Agenda Item: 2.c

Meeting Date: December 3, 2026

MEMORANDUM

To:	City Commission
Through:	Jennifer K. Bramley, City Manager
From:	Nicole Delfino
Date:	2026-12-03
Subject:	RFP #26-2626 Award of Bid for "Legislative Advocacy Services"
Presenter(s):	Nicole Delfino, Strategy & Sustainability Manager
Staff Recommendation:	Staff recommends award of RFP #26-2626 for "Legislative Advocacy Services" to The Southern Group of Florida, Inc. in the amount of $60,000 for an initial 3 year term.
Strategic Themes:	Good Governance
Boards & Committees:	N/A
Budget Impact:	Funds for this project are budgeted in Acct. #001-1100-512-053110-GG, under Project # 112404, in the amount of $60,000 annually.
Past Action:	Approval of RFP #23-1246 "Legislative Advocacy Services" to The Southern Group in the amount of $50,000.
Next Action:	Advocacy, Appropriation Requests, and 2027 Session Updates
Attachments:	A. Purchasing Memo RFP #23-1246 Legislative Advocacy Services.pdf B. RFP 23-1246 Legislative Advocacy Services City of Dunedin Agreement.pdf C. RFP 26-2625 Legislative Advocacy Services.pdf D. The Southern Group of Florida Inc RFP 26-2625 Response.pdf
Background:	A Business Plan Initiative (BPI) was submitted by staff for consideration in the FY 23-24 budget to fund a Legislative Lobbyist on behalf of the City of Dunedin to advocate for the City's Legislative platform and to manage appropriations requests. On August 22, 2023 during a City Commission Special Budget Meeting, the Commission reviewed the request for a Legislative Lobbyist and provided approval to fund the BPI request.

On September 1, 2023, RFP #23-1246 "Legislative Advocacy Services" was advertised through the City's Purchasing Department. The deadline for submissions was September 22, 2023 to which there were 10 responses. The selection committee, consisting of Nicole Delfino, Strategy and Sustainability Manager; Jeff Parks, Fire Chief; and Kathy Gademer, Project Manager reviewed the 10 submissions and created a short list of 5 firms. Additional information was requested from the 5 firms and a request to meet either in person or virtually. During this period, one firm withdrew, leaving the four firms of: Ronald L. Book, Shumaker Advisors Florida, LLC, Sunrise Consulting Group, and The Southern Group. In 2023, the Committee unanimously selected The Southern Group as the vendor that could best represent the City through their experience with policy advocacy, appropriations requests, grant funding, federal recommendations, and relationships to local legislative delegation, committee leadership, and agency personnel. The City Commission approved the RFP #23-1246 "Legislative Advocacy Services" to The Southern Group in the amount of $50,000.

The approved contract between The Southern Groups and the City of Dunedin began in November 2023 and was for a one year term, with the option to extend for two additional one year terms. The Southern Group successfully oversaw advocacy and appropriation requests through the 3 years serving as the City's lobbyist. In 2024, Gabion Replacement ($375,000) and the Dunedin EOC/North County Fire Training Center ($850,000) were passed by the Legislature and included in the State budget. These two projects were later vetoed by Governor Ron DeSantis during the signing of the budget. In 2025, appropriations valuing $850,000 for Gabion Repair, $1.5M for Marina Repair and Restoration and $200,000 for a Dunedin Fire high water rescue vehicle were funded by the legislature and signed into law by the Governor. In 2026, appropriations valuing $1.5M for the Bayshore Water Main Replacement and $3M for the Marina Repair and Restoration were funded by the legislature and signed into law by the Governor. All state appropriations are assigned a state agency and run as a reimbursable grant.

The expiration term of RFP #23-1246 "Legislative Advocacy Services" was set to expire in November 2026. Due to the expiration of the agreement, it was necessary to re-issue an RFP. RFP #26-2625 for "Legislative Advocacy Services" was posted on Demand Star on September 24, 2026 and closed on October 26, 2026. Five respondents replied to the RFP including: Ashton Advocacy Consulting, LLC, Gavin Rollins Attorney, Seedall International Group, Sunrise Consulting Group and The Southern Group of Florida, Inc. The evaluation committee consisted of: Nicole Delfino, Strategy & Sustainability Manager; Les Tyler,

Director of Finance and Sue Burness, Director of Communications. The review committee met on November 12, 2026 to evaluate all 5 proposals.

The five proposals were evaluated in four areas including: Proposed Solution, Project Cost, Experience and Qualifications and References. Each rating was out of a total 100 points, with a potential committee score of 300. The evaluation committee collectively rated the proposals as follows: Seedall International Group (113/300); Ashton Advocacy Consulting, LLC (165/300); Gavin Rollins Attorney (197/300); Sunrise Consulting Group (246/300); and The Southern Group of Florida, Inc. (289/300).

The committee unanimously rated The Southern Group of Florida, Inc. as the top score amongst the 5 submissions. Due to the combination of the rating and alignment with the proposed budget, the committee unanimously recommends the award of RFP #26-2625 for "Legislative Advocacy Services" to The Southern Group of Florida, Inc. in the amount of $60,000. The term of the contract for the award is referenced in RFP #26-2625 as an initial term of 3 years, with the option to renew for two (2) additional two-year periods.