Item 23-0915: Recommendation to Award Website CMS to Revize
Human Resources & Information Technology Committee
Wed, Aug 02, 2023, 6:30PM

Alderperson Sheri Hartzheim (District 13) 00:58
We do not have any public appearances or hearings so we'll move on to our first action item which is 23-0915 Recommendation to award website CMS to Revize. Do I have a motion?

Alderperson Denise Fenton (District 6) 01:11
Move to approve.

Alderperson Sheri Hartzheim (District 13) 01:13
We have a motion. And a second anywhere?

Alderperson Chris Croatt (District 14) 01:17
Second for discussion.

Alderperson Sheri Hartzheim (District 13) 01:18
Thank you. Director Popp if you'd like to present this, please.

Director Corey Popp (IT) 01:23
Thank you chair. So, I'm very pleased to come to committee tonight to present a recommendation to award the city of Appleton's public website to a company called Revize. This has been a little bit over a year in the works, getting back all the way to March 16 of last year with resolution 2-R-22, which allocated funds to redesign the city website.

Director Corey Popp (IT) 01:49
So, about a year later—it actually did take quite a while to get this up and running and off the ground due to staff turnover and other items—I did release an RFP to which we had 20 proposals submitted. Yep, we had a lot of proposals submitted to the RFP, and all were in by April 28. We did a panel review of all 20 proposals and scored them. And we ended up with a top four. We had the top three scorers, and then in addition to the top three scorers, we chose the highest scoring local supplier in the state of Wisconsin, which was out of Green Bay.

Director Corey Popp (IT) 02:29
So, once we got it down to those four, we asked those four suppliers to provide demonstrations to city staff. And for that we opened it up to several different departments to send staff to watch the demonstration. Those departments were Communications, Community and Economic Development, Information Technology, of course, Parks and Recreation, Police, and Public Works. So, we did—wasn't the same member every time, and most departments did see all four demonstrations, although there were some exceptions to that as well. But for the most part, it was city staff. We had four people in Information Technology—myself, Deputy Director Thompson, Systems Administrator, and the CMS analyst who would be the site administrator of the new site.

Director Corey Popp (IT) 03:17
So, following those demonstrations, I took the two groups. I divided up—the city staff who saw the demonstrations, I divided them into two groups. One was the department staff, and one was the IT staff just so I could get a technical point of view versus a department point of view. And one thing to keep in mind as we look

at this recommendation, the idea is we will manage content for the website out in the city departments. So, we'll have anyone who wants to post or create web pages, that will happen outside by content man—not outside but outside of IT in the departments by content managers.

Director Corey Popp (IT) 03:57
So, we broke the two groups up, talked to the departments, and overwhelmingly unanimously Revize came to the top of the four demonstrations as being the company that everyone was most comfortable with, both the public side that we viewed and the back-end content management system that they would be using to create content.

Director Corey Popp (IT) 04:20
On the IT side—we brought the technical team together—we had similar results. I would say that the incumbent, as far as the CMS analyst was concerned, the incumbent tied with Revize. The CMS analyst admitted that was really probably just due with—due to his current comfort level with the incumbent said he saw really no issue with going with Revize on this as well. So nearly unanimous, practically unanimous in in choosing this vendor.

Director Corey Popp (IT) 04:50
Year one cost are $92,500 which is within the money set aside by the resolution, and year—subsequent years costs are actually lower than we currently pay and lower than the incumbent's proposal as well. So, you can see if we, the—page two of the memo shows us taking the total cost of ownership out to year five, just versus the incumbent so we could do an apples-to-apples comparison. We're about $20,000 less than had we stayed with the incumbent on this. So financially, we're in a very comfortable spot as well. So, with that, I'll take any questions committee may have regarding this recommendation.

Alderperson Sheri Hartzheim (District 13) 05:32
Thank you so much. Any questions?

Alderperson Chris Croatt (District 14) 05:34
Patrick's first.

Alderperson Sheri Hartzheim (District 13) 05:34
Alderperson Hayden.

Alderperson Patrick Hayden (District 7) 05:36
I just had a few questions. And I appreciate you getting back to me and getting me documentation earlier this week. The first question I had is, right now throughout the Appleton domain, it's a really fragmented experience. If you go to appleton.org, you gotta go to parksandrec.org to kind of see the Parks and Rec experience. Will this vendor end the fragmentation that we have across Appleton's platform.

Director Corey Popp (IT) 06:02
Yes, that's a—so obviously that that's the long-term hope. Since you mentioned Park and Parks and Rec specifically, at this time, they would remain with their current supplier for their Parks and Rec website. It's our hope that when they look to read redesign that website, the department will also take a very serious look at our new provider which, if approved, would be Revize. And hopefully there's enough benefits in the new website that they would move their platform over to Revize. We could end that fragmentation, as you call it.

Director Corey Popp (IT) 06:35
My understanding is just in the past, when it came time to use this website to create the Parks and Rec department may have been an issue largely with branding. Parks and Rec is just a little bit more comf—colorful, a little bit more fun, didn't just really fit real well within what this website was doing. So, if we did that, it more than likely would be an additional exercise, come something in the form of what's called a sub site so that we could brand it differently. So, Parks and Rec logo, Parks and Rec colors, that type of thing. So yes, the idea is, hopefully, with consent from the department and working together with the city, we can bring those back in together.

Alderperson Patrick Hayden (District 7) 07:15
And who would own the code? So, they're going to develop it. Are we buying sort of a software as a service? Or are we buying them to build the site, and then we own it, and then we can take it to another host, because I know they're hosting the service as well. So, who owns what they're building, I guess is my questions.

Director Corey Popp (IT) 07:31
So, they'll own their code. They'll own all the back-end code, the code on it, the custom code. We'll own our content. So, if we should leave, we would there'd be no issue in taking our content with us. But as far as the code goes, they would own that. They do build the site from scratch; they build a custom site, work with the city to do that. And they are providing hosting as well. So, it is very much a software as a service type solution, which is very much what we have today with the incumbent.

Alderperson Patrick Hayden (District 7) 07:59
I guess—sorry, one last question. Um, there was a long list of things that they support. Is there anything that really concerns you? I know the price seems a little low; that that's kind of setting off a couple alarm bells with me. Anything that we could get charged with, support that could cause this to cost us more than what we're expecting?

Director Corey Popp (IT) 08:18
So, I don't think—day to day support wise, I don't think so. You know, the team, and the panel, and the departments looked at that list as well. And then also had a chance to talk with the people that were on site for the demonstration. Everything looked good as far as support by way of portal and by way of telephone, very comfortable with that, even to the rollout. I would say the one thing that's not going to be included with this would be modification. So, once we stand up our website, say—let's use the landing page, for example. That format that's on the landing page will be as is going forward. Now, that doesn't mean content on the landing page—let's call it the wireframe, as it's commonly referred to. That format, that arrangement will stay the same. Modifying that would be a charge. Now that said, this agreement—it's a four-year agreement. That would include in year four a free refresh of the site or a free redesign of the site. If we accept that free redesign, that's going to affect the go-forward costs. So that's just one thing to keep in mind.

Alderperson Patrick Hayden (District 7) 09:18
Thank you, Chair.

Alderperson Sheri Hartzheim (District 13) 09:20
Anyone else? Alderperson Croatt?

Alderperson Chris Croatt (District 14) 09:25
Thank you. Couple of comments and I guess a couple of questions. And I don't—please don't take my comments the wrong way in that I'm questioning the recommendation, but I'm trying to feel better about the

recommendation. There was a—just to clarify a three-member panel reviewed the proposals. Were they all IT representatives?

Director Corey Popp (IT) 09:45
They were not. So, there was myself. There was my CMS analyst. And then there was the Manager of Communications and Public Engagement from the mayor's office.

Alderperson Chris Croatt (District 14) 09:55
Okay, and then—then it was expanded to the demonstrations, which included city staff representatives, but no elected officials, no alderpersons, no Council President?

Director Corey Popp (IT) 10:07
No, not in the demonstration.

Alderperson Chris Croatt (District 14) 10:13
The memo references, "largely positive feedback from nine references." Could you talk a little bit more about that? And I'll explain why I'm asking.

Director Corey Popp (IT) 10:24
Sure. It was the Manager of Communications who did follow up on the references. I can't give you a one by one how they came back. But as it says, they were largely positive. There—obviously with nine references there were some—I would say the worst one, or the most critical one, said that there had been enough issues with Revize that they were going through the RFP process similar to what we were rather than renewing with Revize. That was not across the board. That was one particular person. For whatever it's worth, it did happen to be a new IT Director of that city. I don't know; out of nine references, I wouldn't expect all to be perfect. So that was the most critical one.

Alderperson Chris Croatt (District 14) 11:06
Correct. Thank you for your transparency on that. I did some research of my own on them and looked at some reviews and actually reached out to a municipality that is using them, but they did not get back to me. Some of the reviews are mixed. One of the things that kind of stood out was their customer service. What part of the review process—or maybe if you could explain your comfort level with the customer service that we will get from this company if we award this contract to them.

Director Corey Popp (IT) 11:40
Sure. So, as I sit and I look at this, I'll be further transparent with you. I really—my expectation going into this was I really did naturally think we'd come back to the incumbent on this. It just seemed to be the natural way this might happen. So, I was not shocked or not—surprised is the wrong word. But it was interesting to see this come back as Revize. That was my feeling after watching the four demonstrations, as well, is that Revize really did—Revize really did come to the top of this.

Director Corey Popp (IT) 12:10
One thing that I noted during the presentation—a couple things. One is that every question the group asked, whether it was IT and technical or whether it was from the department, Revize took us to a live website to show us the solution they had in place for that particular municipality for whatever that question was. Just by coincidence, they did hit some points that we've had difficulty with in the city, whether it be website or management. So, one thing they hit on is a custom overnight parking app that they wrote for one particular

municipality. So, I think that kind of hit home with, you know, the police department and just some challenges the city faced.

Director Corey Popp (IT) 12:47
The other thing that I noted was Revize has sort of a Goldilocks size to them. So, if you look at the incumbent and one of the other players in this, they're quite large. So, 1000 plus employees. They're nationwide. They handle very large accounts. City of Appleton, population-wise, they're still a small city, or considered a small city nationally, officially a small city. Revize sits at about 100 employees that I think to the group seemed like kind of a sweet spot where our customer service would be more personal, especially the build. We were noted that we could actually choose the technical person we work with to build the website. In other words, look at other municipalities' websites, find the one that we liked, and work with that specific designer to build our own. So, I think I'll say it again, there's a Goldilocks size to the company where it's not too big, yet it's not too small—that the customer service would be personal enough, yet large enough to support what the city needs in regards to customer service.

Director Corey Popp (IT) 13:48
There also was in that bulleted list—and I can provide that as well offline—but 24 by 7 portal support and email support, 8am to 8pm telephone support. We're all very comfortable with that.

Alderperson Chris Croatt (District 14) 14:05
Thank you for that additional information. Lastly, the memo states, and I think you stated, that City representatives that reviewed or took part in the presentations presented this as the best solution. How—I guess what I'm struggling with is, were they looking at it from using it internally with content management and functionality? Or were they were they looking at it through the lens of citizen engaged—citizen experience?

Director Corey Popp (IT) 14:37
Sure.

Alderperson Chris Croatt (District 14) 14:39
Users coming to the site? Navigating? Care to comment on that?

Director Corey Popp (IT) 14:44
Yes, literally both. So, the presentations—all four presentations showed both sides of this. So, most of them—all four I think—lead with what it looks like from the citizen side, and then how that content was created on the back end. The citizen side, the display, the outward display of the website—I know that that people did like that with Revize. One of the things Revize does is it's more customized than the other solution providers that were on here. So, your site—our site—can look very unique; it doesn't necessarily look like a cookie cutter.

Director Corey Popp (IT) 15:16
So, for example, if you go to appleton.org right now, and you pull up Outagamie County right next to it in a new tab, I don't know that you see a real distinct—you would know that this is the same provider. The impression was that we could very much create a unique website using Revize that someone couldn't land on and say "Oh, I see, this is the same as Waukesha," even though it would be.

Director Corey Popp (IT) 15:41
The second piece of that was the content management system itself. Revize's content management system is customized, custom built CMS interface, as opposed to say a lot of the 20 proposals came in with a WordPress front—back end. So, a very familiar interface that can be built. This is unique. And it was simple. And it was

noted by the staff that it was very easy to use, even compared to the incumbent's interface today, which some pointed out was a reason they didn't want to go forward with the incumbent. They just weren't comfortable with the CMS side of it. So, both sides were looked at by the by the group.

Alderperson Chris Croatt (District 14) 16:22
Thank you. I appreciate that. Because the public facing side is the side that I'm most concerned about. And when citizens go to the website to look for something, they find it. Obviously, being able to manage the content on the backside and doing that easily is a good part of it, but the finished product for me is the most important because what citizens of Appleton see when they go out there.

Director Corey Popp (IT) 16:46
Certainly. And that's going to be phase one of their implementation is going to be the front end. So, phase one is going to be all about user experience, branding, user interface.

Alderperson Sheri Hartzheim (District 13) 16:58
Thank you. Alderperson. Fenton.

Alderperson Denise Fenton (District 6) 17:00
Thank you, Chair. I'm just—sorry to put you on the spot. So—but I'm glad that you mentioned phases. So, timeline—have we talked anything about timeline? Or...?

Director Corey Popp (IT) 17:16
No, we have not discussed timeline in in depth. I went through the proposal, and timeline is not mentioned. There's seven phases, and they're in-depth phases. If we were to try and ask Revize to nail down a timeline, I'm certain they're going to tell us "It depends." It depends on how fast we can move forward with the branding. How long does it take us to, you know, to build wireframe mock ups, choose one of those and move forward with it. And I think we're going to get an "It depends."

Director Corey Popp (IT) 17:46
I had believed when we started this process, you know, we could have something up by the fall—maybe a landing page. I'm not so certain about that. It would not take much to stand up just even a landing page, but at the same time, I think when it comes down to just the design portion of this, I think that's going to be a handful. I think phase one is going to be a handful. I still am optimistic we could have something up by year end.

Alderperson Denise Fenton (District 6) 18:11
Okay, so the completion of phase one—can I follow up?

Alderperson Sheri Hartzheim (District 13) 18:15
You may.

Alderperson Denise Fenton (District 6) 18:16
Thank you. So, at the completion of phase one, would the public and would we see that landing page? Or is this going to be a more waterfall approach and we're not going to see anything until it's done?

Director Corey Popp (IT) 18:29
Yeah. So, phase seven is training. So, phase seven is—when you hit the end of phase seven, you have a website stood up to use and run. So, we would have to go through all seven phases quite quickly, you know, to even

stand up a front page. Like, there's also subpages that have to be designed. And then once those subpages are designed, once the landing page is designed, then it's up to us to start creating the content behind that.

Director Corey Popp (IT) 18:57
It's going to be a really rough thing to try and predict. I think as we get to the contract and the first project launch meeting, it'll start to take shape. But before that, I don't think we're going to be able to nail down a timeframe on it. Certainly, you know, within 12 months, right? It's not going to go beyond 12 months, and it would not take 12 months either.

Alderperson Sheri Hartzheim (District 13) 19:17
How do you eat an elephant? One bite at a time.

Alderperson Denise Fenton (District 6) 19:22
I share my colleagues concern that, you know, that nobody on the Council got a chance to view the demo. Not that we necessarily would have great input other than maybe Alder Hayden. But I believe I also share with my colleagues that I would—if I had to put pretty hard numbers to it, I would say that 15% of the constituent questions I get is for information that is on the website that an average citizen can't find. I see nods of agreement. So, I mean, we all agree that this is something that really needs to be done. And you know, we can't have a do over, but I would—for something that's that public facing, I think it would have been a good idea to bring Council President or somebody in—or the chair of the HR IT committee, or somebody in to just take a look, but we appreciate the effort nonetheless. Thank you.

Alderperson Sheri Hartzheim (District 13) 20:25
I think—piggybacking on that, I think, more importantly, is once we choose a vendor, that there is some involvement with either the Council President or a few select alderpersons who are kind of familiar with the sort of dealio so that we can have a little bit of push and pull feedback that comes more from what our constituency.

Director Corey Popp (IT) 20:49
Sure. So, I can't speak for the mayor's office, but it is my understanding that the design portion will involve far more people than the actual selection of the of the vendor. I think the selection of the vendor, as we went through the process, was very much aimed at the technical side—standing up the CMS, making sure the hosting was correct, making sure we had a backup, just the basics of the CMS were there. As long as from a department standpoint, what was the usability of it? Would the departments be on board with the website going forward?

Director Corey Popp (IT) 21:23
I think now that we're heading into the design portion, you'll see me take a step back on design. My resources in IT from a technical standpoint, will be there as a reference, but the design will come right out of the mayor's office. And it's my expectation and understanding based on discussions I had, that that design group, they will go out and look for additional recommendations. Can I say for sure it's going to be committee and Council? I assume so. I can't commit for the mayor. But I think, I would expect that that is probably coming in some format. But that's going to be up to Mayor Woodford.

Alderperson Sheri Hartzheim (District 13) 21:57
Thank you. Alderperson van Zeeland, what is your mic number? Go ahead.

Alderperson Katie Van Zeeland (District 5) 22:04
I'll be happy to bring those concerns to the mayor in our next meeting. And it just so happens my previous career was in software and software as a service.

Alderperson Sheri Hartzheim (District 13) 22:14
Thank you. I just had one question or tag-along to this particular memo, and that is in regards to branding and style guides stuff. Is there enough money there to do that? And how, how can we put the cart before the horse? How can we build this website without really having those things? Or will they be working in parallel?

Director Corey Popp (IT) 22:41
Sure, I think there'll be working parallel. I also believe that there's been some work, quite a bit of work, that's been done on the branding and style guide as well. We actually had that conversation with Revize while they were here, how they could assist with that. And they said absolutely, they could assist with it. In fact, the conversation began with logo design, and we had to say, "Well, hold on. You know, we're not talking about logo design." They're like "Well, we can we can do logo design as well." If you're not talking about logo design—you know, if you're talking fonts and colors and style, absolutely, we just, we do that as part of this.

Director Corey Popp (IT) 23:13
So, in the subsequent discussion with the mayor—I mentioned it in the memo that we sat down with the mayor about this recommendation. We are looking for the full $100,000 funding even though the launch is you know $92,500 or $92,700, something like that, just so we do have a little extra money should we need to spend additional money on branding of some type or with a consultant. So, we do have some money there.

Alderperson Sheri Hartzheim (District 13) 23:38
Excellent.

Anindita Anaam (Communications and Public Engagement Manager) 23:43
Yeah, so—

Alderperson Sheri Hartzheim (District 13) 23:44
Do you have a microphone handy? Thank you.

Anindita Anaam (Communications and Public Engagement Manager) 23:52
Thank you. So, I'm Anindita, and you can call me Andy. So, I—we had discussion on the branding part. So, I have designed in-house the Branding Guide. But to give it a kind of a little more professional look, we will have some sort of designer working for us. So, we will keep the budget pretty low because we know we will not be investing too many tax dollars on that. So that's why 70% work I have done in-house. That means we just free up cost, probably a brand design work really [...] a lot of money. It's a lot of money we're talking about, but since I created it in house so what we will do is we'll just expand it a bit more, and then we can finalize like what kind of [...] we need to go with so that will really cut down on the cost, and I'm not anticipating a lot of cost on that.

Alderperson Sheri Hartzheim (District 13) 24:40
Excellent.

Anindita Anaam (Communications and Public Engagement Manager) 24:41
So, I don't have the right numbers because I will be meeting some people, you know, to know like what kind of cost they have on something already built. So, they just have to make it look more professional. That's it. So, I'm not anticipating too much cost, but yeah, of course we will give you a budget and everything when I have some numbers with me. But 'til then I'm pretty confident that we will be under budget.

Alderperson Sheri Hartzheim (District 13) 25:02
Excellent. Thank you. Do we have any other questions?

Alderperson Sheri Hartzheim (District 13) 25:07
There being none. I'll ask for a vote. All those in favor? Aye. Any opposed? Any abstentions? None. So that passes four zero.