



Recommendation for Action

File #: 19-3841, **Agenda Item #:** 35.

1/23/2020

Posting Language

Authorize negotiation and execution of Amendment No. 4 to an agreement with Texas RioGrande Legal Aid, Inc. for tenant advocacy services to increase funding in an amount not to exceed \$140,000 for the remaining 12-month extension option, for a total agreement amount not to exceed \$2,110,000.

Lead Department

Austin Public Health.

Fiscal Note

Funding in the amount of \$140,000 is available in the Fiscal Year 2019-2020 Austin Code Department Operating Budget.

Prior Council Action:

September 10, 2019 - Council approved Ordinance No. 20190910-001 adopting the Fiscal Year 2019-2020 Operating Budget, including \$140,000 for the Residents Advocacy Program on a 10-1 vote with Council Member Flannigan voting no.

December 13, 2018 - Council approved Ordinance No. 20181213-023 to increase funding for tenant resident advocacy services in an amount not to exceed \$110,000 for each remaining 12-month extension option on a 7-1 vote with Council Member Troxclair voting no, Mayor Adler and Council Member Flannigan off the dais, and Council Member Renteria absent.

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:

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Additional Backup Information:

Approval of this item will authorize Austin Public Health to negotiate and execute Amendment No. 4 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. 3 exercised the third extension option for January 1, 2019 through December 31, 2019, and increased funding by \$110,000. 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 1, 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, 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 (also known as STR) housing enforcement.

The goals of the Residents Advocacy Project include: 1) Educate tenants residing within Austin of their legal rights; 2) identify tenants that reside at substandard rental properties through investigation, outreach and from referrals from the Code Department; 3) work with tenants to advocate for their rights as tenants, 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. TRLA 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 begins nuisance abatement efforts. TRLA employs experienced English and Spanish-speaking outreach professionals who have expertise in housing laws and empower tenants to take actions to improve conditions despite fears of retaliation.