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Water district keeping longtime D.C. lobbyist, but price is dropping

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The agency in charge of treating and disposing of Chicago's sewage apparently is keeping its longtime big-bucks Washington, D.C., lobbyist. But the price to taxpayers is dropping, at least for awhile.

At its meeting Thursday, the board of the Metropolitan Water Reclamation District of Greater Chicago is scheduled to vote on a one-year pact with Washington-based Carmen Group.

The deal would pay the company up to \$417,600 a year, with an option for two one-year renewals. Board sources say the proposed contract will be approved.

Carmen has worked for the district for 25 years, but its contract had not been put up for bid until recently.

Last year, the district formally requested any interested firm to bid, with seven responding.

Carmen — whose top executives include the son of former Metra Board Chairman Jeff Ladd and a former aide to late Southwest Side Congressman John Fary, D-Chicago — ended up winning. But it will get substantially less than the \$621,000 it was paid in 2010 and the \$714,000 it got in 2009, according to records on the district's [website](#).

"Competition works. We are going to be paying significantly less money," Commissioner Debra Shore said. The firm is being retained because it "has been successful in helping secure federal support" for the district's ongoing Deep Tunnel flood prevention program, she said.

In recent years the district has received \$25 million to \$50 million in annual federal funds to complete Deep Tunnel's large reservoirs.

Last year, the firm lost a similar well-paying, long-term Washington lobbying pact with Metra, the commuter rail agency.

The company did not respond to a request for comment.
