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COUNTY COUNSEL:  
Gregory Priamos

CLERK OF THE BOARD:  
Vanessa Delgado

**Agenda Item  
Regular Meeting of the  
Board of Supervisors  
Tuesday, January 13, 2026**

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**Item Number: 2.15**

**MEETING DATE:** 01/13/2026

**DEPARTMENT:** RESOURCE MANAGEMENT AGENCY

**AGENDA ITEM PREPARER:** Abraham Prado

**DEPT HEAD/DIRECTOR:** Abraham Prado

**SUBJECT:**

**RESOURCE MANAGEMENT AGENCY/PLANNING AND BUILDING - A. PRADO**

1. Approve Amendment #1 with EMC Planning Group Inc., for an additional amount of \$21,814.75 for a total contract amount not to exceed \$97,361.50 to continue work on behalf of the County on the preparation of an Initial Study pursuant to the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) for the Hippo Harvest Conditional Use Permit Project (County Planning file PLN250009), located at 2370 Shore Road; and

2. Authorize Chair, County Administrative Officer, or designee to sign the contract.

SBC FILE NUMBER: 790

**AGENDA SECTION:**

CONSENT AGENDA

**BACKGROUND/SUMMARY:**

The original contract was executed August 12, 2025 with EMC Planning Group Inc. (Contract ID: RMA-2025-041) in an amount not to exceed \$75,546.75, for the period of August 12, 2025, through August 31, 2026, to conduct the environmental analysis required by the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) for the Hippo Harvest Conditional Use Permit Project (County Planning file PLN250009), located at 2370 Shore Road. The contract covers preparation of an Initial Study and Mitigation Monitoring and Reporting Program (MMRP), addressing potential environmental impacts. The original contract is hereby further amended to include additional work required to address air-quality work and greenhouse gas emission assessment related to proposed agricultural cogeneration (CHP) units also referred to as microturbines. The applicant has changed the type and number of microturbines to be used for the project which has resulted in more time spent by the subcontractor Illingworth & Rodkin, researching the different microturbine units and EMC Planning Group coordinating between the County and the subcontractor.

The contract is fully funded by the project applicant through a reimbursement agreement established at the time of application submittal; no County General Fund dollars will be used for this environmental analysis. EMC Planning Group Inc.'s scope of work specifically includes thorough evaluations of agricultural resources, biological and cultural resources, hydrology, geology, air quality, greenhouse gas emissions, transportation, and energy use. Their analysis will comply with CEQA guidelines, identifying potential impacts and feasible mitigation measures to minimize environmental effects. The project site presents several significant considerations requiring focused assessment: Williamson Act enrollment, requiring careful land-use consideration and tax implications; Location within an official Earthquake Fault Zone, necessitating compliance with seismic safety regulations and additional geological assessments; Prime Farmland designation, triggering heightened environmental and agricultural analysis.

Original Contract \$75,546.75 approved on August 12, 2025 by the San Benito County Board of Supervisors.

1st Amendment \$21,814.75 - Amendment includes additional work required to address air-quality work and greenhouse gas emission assessment related to proposed microturbines. for an additional amount of \$21,814.75, for a total contract of \$97,361.50 to be paid by applicant through August 31, 2026.

Total: \$97,361.50.

### **Proposed Project:**

The Resource Management Agency received a Conditional Use Permit application (PLN250009) from Hippo Harvest for the development of an approximately 28-acre hydroponic greenhouse facility at 2370 Shore Road in unincorporated northern San Benito County. The proposed project includes a 45,000-square-foot agricultural processing facility and ancillary infrastructure to support comprehensive operations of cultivating, processing, packaging, storing, and distributing USDA Certified Organic leafy greens.

The project will be developed in four phases: Phase 1 (early 2026 completion): 4 acres greenhouse, 25,000 sq. ft. processing facility, approximately 30 employees. Phase 2 (2027 completion): Additional 4 acres greenhouse cultivation. Phase 3 (2028 completion): Additional 8 acres greenhouse cultivation. Phase 4 (late 2028 completion): Additional 12 acres greenhouse cultivation, expansion of processing facility by 20,000 sq. ft. to a total of 45,000 sq. ft., and approximately 70 additional employees (total of 75-100 employees working two shifts, 6:00 AM to 8:00 PM, Monday-Saturday).

The Resource Management Agency has contracted EMC Planning Group Inc. (Contract ID: RMA-2025-041) to conduct the environmental analysis required by the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA). The contract covers preparation of an Initial Study and Mitigation Monitoring and Reporting Program (MMRP), addressing potential environmental impacts. The contract is fully funded by the project applicant through a reimbursement agreement established at the time of application submittal; no County General Fund dollars will be used for this environmental analysis. EMC Planning Group Inc.'s scope of work specifically includes thorough evaluations of agricultural resources, biological and cultural resources, hydrology, geology, air quality, greenhouse gas emissions, transportation, and energy use. Their analysis will comply with CEQA guidelines, identifying potential impacts and feasible mitigation measures to minimize environmental effects. The project site presents several significant considerations requiring focused assessment: • Williamson Act enrollment, requiring careful land-use consideration and tax implications; Location within an official Earthquake Fault Zone, necessitating compliance with seismic safety regulations and additional geological assessments; Prime Farmland designation, triggering heightened environmental and agricultural analysis.

## **RFP & BID History:**

On June 26, 2025, Planning staff issued a Request for Proposals (RFP) containing a detailed scope of work to environmental consultants pre-qualified by San Benito County. The prescreening of CEQA-compliance consultants took place in early 2023. Planning staff published a request for qualifications (RFQ), seeking to establish a list of 10 to 20 qualified environmental review firms that could enter into on-call contracts with the County. The review and acceptance of responses resulted in a list of 13 qualified consultants, and this list would remain effective for three years, through 2026. Evaluation of each consultant's proposal was based primarily on understanding of the work to be done, experience with similar kinds of work, and quality of staff for work to be done, with further consideration for capability of developing innovative or advanced techniques, familiarity with state and federal procedures, financial responsibility, and demonstrated technical ability. The on-call tasks expected of consultants included: Independent peer review of documents or reports submitted to the County. Such reports may be as varied as the subject matters included in the CEQA Checklist: Aesthetics, Agriculture Resources, Air Quality, Biological Resources, Cultural Resources, Forestry, Geology/Soils, Global Greenhouse Gases, Hazards and Hazardous Materials, Hydrology/Water Quality, Land Use/Planning, Mineral Resources, Noise, Population/Housing, Public Services, Recreation, Transportation/Traffic, Tribal Consultation, Utilities/Service Systems. This task may include peer review of other documents, reports or information as may be needed by the County. Preparation of Initial Studies and a determination whether a Negative Declaration (ND), Mitigated Negative Declaration (MND), or Environmental Impact Review (EIR) is necessary for CEQA compliance. Preparation of environmental impact reports and supporting documentation. Preparation of mitigation monitoring and reporting programs. Preparation of technical documents including but not limited to air quality/greenhouse gas modules, noise and vibration analysis, traffic studies, soil reports, biological surveys, geohydrology reports, septic suitability reports, geologic reports, cultural surveys, etc. In addition to CEQA compliance, the RFQ further asked consultants for more complex professional County planning functions and assignments; developing of planning studies, environmental reviews, community design, and general plan preparation; housing element preparation; zoning and other county code updates; responsibility for the development, coordination, and completion of assigned planning projects; assisting with planning policy formulation and implementation; zoning enforcement; explanation of planning and zoning ordinances, regulations, and policies to the public; and related work as required. The firms included RCH Group Planning & Environmental Consulting, SWCA Environmental Consultants, Aspen Environmental Group, M-Group, CSG Consultants Inc., EMC Planning Group Inc., Dewberry Engineers Inc., FirstCarbon Solutions International Inc., Ascent Environmental, Inc., JHS Consulting LLC, PlaceWorks Inc., Denise Duffy & Associates, Inc., and ICF.

The RFP detailed the requirements for preparing an Initial Study and Mitigation Monitoring and Reporting Program (MMRP) in support of a Conditional Use Permit (CUP) application for the Hippo Harvest facility located at 2370 Shore Road. The environmental analysis required by the RFP necessitated a thorough evaluation of potential impacts, specifically addressing critical areas including agricultural resources, biological and cultural resources, hydrology, geology, air quality, greenhouse gas emissions, transportation, and energy use. The RFP emphasized adherence to the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) guidelines to accurately identify potential environmental impacts and feasible mitigation measures. Four responsive proposals were received by the submission deadline of July 11, 2025. These proposals were evaluated using clearly defined scoring criteria, which included the following categories and respective points: understanding of the project scope and CEQA requirements (25 points), technical expertise and qualifications (20 points), methodology and work plan (20 points), relevant experience and past performance (15 points), cost proposal (15 points), and responsiveness and overall proposal quality (5 points). The final evaluation scores for the responsive proposals were: EMC Planning Group Inc.: 97 points Denise Duffy & Associates, Inc.: 96 points ICF Jones & Stokes, Inc.: 94 points PlaceWorks Inc.: 94 points.

Consultant Name Response Status Comments EMC Planning Group, Inc. Responded; Proposal submitted Selected consultant Denise Duffy & Associates (DD&A) Responded; Proposal submitted Not selected ICF Jones & Stokes, Inc. Responded; Proposal submitted Not selected PlaceWorks Responded; Proposal submitted Not selected Ascent Environmental, Inc. Did not respond Rincon Consultants, Inc. Did not respond Kimley-Horn and Associates, Inc. Did not respond David J. Powers & Associates, Inc. Did not respond Harris & Associates Did not respond MIG, Inc. Did not respond Panorama Environmental, Inc. Did not respond HELIX Environmental Planning, Inc. Did not respond.

Following this comprehensive evaluation, EMC Planning Group Inc. was selected to prepare the Initial Study and Mitigation Monitoring and Reporting Program (MMRP). Their work will fully comply with CEQA guidelines and comprehensively identify mitigation measures designed to minimize potential environmental impacts.

### **FISCAL IMPACT:**

The first amendment is in the amount of \$21,814.75 for a total contract of \$97,361.50 to be paid by permit applicant the contract term is through August 31, 2026. This contract will be paid out of Non-general fund, SBC Budget Line Item Number 639.70.7595.1000.619.222.

### **STAFF RECOMMENDATION:**

1. Approve Amendment #1 with EMC Planning Group, Inc. to include additional work required to address air-quality work and greenhouse gas emission assessment related to proposed agricultural cogeneration (CHP) units also referred to as microturbines on behalf of the County, for an additional amount of \$21,814.75 for a total contract amount not to exceed \$97,361.50; and
2. Authorize Chair, County Administrative Officer, or designee to sign the contract.

### **ATTACHMENTS:**

[Agenda Fact Sheet -Amend #1 EMC Planning Inc.](#)  
[Amendment #1 EMC Planning Group, Inc. Contract](#)