

REPORT OF GENERAL MANAGER

NO. 05-247


DATE September 21, 2005

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BOARD OF RECREATION AND PARK COMMISSIONERS

SUBJECT: GRIFFITH OBSERVATORY - PERSONAL SERVICES AGREEMENT WITH JEFF YANA FOR THE INSTALLATION, MAINTENANCE, AND OPTIMIZATION OF SERVERS AND RENDERING CAPACITY FOR ASTRONOMICAL VISUALIZATIONS FOR THE PLANETARIUM SHOW

B. Jensen	_____	H. Fujita	_____
M. Shull	_____	J. Kolb	_____
F. Mok	<u>am</u>	K. Regan	_____
S. Huntley	_____	J. Combs	_____

  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 General Manager

Approved \_\_\_\_\_ Disapproved \_\_\_\_\_ Withdrawn \_\_\_\_\_

RECOMMENDATION:

That the Board:

1. Approve a personal services agreement with Jeff Yana, substantially in the form attached, for expert systems assistance related to the graphics software and rendering systems and hardware used in development of the Griffith Observatory Planetarium Show, from September 22, 2005, to March 3, 2006, for a contract maximum of \$40,000.00, subject to approval of the Mayor and review and approval by the City Attorney as to form;
2. Find, pursuant to Charter Section 371(e), that the services to be performed by Jeff Yana require specialized technical expertise for which competitive bidding is not practicable or advantageous;
3. Find, pursuant to Charter Section 1022, that the Department does not have personnel available in its employ with sufficient expertise to undertake these specialized professional tasks in a timely manner, and that these service can be performed more feasibly by qualified independent contractors than by a City employee;
4. Direct the Board Secretary to transmit the proposed agreement to the Mayor in accordance with Executive Directive No. 16, concurrently to the City Attorney for review and approval as to form; and,
5. Authorize the President and Secretary to execute the agreements upon receipt of necessary approvals.

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### SUMMARY:

The Griffith Observatory will reopen in 2006 with a new state-of-the-art Planetarium Theater. A laser-projected, all-dome video system with the capability to show high-definition video will replace the antiquated 35 mm slide system removed in 2002. Production of the first 30 minute planetarium show, with 10 minutes of images from the Zeiss Mark IX star and planet projector integrated with 20 minutes of full-dome animated video sequences, and a custom synchronized audio track, must result in a show unique to the Observatory Planetarium and commensurate with the expectations raised by the Renovation project itself. A team of graphics specialists, 3-D animators, composers, modelers, and production staff, funded by Department and in part by the Friends of the Observatory, have boosted the excellence and innovation expected for this premiere show. The Department has also undertaken to purchase high quality, state-of-the-art graphics workstations, graphics software used in the most sophisticated current commercial animation motion pictures, and computer capacity to render complex five- and six-camera animated sequences. The specialized servers and other computer equipment necessary to draw, animate, composite, and ultimately render into final form the planetarium show are unique to the motion picture industry and require expert knowledge for installation and regular monitoring to increase efficiency. Among the staffing resources which have been budgeted at the Observatory are a Systems Programmer and a Systems Analyst II, which are intended to work on applications, networking, and personal computer support, for the planetarium show production studio, for the exhibit program, for the ticketing system, and for general operating assistance. Although assistance with purchase, installation, and administration of the animation systems is partially handled by City staff, an expert is needed to train staff on daily operations, to assist in installation of addition of rendering capacity when added in October as the production accelerates toward final rendering, and to advise throughout the production on troubleshooting, enhancements, and efficiency improvements.

In March, 2005, the Observatory identified an available expert to provide training to staff in operation of the existing rendering farm and servers, and to help design an expanded and faster system. A Letter of Agreement with Jeff Yana, for an amount not-to-exceed \$20,000.00, was approved for a short time period. Mr. Yana was referred by a graphics animation specialist and is well-known in the local animation studio industry as an expert, with experience working with major studios, production houses, and vendors. He possesses multiple years' specialized experience in visual and special effects systems administration, applications, and network administration for effects rendering, all working in a cross-platform environment (Linux, Mac OSX, and Windows). He assisted the Observatory systems and graphics staff in designing an improved system, of which the servers, memory back-up, and rendering boxes were purchased with MICLA and other funds set aside for Observatory needs. The Observatory graphics animation production group is ready to install the new system and begin more advanced rendering, but going forward, we continue to need Mr. Yana for installation, integration, and troubleshooting, until the current production concludes in early 2006.

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Based on his prior work experiences and his demonstrated abilities, Mr. Yana clearly brings a unique body of skills and talents that would not be available at this time from City systems staff, but will train that staff for future responsibility as the system is made operational and during troubleshooting of the new system's equipment. The efficient and expanded graphics animation system will help the Observatory achieve the goal of an awe-inspiring opening for the planetarium show, on a timely basis.

### FISCAL IMPACT STATEMENT:

The Department's Budget for 2005-2006 which commenced on July 1, 2005, includes \$553,124.00 in Contractual Services funding, much of which is planned for Planetarium show production expenses. Mr. Yana will be paid \$55 per hour on an as-needed basis when requested for assistance. Sufficient funds are available in Department 88, Fund 302, Contractual Services Account 304, Activity 7780.

Report prepared by Linda Barth, Administrative Resource Division