



Office of the
**INDIAN RIVER COUNTY
ADMINISTRATOR**

Jason E. Brown, County Administrator
Michael C. Zito, Assistant County Administrator

MEMORANDUM

TO: Members of the Board of County Commissioners

FROM: Jason E. Brown
County Administrator

Dylan Reingold
County Attorney

DATE: March 18, 2019

SUBJECT: Budget Amendment 009
Intergovernmental Coordinator/Public Information Officer Position

Background and Analysis

On July 1, 2014, the Indian River County Board of County Commissioners (“Board”) discussed the issue of creating and funding an “Intergovernmental Relations and Grants Coordinator” position. As part of the discussion the Board requested that the County Attorney’s Office create a plan analyzing the alternatives for future lobbying efforts with respect to obtaining funding and positive legislative results at the state level.

On July 15, 2014, the Board approved the concept of having an attorney in the County Attorney’s Office serve as the point person with one or more lobbying firms, other counties and our legislators and their staff in promoting Indian River County’s (the “County”) priorities. At the time, the County Attorney’s Office was staffed with someone who had the skill set to immediately fill the role, Assistant County Attorney Kate Cotner. Unfortunately, Kate Cotner has been given the opportunity to further her career elsewhere and thus as the County Attorney looks to hire a new Assistant County Attorney, I thought it was important to discuss examining the intergovernmental coordinator role.

Since 2014, whether the issue was the sale of the City of Vero Beach electric utility, Brightline or biosolids, the “County has become more involved in legislative matters. And the work is not constrained to the two months of session. There are committee weeks prior to session and meetings that take place with agencies throughout the year.

Back in 2014, one of the options presented to the Board was to fund an intergovernmental coordinator position. This person would not replace the need to hire a lobbyist, but instead would monitor and track all budgetary and legislative issues on behalf of the County and work with a lobbying firm when necessary to protect the County's interests and support the Board's legislative priorities.

There are several benefits to creating and funding a full-time person as an intergovernmental coordinator. This person would be able to focus on the County's issues in Tallahassee without balancing other job-related responsibilities. Additionally, this person could serve as a public information officer, coordinating with our local governments and local organizations and the press on important County issues. County staff has identified a growing need for a public information officer to coordinate communications on matters of significance to the County (e.g. Indian River Lagoon efforts, All Aboard Florida/Brightline, Biosolids). Frequently, these issues result in legislative priorities as well. A designated public information officer would also be beneficial during emergencies such as hurricanes, which, while rare in frequency, can have a significant impact on the County and our residents. Such position would report to the County Administrator. This would allow the County Attorney to hire a new Assistant County Attorney who would work full time on legal issues in the County Attorney's Office. The workload for the County Attorney's Office has increased with the faster pace of development activity as well as right-of-way acquisition, and this would additionally prepare the County Attorney's Office for future staff transitions anticipated in the next couple of years.

Funding

Funding for the proposed position in the amount of \$98,679 will be provided by the attached budget amendment from General Fund/Cash Forward Oct 1st.

Staff Recommendation

Staff recommends the Board of County Commissioners approve the proposed budget resolution amending the fiscal year 2018/19 budget to add a position in the County Administrator's Office that will support the County's legislative priorities as well as serving as the public information officer.