



BOARD OF SUPERVISORS  
AGENDA LETTER

Agenda Number:

Clerk of the Board of Supervisors  
105 E. Anapamu Street, Suite 407  
Santa Barbara, CA 93101  
(805) 568-2240

Submitted on:  
(COB Stamp)

Department Name: Planning and Development  
Department No.: 053  
Agenda Date: March 3, 2026  
Placement: Administrative Agenda  
Estimated Time: N/A  
Continued Item: No  
If Yes, date from: N/A  
Vote Required: 4/5

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**TO:** Board of Supervisors  
**FROM:** Department Director(s): Lisa Plowman, Planning and Development  
Contact: Errin Briggs, Deputy Director  
**SUBJECT:** Approval of Amendment No. 1 to the professional services contract with Robert Brown Engineers for engineering consulting services, all Supervisorial Districts

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**County Counsel Concurrence**

As to form: Yes

**Other Concurrence:** Risk Management

As to form: Yes

**Auditor-Controller Concurrence**

As to form: Yes

**Recommended Actions:**

That the Board of Supervisors:

- a) Approve and authorize the Chair to execute Amendment No. 1 to the Agreement for Services of Independent Contractor with Robert Brown Engineers to increase the contract amount by \$220,000 for a total contract amount not to exceed \$550,000 for continued engineering consulting services to the Energy, Minerals & Compliance Division for the period of July 1, 2025, through to June 30, 2026 (Attachment A);
- b) Approve the Budget Revision Request No. 0010961 to increase appropriations by \$220,000 for additional engineering consulting services (Attachment B); and
- c) Determine that the proposed actions do not constitute a "Project" within the meaning of California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA), pursuant to Section 15060(c)(3) and Section 15378(b)(5) of the CEQA Guidelines, because the actions are organizational or administrative activities of government that will not result in direct or indirect physical changes to the environment.

**Summary Text:**

Planning and Development (P&D) maintains an annual professional services contract with Robert Brown Engineers, totaling \$330,000 for ongoing engineering consulting services to the Energy, Minerals, and Compliance Division for County-wide oil and gas projects. Expenditures are required

beyond the contract's original scope due to increased consulting hours in response to the 2025 restart of several previously idle oil and gas facilities. Specifically, restart activities for the Santa Ynez Unit and POPCO Gas Plant and the Santa Maria Asphalt Refinery, which have been idle since 2015 and 2021 respectively, have created more engineering support needs than originally anticipated and necessitates a budget augmentation to allow for continued consulting services through the end of the fiscal year. If approved, the additional \$220,000 that is requested herein would augment the current contract for an updated not-to-exceed amount of \$550,000. The proposed contract amendment is included as Attachment A.

**Background:**

Robert Brown Engineers has been providing engineering consulting services to the County since at least 2000, authorized through yearly Agreements for Services of Independent Contractor (Agreements), generally capped at a not-to-exceed amount of \$330,000 per fiscal year. On September 9, 2025, the Chair of the Board of Supervisors executed the most current Agreement in an amount not to exceed \$330,000.00, with a term spanning July 1, 2025, to June 30, 2026 (Attachment C). Duties under the Agreement include, but are not limited to, conducting oil and gas project audits and inspections, reviewing safety and risk documents, conducting critical plant walk downs and "as built" checks, the review and consultation of plant modifications, meeting with oil and gas operators/applicants, and other required tasks.

The services provided by Robert Brown Engineers encompass all oil and gas projects in the County, including the Santa Ynez Unit and POPCO Gas Plant, and the Santa Maria Asphalt Refinery, which have been idle since 2015 and 2021, respectively. The Santa Ynez Unit and POPCO Gas Plant have been idle since the 2015 shutdown of the Las Flores Pipeline System (then the Plains All American Pipeline System) and have required minimal to moderate consulting services from 2015 - 2024. However, in May 2025, the Santa Ynez Unit began certain restart activities, and POPCO is anticipated to restart prior to the end of the fiscal year. Because of this, Robert Brown Engineers has been providing increased consulting services for these facilities above and beyond those anticipated in the original scope of the 2025 – 2026 Agreement. Similarly, the Santa Maria Asphalt Refinery has been idle since the County Fire Department placed a mandatory stop work order on the facility in 2021. In late 2025, the asphalt refinery came under new ownership, and the new owner/operator is working to restart the facility in 2026. Equally, Robert Brown Engineers has been providing additional consulting services in preparation for the restart of this facility. Robert Brown Engineers expects to meet their current contract limit by March 2026; therefore P&D requests their contract be amended with an additional \$220,000 for an updated not-to-exceed amount of \$550,000 through June 30, 2026.

**Fiscal Analysis:**

Budgeted: Yes

All costs for work conducted by Robert Brown Engineers are fully reimbursed by the County's oil and gas operators through existing compliance cases and new and ongoing permitting cases. These funds are budgeted in the Operating Expenditures of the Energy, Minerals, and Compliance Division on pages D-307 (*Permitting Budget Program*) and D-310 (*Code Enforcement Budget Program*) of the County of Santa Barbara Fiscal Year 2025 – 2026 budget. However, current appropriations are not sufficient to cover the additional \$220,000 in anticipated expenditures. Therefore, a budget revision is requested to increase appropriations by \$220,000 in the relevant programs, fully offset by reimbursements. The budget revision request is included in Attachment B.

The contractual agreement has a moderate risk due to its moderate complexity, one-year term, and moderate visibility. Factors that reduce risk include: 1) the fact that all costs incurred are fully reimbursed by oil and gas owner/operators through monthly invoices; 2) the contractor has a long standing history of providing excellent consulting services to the County; 3) the Agreement indemnifies the County agents, officers, and employees from all claims that arise from activities performed under the Agreement; and 4) no claims have been made by either the County or contractor under previous contracts.

| Funding Source | FY 2025-2026 | Amendment No. 1<br>FY 2025 – 2026 | Total            |
|----------------|--------------|-----------------------------------|------------------|
| General Fund   |              |                                   |                  |
| State          |              |                                   |                  |
| Federal        |              |                                   |                  |
| Fees           |              |                                   |                  |
| Reimbursements | \$330,000    | \$220,000                         | \$550,000        |
| <b>Total</b>   |              |                                   | <b>\$550,000</b> |

**Special Instructions:**

The Clerk of the Board shall forward a copy of the fully executed Amendment No. 1 and the Board Minute Order to the Energy, Minerals, and Compliance Division, attention Deputy Director Errin Briggs, via email at [ebriggs@countyofsb.org](mailto:ebriggs@countyofsb.org), and Supervising Planner Jacquelynn Ybarra via email at [jybarra@countyofsb.org](mailto:jybarra@countyofsb.org).

**Attachments:**

**Attachment A** – Contract Amendment No. 1

**Attachment B** – Budget Revision Request 0010961

**Attachment C** – Agreement for Services with Robert Brown Engineers, dated September 9, 2025

**Attachment D** – CEQA Notice of Exemption

**Contact Information:**

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 Supervising Planner, Energy Mineral and Compliance Division  
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