

**Item 23-1122: Request to award a contract for consulting services related to the City of Appleton Housing Development Policy, Process and Stakeholder Engagement Services to Green Bicycle Co. in the amount of \$32,000**

**Community & Economic Development Committee**

Wed, Sep 27, 2023 6:30PM

**Aldersperson Denise Fenton (District 6) 01:13**

We have no public hearings or appearances. So, we will move on to our single action item number 23-1122 request to award a contract for consulting services related to the City of Appleton Housing Development Policy Process and Stakeholder Engagement Services to Green Bicycle Company in the amount of \$32,000. All right. Director—District—District Four? Alright, Director Homan.

**Director Kara Homan (Community And Economic Development) 01:46**

Alright, so we've included a overview memo, a copy of the proposal, as well as a copy of our request for proposals, which is what we use to solicit proposals. And really what we're advancing is a request to award to Green Bicycle Company for the scope of services outlined in their amended proposal. Our initial budget was \$25,000, which was included in the mayor's budget and funded through a special appropriation requests last year and carried over into this year's budget.

**Director Kara Homan (Community And Economic Development) 02:18**

The—initially the proposal we received came in at \$40,000. We were able to work proactively as a team and identify what we really needed and what we felt might be redundant to work that was already done. So, we did re-scope the proposal and were able to reduce the amount of market research and data analysis that they had initially proposed in light of the College North neighborhood plan, which already had a market analysis, as well as the county's housing study which got us down to a dollar amount of \$32,000, which takes the mayor's budgeted dollars and then also uses \$7,000, from our New and Redevelopment Consulting budget.

**Director Kara Homan (Community And Economic Development) 03:01**

Any service that's procured by the service over \$25,000 does require Council approval. And what we are requesting is for this committee to recommend approval. I'm happy to answer questions regarding the work. I think many of you were at the press conference on Monday. And the proposal really does speak for itself. But it is something that I know that me and my staff are looking forward to because not only will it engage the external community, but it will also help us work internally and really have some honest conversations and glean insights from various team members within city hall on opportunities they see to make things better internally from a development review process. Examples could include new ways of reviewing things, tools we may need, etc. And I know just in talking to some of our team members, they're looking forward to being able to be open and honest with a third party and have them really take their feedback as well.

**Aldersperson Denise Fenton (District 6) 04:12**

Thank you. Can we get a motion?

**Aldersperson Nate Wolff (District 12) 04:14**

Motion to approve.

**Aldersperson Joss Thyssen (District 8) 04:15**

Second.

**Alderson Denise Fenton (District 6) 04:16**

All right, so we have a motion is second on the floor. Are—is there any discussion? Alder Hartzheim and you're on your microphone?

**Alderson Sheri Hartzheim (District 13) 04:25**

Thank you, chair. My concerns in this regard are to twofold. Well, maybe more than two-fold but twofold to start. First, first blush first glance at the Green Bicycle Company makes me concerned about their abilities to satisfy this particular RFP for us. I don't see a great deal of similar activity on their past activities on their projects on their website. I also see a lot of other things on their website that don't necessarily carry into this particular work. So that is a concern for me.

**Alderson Sheri Hartzheim (District 13) 05:12**

My other concern is—oh, here's the third concern. Here's the second concern, then the third concern. Second concern, there were no other proposals. So, we don't know that this is really the appropriate folks for doing this job. They're just the only folks that are on the table for doing this job.

**Alderson Sheri Hartzheim (District 13) 05:32**

And then thirdly, which kind of coincides with that, is that this is on the table for us after it was essentially announced by the task force in the in the press conference. It feels like the Council is being put inside a box. We've announced this, and we've sent out press releases and done a big press conference. And we don't have the approval of the Council yet to do this. So that feels like a procedural issue that is of concern to me, but only because of issues one and two. One that they perhaps are not qualified, and secondarily that they're the only people that have applied for this particular RFP. Thank you.

**Alderson Denise Fenton (District 6) 06:21**

All right. I'm gonna let Director Homan respond.

**Director Kara Homan (Community And Economic Development) 06:28**

Alright. Let me make sure I got your questions correctly. One was about their—your initial review of their experience, lacking relevant qualifications.

**Alderson Sheri Hartzheim (District 13) 06:37**

Yep.

**Director Kara Homan (Community And Economic Development) 06:38**

That only one proposal was received, and that this is being advanced to Council after a press conference was held. So, let's first start with the perception that the background is lacking. So, it is a startup firm. They launched in 2020. With that said, the team consists of three individuals who both have—all three have master's in urban planning from UW Milwaukee. The principal at the firm has experience in civil engineering, nonprofit management, as well as urban planning and stakeholder engagement. The other team member has actually, for a decade or so, been working in private development, working for developers and entitlements, and helping them put projects together so really has that background from a developer perspective. And then the third team member has, until recently, worked as a city planner, and really understands the day-to-day intricacies of how municipal planning and development review works. So, while it does look like on their website, that the firm may not have a lot of experience, it's because they're new.

**Director Kara Homan (Community And Economic Development) 07:54**

What I can tell you is, you know, I've put out a lot of RFPs—not here at the city, but in my time at the county—and I've kind of learned sometimes the firms that have a ton of experience that may look perfect on paper, sometimes you get a cookie cutter response, and they might not put in the extra effort as a startup firm would. Really, you know, we did our due diligence, we took the firm in we interviewed them to make sure our team was comfortable and felt like they could do the work. If we didn't feel like that we would have gone out for bid and not advanced this to a recommendation.

**Director Kara Homan (Community And Economic Development) 08:34**

Your question on only one proposal—I wanted more than one proposal. The best way I can describe it is, as of late, the amount of planning proposals that I've been receiving in my career over the last, I'd say, three to four years—you know, five to 10 years ago, you'd put out an RFP for planning and get 2, 3, 4 proposals. Most recently at the county I put out a proposal where the budget was like \$100,000 for a master plan for campus facilities and land use. And we got one proposal. One right before that, I got two.

**Director Kara Homan (Community And Economic Development) 09:19**

I was happy to get one; I wish we would have had to so there would have been some competition. But we did identify—the procurement policy for the city requires a minimum of three proposals solicited. We identified four firms within the state of Wisconsin that we felt had the blend of stakeholder engagement, land use planning, as well as that market or real estate background. And unfortunately, we only got one proposal. The good news is we felt like the proposal was strong and one that we felt worthy of advancing through Council and worthy of finding some additional money in our budget to make the project work.

**Director Kara Homan (Community And Economic Development) 10:04**

The question on this being announced, prior to Council proposal—I do understand that that's a concern. We have had conversations with Alder Fenton to brief her on this being advanced. I will take that feedback and relay it to Mayor Woodford. I'm happy to do that.

**Aldersperson Denise Fenton (District 6) 10:29**

I think I had Alder Wolff, and—unless you're just following up—all right, go ahead. Go ahead.

**Aldersperson Sheri Hartzheim (District 13) 10:34**

Thank you, the one question that I didn't ask in the three questions, which now is four questions, what—may I direct to director Homan?

**Aldersperson Denise Fenton (District 6) 10:43**

Please.

**Aldersperson Sheri Hartzheim (District 13) 10:43**

What was pared back from the original proposal? And is there the possibility of paring it back to the point where we won't need to have a Council approval for this? It—can you make it a \$25,000 proposal and get what you're looking for?

**Director Kara Homan (Community And Economic Development) 10:59**

So, what we pared back was—initially, the proposal included a significant component of staff—staff and billable time to data and market research around housing in our market. When our team was reviewing that—kudos to my team—they said, "We already have a lot of this data." In 2022, the city completed the College North Neighborhood Plan, and a component of that plan was a market analysis of housing and market demand city

wide. Okay. In addition, Outagamie County did a housing study as well that did market and demand projections for the greater region—so the Fox Cities region and beyond. And we felt that what they were proposing was somewhat redundant to data that we already have on hand that is fresh as of 2022. So, we inform them, hey, we already have these market studies, we feel like this piece of your proposal is redundant. Can you come back with us with a new proposal that takes into consideration that you don't need to redo this work? So that is what we removed. I do feel that if we were to attempt to scope it back to \$25,000, and get it to a level where, you know, I could just administratively choose to contract with them, we wouldn't be getting a quality product. Feel like we'd be missing something from the work we were looking to do.

**Aldersperson Sheri Hartzheim (District 13) 12:44**

Thank you.

**Aldersperson Denise Fenton (District 6) 12:46**

Alder Wolff.

**Aldersperson Nate Wolff (District 12) 12:47**

Thank you, Chair. So, I, one, thank you for figuring out how to make up for the funds within budget shift that, and I'm actually excited because sometimes the little guy will put forth their best effort to build their own brand. And going, like picking someone like that will—might be better off than some big organization because they've been established, they might not care as much. But picking the little guy will sometimes get you a better result. So, thank you.

**Director Kara Homan (Community And Economic Development) 13:25**

Thank you.

**Aldersperson Denise Fenton (District 6) 13:28**

Any other questions? Alder Van Zeeland? What mic to do you?

**Aldersperson Katie Van Zeeland (District 5) 13:31**

District 15?

**Aldersperson Denise Fenton (District 6) 13:34**

Okay.

**Aldersperson Katie Van Zeeland (District 5) 13:44**

Thank you. Sorry about that. I was just wondering, with the contracts—I guess this would be for Attorney Glad. Understanding my colleagues concerns, are there things built into the contract about the deliverables? If the things that are promised are not given to us as the city, is there anything built into the contract that would protect us?

**Aldersperson Denise Fenton (District 6) 14:15**

Four? Thank you.

**Darrin Glad (Assistant City Attorney) 14:20**

I mean, that's that'd be the purpose of the contract is to have some sort of deliverable, some sort of way to hold them to, or you don't get paid. And that's generally in the broadest view what we would want out of a contract. Having not seen this in any draft version of the, of a contract, but that would be our role to make sure there's accountability through the contract.

**Aldersperson Katie Van Zeeland (District 5) 14:45**

Okay. And if I could also ask another question of Director Homan. Your experience with this group—they understand that they're working with some professionals with the realtor's group and builders. I'm not sure if anybody on the task force was asked for feedback on this group, or was it kept within the city?

**Director Kara Homan (Community And Economic Development) 15:10**

It was kept within the city.

**Aldersperson Katie Van Zeeland (District 5) 15:11**

Okay, they understand that they'll be working with professional realtors? Okay. And I just could see that that would be very daunting for a company who doesn't have everything together. And from what I thought everything looks great. So.

**Director Kara Homan (Community And Economic Development) 15:26**

Right, and one of their team members used to work for developers—

**Aldersperson Katie Van Zeeland (District 5) 15:30**

Great.

**Director Kara Homan (Community And Economic Development) 15:30**

—um, directly. They're also currently under contract with Sheboygan County. So, we're not their first government contract.

**Aldersperson Katie Van Zeeland (District 5) 15:39**

Great. Uh, you know, with there being a taskforce of professionals, I just think this is really important. So, I guess I can ask this of you also, if that's okay. If this was the only proposal and you didn't feel that they were fit, would you have moved ahead because we need a consultant for the task force? Or would we have retooled?

**Director Kara Homan (Community And Economic Development) 15:59**

I would have put it out for bid again.

**Aldersperson Katie Van Zeeland (District 5) 16:01**

Okay. Great. Thank you.

**Aldersperson Denise Fenton (District 6) 16:05**

I've got just a couple of questions, Director Homan. So, it is my understanding, and is it correct that the task force—the existence of the task force is from the mayor's office and has nothing to do with the consulting contract?

**Director Kara Homan (Community And Economic Development) 16:22**

Correct.

**Aldersperson Denise Fenton (District 6) 16:23**

So, the task force has been formed and will exist whether the consulting contract exists or not?

**Director Kara Homan (Community And Economic Development) 16:29**

Correct.

**Alderson Denise Fenton (District 6) 16:29**

Okay. And the \$25,000—if Council rejected this contract, this proposal? I'm not asking you what you would do, but it is my understanding that the mayor's budget still has the \$25,000—

**Director Kara Homan (Community And Economic Development) 16:49**

Yes.

**Alderson Denise Fenton (District 6) 16:50**

—in it. And you're—and you were taking \$7,500 out of your department, or \$7000 out of your department budget for that. So, if we—if the Council rejects this contract, what would the plan be to allow the task—because looking at the task force timeline, you know, they're expected to start quite soon.

**Director Kara Homan (Community And Economic Development) 17:18**

That's not a discussion I've had yet. If Council did reject it, then we'd regroup and come up with a plan B.

**Alderson Denise Fenton (District 6) 17:26**

Okay. I personally found that the the—I don't have misgivings about the qualifications of the company. I thought that the proposal was very detailed, the cost of every item is broken down. And I think for something like this, bringing in something—somebody from the outside is really important because as I understand it, a lot of the people on the task force work on a daily basis with city staff, and maybe there's, you know—they're good relationships there, but I think having a third party is really important too, as you mentioned, Director Homan, to let people on our staff feel free to—as a—to speak, to speak freely to people, and also to have somebody who is not coming to the city, as, you know, either wanting something or having the city want them to do something so they're—so are—the people of the task force who are very busy people who are essentially donating their time to the city. And we want to make the best use of those people's time, and using a firm who has maybe not necessarily a municipal, but in terms of the work they did with the development group—so they have this kind of experience in bringing people together from disparate.... So, I'm comfortable with this. And I, I expect great things out of it. So, I would urge my colleagues on the committee to recommend this for approval. Any other?  
Alder Hartzheim.

**Alderson Sheri Hartzheim (District 13) 19:15**

Thank you, Chair. I would like it noted that in the RFP, the item number 1.2 specifically states that this work would be done for the task force. So, this is directly related to the task force. I'm wondering if there has been any opportunity for any of the other members of the task force to be able to, quote "pitch in" for some of this work because it's being used in conglomeration with them.

**Alderson Denise Fenton (District 6) 19:47**

Is that directed to Director Homan?

**Alderson Sheri Hartzheim (District 13) 19:49**

If I could, please. Yes.

**Alderson Denise Fenton (District 6) 19:51**

Director Homan?

**Director Kara Homan (Community And Economic Development) 19:52**

I'm going to rephrase the question to make sure I understand it. So, was your question: could taskforce members pitch in do additional work or work that this firm would be doing?

**Aldersperson Sheri Hartzheim (District 13) 20:04**

If I could just clarify—if we were to, \$25,000, administratively take this on as the city and the balance of it be taken on by other members of the task force, because we're all going to be using this particular information through the task force, would that be an option or a thought?

**Director Kara Homan (Community And Economic Development) 20:28**

So, I think that that would really depend on what scope items we would remove and, of that scope, who might have the skills to do it and whether there's capacity. You know, with that said, though, I feel really strongly about having a third party who's not a developer or in the development community here, and who's not on city staff on the municipal end, really facilitate the work. That's not to say that staff won't be doing a significant amount of work or that taskforce members won't also be doing a lot of work. We're really going to lean on them heavily for things like getting the word out when we are ready to initiate our engagement plan. Like we want to make sure we're reaching the right audiences, and that will be their job. So, taskforce members will be doing work in addition to what's proposed here, but the work proposed, I feel should be done by a third party.

**Aldersperson Sheri Hartzheim (District 13) 21:30**

If I could, again, clarify. I think if the if the scope is not pared back, and the city pitches in \$25,000, could other task members pitch in the other \$7,000? That—not work from the other taskforce members, but dollars from the other taskforce members kinda like the library. We're counting on outside funds, but the city's got the budget for the entire umbrella of the building.

**Director Kara Homan (Community And Economic Development) 22:00**

That's okay, if I answer?

**Aldersperson Denise Fenton (District 6) 22:02**

Please.

**Director Kara Homan (Community And Economic Development) 22:03**

I don't—I really couldn't tell you at this point. I—that hasn't been a question I asked. I think it would be difficult at this point. And the other piece is we—this is existing budgeted funds that we were able to find that we otherwise might not use.

**Aldersperson Denise Fenton (District 6) 22:26**

Alder van Zeeland.

**Aldersperson Katie Van Zeeland (District 5) 22:27**

I think it's really important to remind ourselves, the makeup of the task force is a group of people that very often does not work together. You know, they all have their own specific goals as organizations. They're often are not in alignment with the others. And so, I think asking them to donate their time to work toward some outside of the box kinds of ideas, I think, is enough for me. And I think having a third party be the group that is gathering the data is important to make sure that we aren't serving just one of those interests. Thank you.

**Aldersperson Denise Fenton (District 6) 23:14**

I'm going to speak from experience on something. I served on the climate task force as one of quite a few members. I had the least amount of expertise of anybody on that task force. I mean, we had the sustainability director from Kimberly Clark. We had multiple academics on in that group. And we struggled putting together the report, because these were busy people from diverse backgrounds. And a lot of us worked really hard, and we worked a lot of hours. And we were extremely grateful when Director Gazza found some money in his budget to bring a consultant on board—a consulting group on board for just not a whole—I can't even remember what it was. It was maybe less than half of what we're talking about here that he had. And that really enabled us to focus, because, you know, we had someone who was from the transportation viewpoint, and everything was about bicycles, and then somebody from a different—we had all these experts, and all of this knowledge, and it was really difficult to bring it all together. But when we had somebody who said, you know, here this one—yes, this is important. But rather than us just kind of getting in a room—and so I think it's—these are people who are dedicated to the community, dedicated to their groups, but in terms of getting them in one place, I think this outside neutral third party will be invaluable. And they're donating their time, and I and I feel like we can't say "Okay, we need—you're donating your time. Can you also kick in a few dollars for to for this?" So that's my opinion on that. Thank you.

**Aldersperson Denise Fenton (District 6) 25:22**

Anything else? All right. Any other further notes from Director Homan? All right, so we have a motion and a second. Let's go ahead and vote. All those in favor, please signify by saying aye. Chair votes, aye. That passes for zero.