

AGENDA



Recommendation for Council Action

AUSTIN CITY COUNCIL

Regular Meeting: December 13, 2018

Item Number: **023**

Public Health

Authorize the negotiation and execution of Amendment No. 3 to an agreement with Texas RioGrande Legal Aid, Inc. for tenant resident advocacy services to increase funding in an amount not to exceed \$110,000 for each remaining 12-month extension option, for a total agreement amount not to exceed \$1,970,000.

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| Lead Department | Austin Public Health. |
| Fiscal Note | Funding in the amount of \$110,000 is available in the Fiscal Year 2018-2019 Operating Budget of Austin Public Health. Funding for the remaining extension option is contingent upon available funding in future budgets. |
| Prior Council Action | On September 11, 2018, Council approved Ordinance No. 20180911-001 adopting the Fiscal Year 2018-2019 Operating Budget including \$110,000 in additional ongoing funding for the Residents Advocacy Program on a 10-1 vote with Council Member Troxclair voting no. On December 17, 2015, Council approved the initial agreement with four 12-month extension options, on a vote of 8-2, with Council Members Troxclair and Zimmerman voting no and Council Member Gallo abstaining. |
| For More Information | Stephanie Y. Hayden, Director, 512-972-5010; Adrienne Sturup, Assistant Director, 512-972-5167; Vella Karman, Social Services Policy Manager, 512-972-5064; Estella Kirscht, Agenda Coordinator, 512-972-5039. |

Additional Backup Information:

Approval of this item will authorize Austin Public Health to negotiate and execute Amendment No. 3 of an agreement with Texas RioGrande Legal Aid, Inc. (TRLA) for the Residents Advocacy Program to expand outreach, education, and advocacy services for low-income tenants in Austin properties.

Amendment No. 2 exercised the second extension option for January 1, 2018 through December 31, 2018. Amendment No. 1 exercised the first extension option for January 1, 2017 through December 31, 2017.

On December 17, 2015 Council approved the initial contract with Texas RioGrande Legal Aid, Inc. to provide education and outreach services for tenants' rights for a 12-month term extending from January 1, 2016 to December 31, 2016 and four 12-month extension options.

A 2015 report by the Entrepreneurship and Community Development Clinic of the University of Texas Law School titled "An Analysis of Austin's Repeat Offender Program and Efforts to Address Dangerous Rental Properties" found the City faces great needs in identifying dangerous rental properties, adequately monitoring repeat offenders, and utilizing appropriate enforcement mechanisms in handling rental-property nuisances. As part of the Fiscal Year 2016 Budget, City Council provided funding for an initiative called the Residents Advocacy Project, which aimed to improve the City's response to rental properties with dangerous conditions and nuisances, and short-term rental housing enforcement.

The goals of the Residents Advocacy Project include: 1) educate tenants that reside within the City of Austin on their legal rights; 2) identify tenants that reside at substandard rental properties through investigative and outreach efforts as well as referrals from the Code Department; 3) work with tenants to advocate for their rights, including ensuring landlords make needed repairs as required by law; and 4) counsel and represent tenants unlawfully targeted for eviction.

TRLA is a non-profit organization that provides free legal services to low-income residents in sixty-eight counties of Southwest Texas, and is the third largest legal services provider in the nation and the largest in the state of Texas. TRLA performs proactive education and outreach to inform residents of their rights as tenants at rental properties and mobile home parks, forwards complaints regarding substandard building conditions, and initiates nuisance abatement efforts. TRLA employs experienced English and Spanish-speaking outreach professionals who have expertise in housing laws, and empowers tenants to take actions to improve conditions despite fears of retaliation.

