



GSA Administrator

January 24, 2011

The Honorable Claire McCaskill
Chairman
Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs
Subcommittee on Contracting Oversight
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Madam Chairman:

This letter is in response to your inquiry dated November 12, 2010, regarding public relations contracts awarded by the U.S. General Services Administration (GSA). Enclosed please find documents responsive to your request. If any new documentation is found in response to your request, it will be forwarded under separate cover. I appreciate your and your staff's willingness to extend the deadline for response.

GSA takes our communication responsibilities seriously. We are committed to providing open, transparent and substantive communication to our employees, stakeholders, the occupants of our buildings, and the public at large. GSA relies on in-house communication experts to relay information on our programs, policies, and projects. However, on occasion, GSA seeks the assistance of outside communications resources when we identify either a lack of capacity or expertise on a specific subject matter. This was the case in GSA's decision to engage Jane Mobley and Associates, Inc. (JMA)¹ on February 5, 2010.

At that time, GSA had one public affairs officer available in the Heartland Region who was effective in the role of maintaining day-to-day communication functions, but lacked the capacity to handle the complexity of the issues surrounding the Bannister Federal Complex. GSA had one other employee assigned to the Heartland Region who had public affairs experience, but at that time the employee was on military deployment. As a consequence, the decision was made to expand our communications capacity by procuring outside assistance.

JMA's past experience dealing with crisis management, working with EPA, translating technical data and experience working across a broad spectrum and levels of government, along with their knowledge of the local community uniquely qualified them as the firm viewed best situated to provide the skills and capacity needed to respond to this crisis in a timely and effective manner. In sum our decision to retain JMA was

¹ JMA's services were procured through the Federal Supply Schedule.

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based on our need to effectively address questions regarding potential health issues at the Bannister Federal Complex. We take this responsibility seriously and our decision to retain JMA was indicative of our desire to leverage the resources necessary to address the situation appropriately.

Although JMA provided research and assisted on various aspects of our response to the situation at the Bannister Federal Complex, GSA maintained its role as spokesperson and directly oversaw all messaging, communications, and outreach efforts. These efforts were intended to convey critical information to the public and to GSA's employees.²

In direct response to your inquiry we are providing the following:

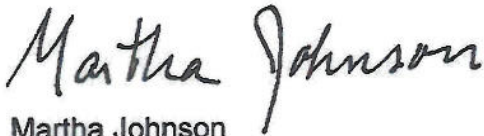
1. A spreadsheet containing all contracts, including task orders, awarded by GSA, as well as those procured through the Multiple Award Schedule (MAS) contracts for fiscal years (FY) 2005 through 2010, for public relations, advertising, crisis communications, or similar services. We have also included contracts for "similar services" which are those contracts related to market research and public opinion.³ More specifically the spreadsheet contains:
 - A. A list of all contracts including task orders awarded by GSA for public relations, advertising or similar services.
 - B. A list of all contracts including task orders awarded through the MAS for public relations, advertising or similar services.
 - C. A list of all contract actions made by all federal agencies, including GSA, for services offered under advertising and public relations service codes.
 - D. A listing of all contracts including task orders awarded to JMA.
2. Information on GSA's Office of Communications and Marketing, including:
 - A. Position descriptions and number of employees.
 - B. Salary levels and responsibilities of respective positions.
3. Documents related to JMA historical activity as a vendor on the MAS.
4. The contract file between JMA and GSA for the time period at issue.

² Although the scope of work and other documents mention "support of congressionals," GSA Central Office has spoken to the involved parties and has received the assurances from the Heartland Region that JMA was not responsible for direct communications with members of Congress in violation of Federal Acquisition Regulation 7.503 (20) prohibiting the use of contractors to draft Congressional testimony and Congressional correspondence. JMA did assist in the creation of some press materials, translations of technical language and historical research that may have been shared with Congressional offices.

³ As noted in the spreadsheet, the FY2010 data listing task orders through the MAS program is incomplete because the U.S. Department of Defense operates on a 90 day delay in reporting data, so not all of their FY2010 transactions are reported.

As requested, Mr. James Hudson, Congressional Liaison, Office of Congressional and Intergovernmental Affairs, will contact the Subcommittee on Contracting Oversight to schedule a briefing in the next 30 days to discuss public relations contracts awarded by GSA. If you have any additional questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to contact me at (202) 501-0800. Staff inquiries may be directed to Mr. Rodney Emery, Associate Administrator, Office of Congressional and Intergovernmental Affairs. He can be reached at (202) 501-0563.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Martha Johnson". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, looped initial "M".

Martha Johnson
Administrator

Enclosures