Beat: Politics

Public spaces V.S. Public money

The unsupervised city

San Francisco, 22.10.2023, 01:45 Time

USPA NEWS - On Tuesday in my reporting class, Professor Rachele Kanigel, from San Francisco State University asked us to go to The Board of Supervisor meeting at San Francisco City Hall. I admit that was something new for me. Even when studying journalism in Brazil, my university never gave me such an assignment.

I was excited about seeing how government officials that represent our city, conduct the city's business. So, in order to get ready, I started to read the meeting agenda and something unique stood out and caught my attention.

The San Francisco city supervisors' meeting agenda of Tuesday, September 26, had a special item discussion numbered 230905, on the “New Business Agenda” in the Recommendations of the Budget and Finance Committee, there was a private contract with the City of San Francisco, with a Silicon Valley company, CCT Technologies, Inc. dba Computer land of Silicon Valley Technology Marketplace “for the purchase of technology products and specialized services on an as-needed basis; increasing the contract not to exceed the amount of $62,900,000 by $3,600,000 for a total not to exceed the amount of $66,500,000 effective upon approval of this Resolution, with no changes to the five-year contract term from January 1, 2019, through December 31, 2023.”

This large amount in the contract caught my attention especially because the budget is to use it as needed. What kind of technology? What is the purpose? Who’s paying for it? Who’s benefiting from it? Is this company contributing to any of the supervisor’s campaigns? Are these technologies being overpriced? Is there a detailed fast-tracking of this contract? Are the tax paying citizens aware of the expenditure and extension?

Further as this was contracted four years ago, and the city, like the world, came to a virtual still during the pandemic how and where was the original 62.9M spent, and is there a need to extend another 3M when this contract expires in 3 months?

A quick search of the company awarded the contracts defines itself on their webpage as "offering a wide range of tailored IT services and solutions to meet the unique needs of your business, from cloud migration and cybersecurity to managed services and software development. From a testimonial standpoint, Computer land of Silicon Valley Technology Marketplace lists an information systems manager from the San Francisco Public Utilities Commission as "providing me and my IT managers with excellent services in the past three years, since we've started two major products: Enterprise SCADA Historian and the new Library Information management system. We are looking forward to working with them in the future."

Further digging reveals that SCADA or Supervisory Control and Data Acquisition aids in safe and efficient monitoring of pipeline systems, I wonder whether this will affect rate increases going forward.

Public comment should be critical to what and how Public Utilities (who set consumer rates) operates. It seems in this case, the City and County of San Francisco failed to identify the agency being advantaged by this budget increase and what it might means now and in the future to the tax paper who pays first for the appropriation of IT services and then later to the San Francisco Dept. of Power and Water.

Moving forward with the meeting, when I got there, I confess I was late, I got there at 2:05 pm and the meeting started at 2:00 pm. I started to look around and see what the ‘stage’ looked like, and I saw a TV showing Supervisor Connie Chan speaking to the crowd her, name was not on the screen. I tried to read her name on the table where she was sitting, and I noticed the name plaques were facing the supervisors each not turned to the people.

While I recognized her and others sitting, many of them I could not read the name and know what district they are representing and speaking for.

Since I am talking about speaking, the whole meeting system seems to be a mess. I did not see a sign language translator and while the screens had subtitles, they were not effective at all. I person with a hearing disability would not be able to understand almost anything that was happening over there.

Looking at the seating set I was wondering, is that seating based on population? Do they rotate? It could not make any difference but when you think about history in American traditions da rings a bell.

After listening to a preposition, from Dean Preston, he literally was moving forward with a project, that in my perception, showed only one side of the coin, did not point out any possible problems that the preposition might cause, and the whole thing, at the end on my perception again, was not effective at all so I had to leave.

It was too much demagogy for too little of a time. Maybe that is why they don't have a sign language spoke's person. I left at 2:40 pm and being a person who suffers from a disability myself,, I could not tolerate such negligence and inefficiency coming from the city, and I hope the next time I'll go to a board meeting I will have a better experience, being able to talk about good things instead.

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