



Legal Services Committee Meeting  
December 15, 2009; 9:30 a.m.  
Conference Call

**Committee Attendees:** Gerald K. Schwartz, Esq.; Alan Eckstein, Esq.; Lucy C. Piñeiro, Esq.

**Staff Attendees:** Evelio Torres (President/CEO); Leeana Pena; Angelo Parrino; Melody Thelwell; Blythe Robinson

- E. Torres informed A. Eckstein that a final decision had not been made after the interviews. L. Piñeiro and G. Schwartz preferred to wait for him to make a final decision.
- L. Piñeiro stated she was impressed with Weiss Serota Helfman Pastoriza Cole & Boniske, P.L. She was not at all impressed with Alex Palenzuela, however liked Nina Boniske. She stated there was a lack of engagement from Mr. Palenzuela however Ms. Boniske was very responsive.
- A. Eckstein stated that Mr. Palenzuela presented for the firm the first time around. He believes the purpose of the second interview was to allow the other representatives to present, which explains lack of engagement. He stated that after going through the Weiss Serota Helfman Pastoriza Cole & Boniske, P.L. notes and comparing with the Tew Cardenas, LLP notes, he has a preference for Weiss. He stated Weiss would be a good fit. He was a little turned off by Santiago Echemendia's request for public information records. He stated it was very poor judgment for Mr. Echemendia to request public information records from a company he is trying to get employed with. He stated he's also concerned with how Mr. Echemendia can cooperate with staff.
- E. Torres stated that Gray Robinson turned in a late proposal which was forwarded to the Legal Services Committee prior to the call.
- G. Schwartz stated he was not interested in Gray Robinson.
- A. Eckstein stated he was not interested in Gray Robinson, considering the laidback attitude they've had in working with us since Walter Harvey left and the delay in getting in a proposal.
- G. Schwartz stated he has no preference between the two firms. He doesn't think Mr. Palenzuela should be working with us on a daily basis, however he liked Ms. Boniske. He thinks both law firms are fine and both would represent very well. He asked E. Torres for his opinion of the two firms.
- E. Torres stated that his experience has been with Tew Cardenas. The quality of work has been great. He stated he agrees that the public records request was in poor taste and not very good judgment considering they were applying for our business. Mr. Echemendia has since called Tabatha Cullen to apologize.
- E. Torres stated that Weiss Serota is a very good law firm, and seems more than highly capable. To Mr. Echemendia's credit, he did a wonderful job in dealing with the



insurance company. The insurance company agreed to reimburse the ELC. He stated that Weiss Serota might be just as good and thinks staff could work with either firm. He stated that Weiss Serota's approach is a little more personable. However, it will be difficult to replace Mr. Palenzuela with another colleague. Tew Cardenas has a strong position in Tallahassee.

- A. Eckstein stated he is concerned with how Tew Cardenas bills. If Mr. Echemendia can guarantee to stay within the ELC budget then it won't be an issue. He asked E. Torres to ensure the firm isn't billing for every two minutes or for every memo to file.
- G. Schwartz thinks Tew Cardenas is the right choice but to clarify the billing issue with them.
- E. Torres asked M. Thelwell if she was comfortable working with Mr. Echemendia and his assistant.
- M. Thelwell stated she's only had experience in working with Mr. Echemendia. She has only received correspondence from his assistant, but feels comfortable working with Tew Cardenas. She stated the ELC will just have to be careful of his billing.
- L. Piñeiro agreed that the work product is excellent, and if they agree to stay within the budget, and the employees feel ok with them, then Tew Cardenas is the way to go.
- A. Eckstein stated that he will make the recommendation to the Board at the next Board meeting.