



MEMORANDUM

Date: February 4, 2025 City Commission Meeting

To: Honorable Mayor and Commissioners

From: Alison Higgins, Resiliency Manager

Via: Brian L. Barroso, City Manager

Subject: Updated Interlocal Agreement with the College of the Florida Keys for Water Quality Partnership, involving funding, equipment, services, deliverables and insurance.

Introduction

Authorize the City Manager to approve the updated Interlocal Agreement (ILA) outlining the funding, equipment, services, deliverables and insurance for a water quality partnership with the College of the Florida Keys (CFK).

Background

In the fall of 2020, CFK began sampling water quality within the Key West Harbor to capture the effects of an absence of cruise ships during the Covid shutdown. Based on funding priorities set by the Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary Water Quality Protection Program Steering Committee (WQPP), CFK then received a grant from EPA to expand the monitoring stations and sampling post Covid.

In 2021, the City of Key West surveyed its residents for the creation of a Strategic Plan, finalized in August of that year. Environmental Protection of Nearshore Waters was 4th of 6 community priorities that came from that survey effort. Per Strategic Plan action items, City staff formed a Water Quality Advisory Team consisting of technical experts from FDEP, NOAA, and UF/Monroe County to determine sampling priorities and a budget, which was proposed in April of 2022 and approved for the FY23 budget which started in October of 2022.

During the summer of 2022, the City partnered with CFK on a 2nd EPA grant proposal to expand the Key West Harbor monitoring and add the City's sampling priorities in current Areas of Concern (Mooring Fields, Mt Trashmore and Smathers Beach). EPA announced that CFK had been awarded the 2nd grant in December of 2022. CFK has delivered semi-annual presentations to the City Commission as work on those two grants has progressed. The final reports for grant #1 is due in March of 2025 and for grant #2 is March 2026.

On April 11, 2023, the City Commission approved the first ILA (Resolution 23-106), budgeting

\$180,000.00 to partner with CFK on a Water Quality Testing Program. That ILA specified that the bulk of the funding (~\$160,000.00) would pay for half of an autonomous vessel which CFK will use to expand its sampling in the Key West Harbor and three additional Key West priority areas. Remaining funds (~\$20,000.00) would pay for lab supplies and sample testing. The first ILA also allowed CFK to install its continuous water quality monitoring system near Mallory Square and ensured that it carried enough insurance to protect the CITY.

The second ILA reduces focus on the Key West Harbor grant, but still allows the monitoring equipment to remain on City property. It refers to FY25 funding which was approved to support EPA grant #2 for the Contaminants of Emerging Concern at CITY identified Areas of Concern. It reduces bi-monthly monitoring to monthly, as it was determined by the EPA that monthly was frequent enough to obtain good data.

The City has continued to meet with the Water Quality Advisory Team, which has grown to also include Mote, Monroe County Marine Resources, Reef Relief, Jacobs consulting and CFK, and presented the Advisory Team's Key West Water Improvement Plan (WQIP) goals to the City Commission in September of 2024. In October of 2024 the Water Quality Advisory Team chose 20 priority action items from a list of 40 and has recommended these actions for as part of the WQIP for FY25.

A presentation and printouts on current, known Water Quality monitoring as well as the FY25 WQIP action items are included with this agenda item.

Purpose and Justification

Per the ILA and conditions and objectives of the current CFK grant agreement with the EPA South Florida Program (Award #02D43523), CFK will:

- 1) Continue to maintain and monitor water quality monitoring equipment in Key West Harbor and Ship Channel and nearby coral reef habitats,
- 2) Continue monthly field measurements and monthly collection of water samples at AOC in the surrounding waters of Key West and submit the samples for analysis by an accredited facility, and
- 3) Continue participation on the CITY Water Quality Improvement Plan.

Monitoring shall continue in perpetuity beyond the duration of the EPA grant (Award #02D43523) contingent upon periodic renewal of the ILA, and annual approval of CFK water quality monitoring budget proposals to the CITY.

Procurement

The City has budgeted \$127,125 in FY25 to continue the Water Quality Testing Program with CFK. The itemized budget request is part of the agenda package.

Recommendation

Staff recommends authorizing the City Manager approval of this Water Quality Partnership Interlocal Agreement with The College of the Florida Keys to authorize funding, equipment, services, deliverables and insurance requirements.