



- **Board of Directors**  
***Engineering, Operations, and Technology Committee***

4/8/2025 Board Meeting

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7-3

## Subject

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Authorize an agreement with Metal Toad Media Inc. for a new fixed cost of \$299,000 per year with a not-to-exceed amount of \$996,200 for the duration of the three-year agreement to host, manage, and maintain Metropolitan's external websites; the General Manager has determined that the proposed action is exempt or otherwise not subject to CEQA

## Executive Summary

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Metropolitan's external websites have been hosted and maintained by the Managed Service Provider (MSP) that was selected for the website redesign project, which was approved in 2019. This action would authorize Metropolitan to enter into an agreement with Metal Toad Media Inc. Metal Toad Media Inc. will serve as the MSP for Metropolitan's four external websites; providing support and maintenance for three years at a not-to-exceed amount of \$996,200. Metal Toad Media Inc. was selected through a competitive Request for Proposal process due to their qualifications and staff expertise on the specific technology used for the external websites, as well as the increased breadth of support activities provided.

## Proposed Action(s)/Recommendation(s) and Options

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### Staff Recommendation: Option #1

#### Option #1

Authorize an agreement with Metal Toad Media Inc. for a new fixed cost of \$299,000 per year with a not-to-exceed amount of \$996,200 for the duration of the three-year agreement to host, manage, and maintain Metropolitan's external websites.

**Fiscal Impact:** Expenditures of \$598,000 in operations and maintenance funds for FY 2024/25 and FY 2025/26 are planned and budgeted. The remaining \$299,000 will be budgeted in the future in FY 2026/27.

**Business Analysis:** Ensure continued support and functionality of Metropolitan's external websites, with improvements that optimize and further secure these sites. This will reduce hosting costs over time and improve our cybersecurity posture.

#### Option #2

Do not proceed with the project at this time.

**Fiscal Impact:** Pay the full \$245,000 for the current calendar year agreement with the existing provider, plus any additional costs associated with changes or upgrades. Significant exposure to additional ad hoc support costs; existing agreement covers fewer activities in its fixed scope than Option #1.

**Business Analysis:** Agreement with the current provider will continue, which will perpetuate ongoing support challenges and delay progress on optimizations and feature enhancements, as well as require an agreement renegotiation at an undetermined price later this year.

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## Alternatives Considered

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Information Technology has considered migrating the external websites to a Microsoft Azure cloud tenant that is managed by IT staff. Limited staff availability, new technical skills required, and unknown cost implications were justifications to avoid this alternative at this time.

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## Applicable Policy

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Metropolitan Water District Administrative Code Section 5108: Appropriations

Metropolitan Water District Administrative Code Section 8121: General Authority of the General Manager to Enter Contracts

Metropolitan Water District Administrative Code Section 11104: Delegation of Responsibilities

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## Related Board Action(s)/Future Action(s)

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By Minute Item 51557, dated April 9, 2019, the Board authorized a \$1,500,000 agreement with Sensis Inc. to redesign the mwdh2o.com website and implement a Content Management System, as set forth in Agenda Item 7-2 board letter.

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## Summary of Outreach Completed

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Not applicable

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## California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA)

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### CEQA determination for Option #1:

The proposed action is exempt from CEQA because there is no potential for the activity in question to have a significant effect on the environment. (State CEQA Guidelines Section 15061(b)(3)).

### CEQA determination for Option #2:

None required

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## Background

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One of the most effective tools for Metropolitan to communicate with the public and provide access to information is through external-facing websites. These sites allow Metropolitan to disseminate information on water issues in its service area with member agencies, local officials, media, educators, and the general public.

For any business or public agency, a consistently available, well-optimized, and modern website is essential to inspire confidence from visitors and is often the first impression people have when interacting with the organization. The mwdh2o.com redesign project, approved in 2019, modernized the technology used by Metropolitan's websites and introduced the Umbraco Content Management System to improve the efficiency of website management.

Metropolitan's current agreement for maintenance and hosting of public-facing websites expires in December 2025. After internal discussion, it was decided that a search for a new MSP to handle the public-facing websites was necessary in order to improve support and evaluate existing technology for optimization and cost savings opportunities. The four external Metropolitan websites being managed by this service provider are: mwdh2o.com, bewaterwise.com, mwdinnovates.com, and socialwaterdialogue.org.

After a competitive RFP process, the evaluation committee has selected Metal Toad Media Inc. as the preferred service provider. Metal Toad Media Inc. demonstrated the best qualifications both in the firm's completed projects and in the experience of individual staff in the technology stack. In addition to the ongoing maintenance of the existing external websites, services will include an architecture review, cloud computing optimization, an increased threshold for support tasks included in the fixed cost, and no additional cost for upgrades to the Umbraco Content Management System. The new agreement is for fixed-cost services of \$299,000 per year which includes professional services for maintenance of the websites and hosting costs. This cost is budgeted in the

Information Technology group budget for FY 2024/25 and FY 2025/26, and will be budgeted in the future for FY 2026/27.

An amount of \$97,200 has been allocated under this contract for additional services beyond what is included in the fixed costs. These services may include the development of new features, migrations to new or emerging technology, redesign efforts that go beyond basic in-scope changes, and other enhancement requests that fall outside the scope of the fixed-cost services.

  
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Charlie Eckstrom 3/25/2025  
Group Manager, Information Technology Date

  
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Deven Upadhyay 3/25/2025  
General Manager Date

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