

AGENDA ITEM BRIEFING

Commissioners Court – October 6, 2020

AI Number: 77627

Information: Requesting authority to authorize a discretionary exemption for Elections Department to purchase necessary equipment as a function of government and of the county's efforts in mitigating the on-going COVID-19 in order to assist with County functions related to medical and public health measures.

Description of AI: (A) Discussion, consideration, and action to approve necessary HAVA CARES Act Relief Fund expenditure to cover cost of purchase; (B) Exemption from competitive bidding requirements, pursuant to Texas LGC 262.024(a)(1),(2); (C) Requesting approval to purchase laptops; (D) Requesting approval to purchase Security Cameras; (E) Requesting approval to purchase Access Control System.

Funding Source: HAVA CARES Act Relief Fund	Acct. #
Requested by: Yvonne Ramon	Department: Elections Department
Prepared by: Damaris Morales, Procurement Specialist	Department: Purchasing Department

BACKGROUND

On March 17, 2020, pursuant to the authority under Texas Government Code Section 418.108, Hidalgo County Judge Richard Cortez issued a Declaration of Local Disaster for Public Health Emergency due to the imminent threat arising from the Coronavirus (COVID-19). On March 22, 2020, in accordance with Texas Government Code Section 418.108(b), the Commissioners Court of Hidalgo County issued an Order of Continuance of Declaration of Local Disaster for Public Health Emergency that affirmed the activation of the Hidalgo County Emergency Management Plan and extends the Declaration of Local Disaster.

In coordinating the response to this ongoing public health emergency, the Hidalgo County Elections Department for the 2020 Election cycle is preparing for an increase in curbside voting as voters will be adhering social distancing guidelines. Therefore, additional staff will be hired to assist with the management of the increase in curbside teams. This also applies to the poll locations as more poll workers will be hired to assist with the implementing COVID-19 preventative safety measures at the election site. This increase in poll workers requires additional equipment (ie. laptops, workstations, security cameras, access control systems etc.) The additional laptops and workstations will also adhere to CDC social distancing guidelines and will

offer the convenience of checking in a larger turnout of voters expected this presidential election year.

There has been an increase in registered voters in Hidalgo County since the last presidential election of 2016. The amount of registered voters in 2016 was 338,990, and this year as of October 1, 2020 the amount of registered voters is 388,036. This increase is contributing to the need of increased poll workers which in return contributes to the need of additional trainings, laptops, workstations, security access control systems and security cameras prior to the presidential election.

The 2010 Census has indicated that Hidalgo County has a low to moderate income level of 54.75% and the Texas Department of State Health Services estimated Hidalgo County's population to be 1,005,539. With this large impoverished population, but limited lab testing capacity, the detection, mitigation and response to COVID-19 has been largely impacted. Current public health directive emphasizing the importance of preventing and mitigating the spread of COVID-19. However, given our current trend, we are projected to have a large segment of the population severely impacted by the pandemic.

COMPLIANCE

Discretionary exemptions are authorized by the Texas Local Government Code 262.024 (a) states "a contract for the purchase of any of the following items is exempt from the requirement established by the section 262.023 if the commissioners court by order grants the exemption." This request is being made under LGC 262.024 (a) (2), an item necessary to preserve or protect the public health or safety of the residents of the county, and LGC 262.024 (a) (4) a personal or professional service. The procurement of services complies with 2 CFR 200 requirements.

ADMINISTRATION

Approval of the item is consistent with Hidalgo County's intended purpose to mitigate the spread of COVID-19. The goal is to provide efficient and effective delivery of services in light of change in technology, the public's expectations, and the area's population and economy. Hidalgo County Health is taking the lead in responding to the COVID-19 health emergency for our community as a whole.

AGENDA ITEM CAPTION

- A. Discussion, consideration, and action to approve necessary Help America Vote Act, aka, HAVA CARES Act Relief Fund expenditures to cover cost not accounted for in the current budget and cannot be lawfully funded by line item, allotment or allocation, for the Hidalgo County Elections Department to obtain necessary equipment required as a function of government and of the County's efforts in mitigating the on-going COVID-19, the Court having reviewed the Agenda Item Briefing, herein finds that such expenditures are reasonable and necessary for the intended use.
- B. Requesting exemption from competitive bidding requirements, pursuant to Texas LGC 262.024(a)(1): an item that must be purchased in case of a public calamity if it is necessary to make the purchase promptly to relieve the necessity of the citizens; (2) an item necessary to preserve and protect the public health and safety of the citizens.

- C. Requesting approval to purchase WVK Cellular Laptops with windows 10 and Votec software form VOTEC Corporation for a total of \$84,000.00, for the upcoming 2020 presidential election. (Req# 00421544)
- D. Requesting approval to purchase Security Cameras form Mood, 3 quotes were requested, Mood was the lowest bid for a total of \$12,138.00. (Req# 00418471)
- E. Requesting approval to purchase Access Control System from Mood, 3 quotes were requested, Mood was the lowest bid for a total of \$21,516.36. (Req# 00420454)

RECOMMENDATIONS

Approval of the items will allow the Hidalgo County Elections Department to continue to respond to the current public health emergency of COVID-19. As previously stated, with these large impoverished population and continued incurred case search; therefore, this is deemed as a reasonable and necessary expenditure related to the County COVID-19 Public Health Response. Expenditures will be charged to the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act and/or other assistance available to address the COVID-19 public health emergency.