to the RFQ. Highlights include:

- Two former Humboldt County Senior Planners on staff, in addition to a team of planners who have worked locally and have capacity to fulfill on projects;
- Familiarity with other agency staff and requirements for cannabis-related projects such as the North Coast Regional Water Quality Control Board, California Department of Fish and Wildlife, and CAL FIRE;
- Successful completion of the environmental review for Mendocino County's medical cannabis cultivation ordinance;
- Successfully provides on-call services to the County of Mendocino preparing Initial Studies and Staff Reports;
- Ability to partner with Horizon Water and the Environment (firm responsible for preparing the Environmental Impact Report for the statewide regulations), on particularly technical projects;
- Past success representing Humboldt County with large controversial projects, including the 2012 *Housing Element Multi-family Residential Inventory EIR* and the Moss Subdivision focused EIR; and
- Over 60 years serving Humboldt County government, Tribal, and private clients.

We respectfully request the Board consider the option presented in staff's alternative recommendation to contract with more firms and include LACO in the list. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,
LACO Associates



Mike Nelson, AICP
President/CEO, Planning Principal



Elizabeth Burks, AICP
Planning Director

EAB:kc