

REPORT OF GENERAL MANAGER


NO. 04-114

DATE April 7, 2004

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BOARD OF RECREATION AND PARK COMMISSIONERS

SUBJECT: APPROVAL OF PERSONAL SERVICES CONTRACTS WITH JOHN CHRISTOPHER BUTLER AND SHAWN W. CROSBY FOR THE PRODUCTION OF ASTRONOMICAL VISUALIZATIONS FOR THE GRIFFITH OBSERVATORY PLANETARIUM SHOW

*G. Stigile		H. Fujita	_____
K. Chan	_____	J. Kolb	_____
F. Mok	_____	K. Regan	_____
M. Mariscal	_____	J. Combs	_____

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

Approved \_\_\_\_\_ Disapproved \_\_\_\_\_ Withdrawn \_\_\_\_\_

RECOMMENDATION:

That the Board:

1. Enter into personal services contracts with John Christopher Butler and Shawn Crosby for specialized services for the production of a planetarium show at the renovated Griffith Observatory. Each provider, under separate contracts, to render as-needed services for two (2) years from the date of execution, not to exceed \$100,000 in any twelve month period, for a contract maximum of \$115,500; and
2. Find that the services to be performed by John Christopher Butler and Shawn Crosby require specialized technical expertise for which competitive bidding is not practicable or advantageous; and
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; and
4. Direct the Board Secretary to transmit the proposed agreement to the Mayor in accordance with Executive Directive 16, concurrently to the City Attorney for review as to form, and upon the Mayor's and City Attorney's approval, authorize the President and Secretary to execute the agreements.

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### SUMMARY:

The Griffith Observatory will reopen in late 2005 or early 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 25 minutes of full-dome video, already has been underway. Due to resource limitations, much of the video production has been completed in-house. The work of the in-house production team is ready to be blended with video acquired from outside sources. Added to the video will be original full-dome animated video sequences, and a custom synchronized audio track, to create a show unique to the Observatory Planetarium. The skills required to seamlessly integrate the elements and ensure stylistic consistency are beyond staff's abilities, therefore, personal services contracts with two skilled and knowledgeable individuals are recommended.

John Christopher Butler and Shawn Crosby are two candidates who meet the Observatory's criteria. Due to the uniqueness of the technology used by the Planetarium, very few individuals were found who could be considered to fulfill this contract. Expert knowledge in various graphics applications including Adobe Photoshop, After Effects, MAYA, Cinema4D, Mental Ray, and the SkyVision module of Digital Fusion, coupled with the requirement for a strong knowledge of astronomy, limited the field of potential candidates.

Through referrals of the planetarium community, John Christopher Butler was identified. Mr. Butler is a renowned astronomical illustrator with extensive international publication experience including National Geographic World, National Geographic Televisions, Omni Magazine, Asimov Science Fiction Magazine, Scientific American and the History Channel; and numerous honors such as Reader's award for cover art, Asimov Magazine, 2001; Judges Award, World Science Fiction Convention, Anaheim, 1996; First Place, professional division, Orange County Science Fiction and Fantasy Art Show, 1991. He has the ability to transform his illustrations into models and utilize computer graphics to animate those visualizations. Mr. Butler will create texture maps of various topographical and astronomical elements. He will graphically reproduce the models using computer graphics and generate animated sequences of the maps. He will assist in the animation of several sequences and the rough and final cuts of the Planetarium show.

One other qualified individual with the technical skills and astronomical background was identified, but could not meet our contract terms.

While no other candidates emerged with the astronomical background, Shawn Crosby was referred to the Observatory, and has had extensive experience with science fiction themes. Shawn Crosby is the owner/operator of a production company in Los Angeles, which has provided over 23 years of service conceptualizing, designing, and constructing models with science themes for film projects. He has designed for Mattel Toys and Vivendi Universal. Mr. Crosby will provide modeling and animation of various sequences for the rough and final cuts, as well as audio production services, overseeing encoding of audio and video, and creating user interface and designs for the DVD video.

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We are fortunate to have identified these qualified individuals who have agreed to provide their services within the budget established by the Observatory. The consultants will provide their services at an hourly rate of \$32. The average salaries for animators/modelers in the Los Angeles area is \$40-\$50 per hour, based on a forty-hour week, and \$100-\$115 per hour for the most experienced animators/modelers. Due to the importance of this project among the Planetarium community, the contractors have discounted their rates for the opportunity to contribute to this high-profile project. The contract with Mr. Butler will be paid out of the Observatory's Municipal Recreation Program account. Mr. Crosby's contract will be paid from the Department's Contractual Services Account 304. Sufficient funds are available in both accounts to pay for the contracts for the remainder of the fiscal year.

Report prepared by Dale Wong Nguyen, Administrative Resource Division