

## Mary Quinn

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**From:** Vanessa Schneider <[REDACTED]>  
**Sent:** Wednesday, January 17, 2024 10:03 PM  
**To:** Clerk  
**Cc:** District3; District4  
**Subject:** Agenda 01.18.2024 ID 24-63

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To the Honorable Members of the Fresno City Council:

My name is Vanessa Schneider and I am proud of my women, minority-owned and green certified, small business in Fresno. I am writing today as my company recently responded to a Request for Proposal opportunity and have been disheartened by the overall experience we had throughout the process.

I apologize for falling out of decorum and failing to send this more than 24 hours before the meeting.

To be clear, I am not writing because I want the decision of which vendor was recommended to be revisited, but instead, I believe there is great room for Fresno to improve the overall transparency to local businesses responding to these opportunities to work with the City.

The journey to owning a business has been long and complicated. My organization began in 2019 and incorporated in 2021. Since then, we have had the opportunity to work with special-districts, non-profit organizations and one municipality. We had been awaiting the chance to respond to a City of Fresno RFP as we hoped to provide support to our own community. When the opportunity arose, we were pleased to see a notation for "Local Preference" within the RFP. As part of the RFP response, we completed the "Certification For Local Preference" form.

By reading agenda item number 24-63 for the 01.18.2024 City Council meeting, I learned that the staff recommends that you contract with a group from Florida for an amount which shows that we severely under-cut our value of what this project is worth to the City.

The documented "Report to the City Council" has a notation under "Local Preference" that states: "Local preference was not implemented per Fresno Municipal Code Section 4-109(b)(3), as there were not three or more local firms providing the specific consulting service within the area of expertise for the subject matter of work."

This is the first time that I have seen this requirement of three or more local firms responding. While I understand why this may be standard practice, this is stifling to local businesses bringing innovative ideas to our community. Had we been aware of this, we would have provided an explanation in our RFP response as to why there would not be at least three local firms responding.

One of the many reasons we began this business is because, to our knowledge, we saw there are not any local firms offering the services we provide. Often-times, local organizations must seek out these services from firms located in larger cities such as San Francisco. My company works to fill this gap because we seek to serve our local community's needs. With this being the case, and having this new-found understanding of what is required for "Local-Preference" to be invoked, I see this as a strong discouragement, rather than support, for companies bringing new ideas and services to our Central Valley.

My company is accustomed to losing to the out of town Goliaths of our fields. What is disheartening is the perceived lack of consideration that we received. We were not given the opportunity for a phone call, interview, or even having the City Council be aware that a local firm responded to this RFP.

I offer a couple of suggestions for how this process could be made better and more transparent in the future for other local organizations:

- 1.
- 2.
3. The RFP should include the explanation that three or more local firms must respond to
4. a proposal for Local Preference to come into effect.
- 5.
- 6.
- 7.
8. The Certification for Local Preference form that vendors must complete should also include
9. this clause of requiring three or more local businesses to respond.
- 10.
- 11.
- 12.
13. The "Report to the City Council" should list the number of local firms that did respond
14. to the RFP to inform members and provide an opportunity to ask questions as to why our tax dollars are being recommended to be sent elsewhere.
- 15.

I greatly appreciate your time and consideration in reading this letter. I sincerely hope that these considerations can be made to bring forth stronger support and opportunities for our local businesses.

Sincerely,

Vanessa Schneider, SHRM-CP, PHR  
Co-Founder/Co-Owner  
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