



Consent Item 9

TO: Ava Community Energy Authority

FROM: Alec Ward, Principal Legislative Manager

SUBJECT: CSA with Omni Government Relations for State Legislative Advocacy and Advisory Services

DATE: February 21, 2024

Recommendation

Adopt a Resolution authorizing Ava Community Energy's (Ava's) Chief Executive Officer to negotiate and execute a Consulting Services Agreement (CSA) with Omni Government Relations, LLC (Omni) to provide state legislative advocacy and advisory services to Ava through December 31, 2024, with a not-to-exceed amount of \$115,000.

Background and Discussion

Ava staff met separately with three highly recommended government relations firms in October 2023 to solicit quotes and discuss the firms' background, qualifications, experience, abilities, and proposed approach: 1) Weideman Group, 2) Strategies 360, and 3) Omni. Staff evaluated the strengths and weaknesses of each proposal along with the proposed quote. Staff selected Omni as the best option and recommends Board approval of a one-year contract for state legislative services. Omni rose to the top of the selection pool based on the quality of its personnel, demonstrated competence and successes, existing partnerships and relationships, strategic and tactical insights and capabilities, proposed price, and ability to tailor its strategy and approach to the needs, mission, and goals of Ava. These services would replace those previously provided to Ava by Weideman Group between 2018 to 2023.

Omni is a full-service government affairs firm with years of proven experience shaping some of the state's most pressing public policy issues. Omni was founded by one of Sacramento's leading lobbyists, Mandy Lee, who brings her experience from the

Capitol, private sector, and nonprofit background to bear for the benefit of her clients. Mandy Lee is a distinguished government and government affairs professional, and she brings over 15 years of government relations, campaign, political strategy, and public service experience to her clients. She serves as a trusted advisor to national and state trade associations, prominent Fortune 10 companies, and large public agencies. Dan Chia of Omni would also represent Ava. Most recently, Dan was the Founder/Principal of Chia Strategies, a clean energy and transportation boutique consulting and lobbying firm. Dan created his own practice after a ten-year government affairs career at Tesla and SolarCity. Dan advocated for Ava's legislative causes in 2022 through our previous government relations firm, and his work was well regarded. Omni also has a strong familiarity with Community Choice Aggregators and Ava. In addition, Omni represents the Clean Power Alliance, where they came highly recommended. Omni has strong relationships with elected officials, especially the Bay Area delegation.

Omni's clear understanding of Ava's mission and values, their successful experience advocating in the clean energy space, and their strategic insights gave Ava staff confidence that Omni is the best choice for providing Ava with state legislative advocacy and advisory services in 2024.

Fiscal Impact

The CSA would result in a not-to-exceed amount of \$115,000 in calendar year 2024. In 2023, Ava had a not-to-exceed amount of \$125,000 for these services.

Attachments

- A. Omni proposal to Ava
- B. Resolution Authorizing the CEO to Negotiate and Execute a CSA with Omni



**PROPOSAL FOR LOBBYING SERVICES
FOR AVA COMMUNITY ENERGY
by Omni Government Relations, LLC
A Registered California Lobbying Firm
Sacramento, CA**

November 19, 2023

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I.

November 19, 2023

Alec Ward, Principal Legislative Manager
Ava Community Energy
1999 Harrison Street, Suite 2300
Oakland, CA 94612

Dear Mr. Ward:

Omni Government Relations, LLC (Omni) is pleased to submit this proposal for lobbying services to Ava Community Energy (ACE).

Founded by leading government affairs professional Mandy Lee, Omni prides itself on delivering smart solutions on behalf of our clients on a multitude of issues. The dictionary defines “omni” as “universal; of all things” and that is the service we bring to our clients. We are all things to our clients but above all, we are your trusted counsel. Omni is a full service government affairs firm with years of proven experience shaping some of the state’s most pressing public policy issues. Our reach of influence benefits our clients and their causes.

Omni has a proven track record of delivering results for our diverse clients. Whether the task is securing a budget allocation, leading a coalition or successfully navigating a high-profile fight, we have done it all with great outcomes for our clients. We have also helped our clients navigate the political realm of Sacramento by helping them build profile and develop relationships with key touch points in the Capitol - advising step by step on how to achieve success and gain influence in California.

We have cultivated our political network through decades of trusted political relationships at the state and local level. Omni’s deep knowledge of the legislative and budgetary process allows us to customize an advocacy plan and work hand-in-hand with our clients to execute it, ultimately charting the course for our clients to achieve their legislative objectives. We develop strategies that are focused, smart and creative in California’s every-changing and tenuous political environment.

We view our mission as helping our clients overcome challenges and identify opportunities in one of the most difficult political landscapes in the world – the California Legislature. We are pleased to submit this proposal to ACE and thank you for the consideration of our firm.

Sincerely,

Mandy Lee
Founder/Principal
Omni Government Relations

II.

TEAM BIO

Omni was founded by one of Sacramento's leading lobbyists, Mandy Lee, who brings her experience from the Capitol, private sector and nonprofit background to bear for the benefit of her clients. Our experience and hard work will provide ACE with expert advocacy and the tools to deliver positive outcomes.

Leading this work will be Mandy Lee, Founder and Principal of the firm. Additionally, Dan Chia, Senior Director, will be supporting her work. Brittany Youngman, Executive Assistant, will provide administrative, legislative research and compliance support.

Mandy Lee

Founder, Omni Government Relations

Mandy Lee is a distinguished government and government affairs professional and brings over 15 years of government relations, campaign, political strategy and public service experience to her clients. She serves as a trusted advisor to national and state trade associations, prominent Fortune 10 companies, and large public agencies helping them navigate through the complex world of politics and policy in one of the world's most challenging political landscapes - the California Legislature.

Mandy founded Omni Government Relations in 2019 with the intention of building a portfolio of world class clients, all while maintaining the personalized touch of a boutique firm. Valuing one-on-one interactions with clients, Mandy curates winning strategies for each of her clients. In 2021, Mandy led a coalition of local governments, electric vehicle charging companies and environmental groups and secured \$51 million in the state budget for a program that will enable her client to build out EV infrastructure in underserved parts of its footprint. In 2022, Mandy succeeded in securing multiple budget allocations in order to relieve supply chain congestion. The most significant accomplishment was not only securing a \$1.2 billion allocation for port infrastructure but ensuring that 70 percent of the funding went directly to the Ports of Long Beach and Los Angeles.

Prior to founding her firm, Mandy served in prominent leadership roles having served as President of one of Sacramento's largest advocacy firms. There, she built a diverse portfolio of clients in the healthcare, banking and finance, transportation, energy and insurance space and managed and led a team of lobbyists. With her diverse client portfolio, she has built longstanding relationships with nearly every Member of the Legislature to the benefit of all of her clients.

Prior to that, Mandy served as Vice President of Government Affairs at the California Retailers Association, a prominent trade association representing the interests of the retail industry. There, she served as chief lobbyist for state, local and regulatory issues and managed the Association's powerful Political Action Committee. In this role, she exhibited success in leading high profile legislative negotiations, coalition building and political strategy.

In 2016, Mandy was nationally recognized as one of the top Asian American Pacific Islander political operatives by the National Association of Asian Pacifics in Politics and Public Affairs (NAAPPPA). In 2019, she was recognized by the California LGBT Caucus for her work in the community, including her efforts to elect more LGBT persons into office. In 2021, 2022 and 2023, she was named in Capitol Weekly's Top 100 list, which highlights the 100 most powerful movers and shakers in California politics today.

Mandy started her career in public service, having served in a number of capacities in both houses of the California Legislature. A key pillar of Omni's advocacy approach is built on the philosophy that you must master the institution that you seek to influence.

Mandy dedicates her spare time to giving back to the community. She is the former President and current Executive Committee Board Member of Equality California, one of the largest LGBTQ civil rights organizations in the nation, helping the organization with its political and advocacy activities. She also serves on the Board of the California Legislative LGBT Leadership Fund, participating in independent expenditures and direct electoral activities to get more LGBTQ+ people into elected office.

Mandy is a graduate of California State University Hayward, where she studied political science with an emphasis on law.

Dan Chia

Senior Director, Omni Government Relations

Dan Chia is a Senior Director at Omni Government Relations. Most recently, he was the Founder/Principal of Chia Strategies, a clean energy and transportation boutique consulting and lobbying firm. Dan created his own practice after a fulfilling, ten-year government affairs career at Tesla and SolarCity. As a Senior Manager of Public Policy and Business Development at Tesla, Dan led west coast government affairs, including CA state and local government affairs, during the company's critical growth phase after introduction of the Model 3. He managed a team of policy and regulatory experts in EVs, solar energy, battery storage, and EV charging, provided strategic advice to the Tesla's executive team regarding business development, tax incentives, and other matters, and helped resolve local government permitting and regulatory issues at Tesla's major CA facilities. Dan played a pivotal role in helping to secure millions of dollars of sales tax exemptions for Tesla's EV and battery manufacturing facilities and helped pass legislation and regulatory measures to accelerate the adoption of EVs, charging infrastructure, and rooftop solar. As Director of Policy and Electricity Markets for SolarCity, Dan managed California and Nevada legislative and regulatory affairs and opened new markets in these states.

Dan began his career in the public sector, as a land use regulator for the California Coastal Commission, analyzing coastal development permit applications for energy and other industrial projects in the coastal zone. He was the lead analyst reviewing the impacts of trans-Pacific fiber optic cables, oil and gas remediation, and coastal power plants. He then served four California State Assemblymembers, including three consecutive Chairs of the Assembly Natural Resources Committee, with expansive jurisdiction over issues such as energy, forestry and fire management, mining, land conservation, oil and gas development, and waste management. Dan

gained valuable energy and utility experience as a Deputy Director in the CA Public Utilities Commission's (CPUC) Office of Government Affairs, advising CPUC Commissioners, senior leadership, and the Governor's Office on legislative and budget matters and working closely with legislators, CPUC staff and stakeholders to shape legislation in a manner the CPUC could support.

Dan received a Master's in Public Policy from the Goldman School of Public Policy at U.C. Berkeley and Bachelor of Science degree in Environmental Policy Analysis and Planning from U.C. Davis.

He lives in Sacramento with his wife and son and enjoys keeping up with his son on the playground, playing tennis, hiking, and gardening.

III. **SCOPE OF WORK**

The Scope of Work described below is hereby included as an integral part of our proposal to ACE. The goal of the activities listed below is to provide you with the most coordinated and seamless service possible in furtherance of the ACE's legislative, budgetary and administrative needs.

- Omni will assist ACE in building and enhancing relationships with key members of the Legislature, Governor's Office, and Newsom Administration and their staff, enabling ACE to raise its profile and influence, improve its credibility, and increase its bandwidth.
- Omni will connect ACE's work with issues and policies that are of interest to the Governor and Legislature including climate change, energy reliability, zero-emission transportation and charging infrastructure, and distributed energy resources. With a full understanding of the breadth of the ACE's assets and initiatives, Omni can help personalize ACE's work both in Sacramento and in legislative districts in order to demonstrate ACE's leadership in these areas and allow legislators to see how relevant policies are directly impacting their constituents.
- Omni will initially focus on enhancing relationships with ACE's legislative delegation with the goal of ensuring these legislators perceive ACE as a resource and leader in the clean energy space.
- Omni will work with ACE to develop an advocacy and outreach plan, incorporating the above scope and other strategies or tactics to accomplish its legislative, budgetary or administrative needs for the 2024 legislative cycle.
- Omni will help ACE organize advocacy or other trips to Sacramento and schedule meetings with Legislators, the Governor's Office, relevant committee and other staff.
- Omni will electronically track and analyze all introduced legislation and amendments affecting ACE. Omni will provide ACE with custom bill reports containing status, location, and relevant hearing dates.
- Omni will advocate on behalf of ACE in meetings with legislators, testify in committee or budget hearings, and assist in drafting or finalizing position letters, legislation and amendments as directed by ACE.
- Omni will provide ACE updates on legislation, the state budget, political trends, and electoral and other information relevant to ACE during regular check-ins and an annual strategy retreat.
- Omni will keep ACE apprised of key proposals and developments at agencies such as the CA Energy Commission, CA Air Resources Board, and others as directed by ACE, and introduce ACE to relevant appointees and staff at these agencies.

IV.

FEE SCHEDULE

Omni Government Relations proposes to meet the full range of legislative advocacy services work described above in the Scope of Work section. For this agreement, we suggest a monthly retainer fee set at Ten Thousand Dollars (\$10,000) per month.

Extraordinary business expenses, such as air fare and hotel accommodations or other travel shall be reimbursed with prior approval from ACE. Omni's retainer will be billed monthly by a written invoice to the contract administrator.

RESOLUTION NO. R-2024-XX

A RESOLUTION OF THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS OF AVA COMMUNITY ENERGY AUTHORITY AUTHORIZING THE CEO TO NEGOTIATE AND EXECUTE A CONSULTING SERVICES AGREEMENT WITH OMNI GOVERNMENT RELATIONS, LLC

WHEREAS The Ava Community Energy Authority (“Ava”) was formed as a community choice aggregation agency (“CCA”) on December 1, 2016, Under the Joint Exercise of Power Act, California Government Code sections 6500 *et seq.*, among the County of Alameda, and the Cities of Albany, Berkeley, Dublin, Emeryville, Fremont, Hayward, Livermore, Piedmont, Oakland, San Leandro, and Union City to study, promote, develop, conduct, operate, and manage energy-related climate change programs in all of the member jurisdictions. The cities of Newark and Pleasanton, located in Alameda County, along with the City of Tracy, located in San Joaquin County, were added as members of Ava and parties to the JPA in March of 2020. The city of Stockton, located in San Joaquin County was added as a member of Ava and party to the JPA in September of 2022. The city of Lathrop, located in San Joaquin County, was added as a member to Ava and party to the JPA in October of 2023. On October 24, 2023, the Authority legally adopted the name Ava Community Energy Authority, where it had previously used the name East Bay Community Energy Authority since its inception.

WHEREAS Ava would be benefited by assistance from Omni Government Relations, LCC (Omni) for legislative advocacy and advisory services, both to represent Ava’s views on bills in the new legislative cycle as well as to provide legislative advocacy and advice around any bills that Ava may choose to sponsor. Omni would facilitate countless meetings in Sacramento, in district and remotely, and support Ava in developing relationships with legislators and their staff, as well as with administration officials and other key strategic partners.

WHEREAS Ava staff solicited quotes from three advocacy firms, and Omni was selected due to the quality of its personnel, demonstrated competence and successes, existing partnerships and relationships, strategic and tactical insights and capabilities, proposed price, and its ability to tailor its strategy and approach to the needs, mission, and goals of Ava.

WHEREAS From 2018 to 2023, Ava contracted with the Weideman Group, Inc. for these services. In 2023, the not-to-exceed for this contract was \$125,000.

WHEREAS The contract with the Weideman Group, Inc. expired on December 31, 2023, and Ava now needs new legislative advocacy and advisory services.

NOW, THEREFORE, THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS OF AVA COMMUNITY ENERGY AUTHORITY DOES HEREBY RESOLVE AS FOLLOWS:

Section 1. Ava's Board of Directors hereby authorizes Ava's Chief Executive Officer to negotiate and execute a Consulting Services Agreement with Omni to provide state legislative advocacy and advisory services to Ava through December 31, 2024, with a not-to-exceed amount of \$115,000.

ADOPTED AND APPROVED this 21st day of February 2024.

Elisa Márquez, Chair

ATTEST:

Adrian Bankhead, Clerk of the Board