

The stated meeting of the Public Affairs Committee of the Board of Commissioners of the Township of Abington was held on Wednesday, March 6, 2019 at the Township Administration Building, Abington, PA., with Commissioner Spiegelman presiding.

CALL TO ORDER: 8:22 p.m.

ROLL CALL: Present: Commissioners SPIEGELMAN, BOWMAN, DiPLACIDO, MYERS
Excused: SCHREIBER

Township Manager MANFREDI
Assistant Township Manager WEHMEYER
Township Solicitor CLARKE
Community Development Director STROTHER
Director of Parks & Recreation OLES

Also Present: Commissioners LUKER, KLINE, ROTHMAN, ZAPPONE, BRODSKY, CARSWELL, GILLESPIE, THOMPSON, VAHEY, WINEGRAD

APPROVAL OF MINUTES:

Commissioner Spiegelman made a MOTION, seconded by Commissioner Myers to approve the minutes of the Public Affairs Committee Meeting of February 6, 2019.

MOTION was ADOPTED 4-0.

PRESENTATIONS: None.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS: None.

NEW BUSINESS:

Item PA-01-031419:

Commissioner Spiegelman made a MOTION, seconded by Commissioner Myers to award the planning and community development consulting services to Urban Design Ventures, LLC for a three (3)-year period. The consultant will aid and assist the Township with the design, planning and implementation of the Township's Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) and HOME Investment Partnership Programs.

Mr. Van Strother, Community Development Director, explained that Abington Township is an entitlement community under the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development's (HUD) CDBG Program. As a recipient of these federal funds, there are several required reports and documents to be submitted to HUD on an annual basis. Next year, the Township will be required to update its Five-Year Consolidated Plan and Analysis of Impediments. The current Consolidated Plan will expire on September 30, 2020 and the Consolidated Plan takes about four to six months to complete.

This is to renew the contract of Urban Design Ventures, LLC for a three-year period for consulting services to assist the Township with design, planning and implementation of the CDBG program. The RFP (Request for Proposal) was publicly advertised and the Township received eight written requests for the RFP package during the first week of public advertisement and proposal due date was November 29, 2018, and on this date, the Township received one (1) sealed proposal to the publicly advertised RFP.

Commissioner Spiegelman clarified that Urban Design Ventures previously had this contract and did they fulfill it satisfactorily?

Mr. Strother replied yes.

Commissioner Spiegelman asked for any comments from Commissioners.

Commissioner Thompson said since there was only bid is there any contemplation of re-bidding?

Mr. Strother replied we will most likely get the same results because it is a complex venture. Other bids received were from companies from out-of-state and this is a local firm. This is an industry that takes a lot of expertise and knowledge in properly responding to annual reports of the Federal government.

Commissioner Spiegelman clarified that this was advertised according to the legal requirements. Is that correct?

Mr. Strother replied yes.

Vice President Kline questioned whether it is known why there was no response from the other eight other companies.

Mr. Strother replied no, he did not reach out to them.

Vice President Kline suggested rejecting the bid and find out why the others did not respond.

Commissioner Spiegelman said previously when this service was sent out for RFP, were there other responses?

Mr. Strother replied yes, three years ago, there were four requests for RFP package and only two were submitted; one was Urban Design Ventures and the other was Triad, a local regional consulting firm.

Commissioner Bowman clarified that there are no Township funds involved, but the Township would be implementing Federal money for this program and proposed is to hire a consulting firm to assist in the planning and implementation of it. Is that correct?

Mr. Strother replied yes.

Commissioner Bowman continued that it should not be put out for RFP again. The rules were complied with and the committee should pass it.

Vice President Kline said it is the Township's money. It is the Township's allocation from HUD and we have a plan to use the money in a certain way and part of that allocation is to hire a consultant to administer HUD funds. Is that correct?

Mr. Strother replied yes.

Vice President Kline said so the more money used for the consultant is less than what could be used for the actual program that the HUD money was meant for.

Commissioner Bowman said the Township complied, and there were requests for RFP package and then they did not submit proposals, but one did, so that is the bidding process.

Commissioner Thompson asked if this is implementation of Federal funds, why do firms need local knowledge and why send RFP's out to other states.

Mr. Strother replied out-of-state consultants picked it up electronically. He only advertised it in the local newspapers. Re-bidding will end up with the same result because there is a tremendous amount of information that is requested by the Federal government and from the County level and there is a lot of demographic information required. There is a learning curve, so experienced consultants look at that and weight their options as to whether or not they want to invest in learning about the fabric of the community as well as meet the demands. It is an ongoing process where the Township is in the middle of several contracts and reports are due and that would put additional burden on the Township as well as exposure if we re-bid.

Commissioner Spiegelman clarified that those eight out-of-state firms who received RFP packets would not have been precluded in any way from submitting a proposal just because they are from out-of-state. Is that correct?

Mr. Strother replied that is correct.

Commissioner Myers asked Mr. Strother if proposal from Urban Design Ventures was within budget and does he have experience working with this firm and is he confident in their services?

Mr. Strother replied yes, it is within budget. He has worked with this firm for the past three years and even longer, and he absolutely has confidence in this firm without hesitation.

Commissioner Myers clarified that the recommendation is to approve the bid from this company. Is that correct?

Mr. Strother replied absolutely. The issue should not be about the consultant, because the biggest burden is making sure the reports are submitted to HUD on time, properly and accurately.

Commissioner Spiegelman said if the Township re-bids would it compromise the timely submission of those reports.

Mr. Strother replied yes.

Vice President Kline said the issue is that nine packets were sent out and one bid was received and why did the other eight refused to submit proposals. If the Board is inclined to move forward due to the time factor, we should still find out why the Township did not receive other bids.

Commissioner Bowman said he does not believe the Township has an obligation to inquire with the other firms as to why they did not submit a proposal. It is a highly-detailed localized situation and many were not local companies and maybe do not understand the demographics of the neighborhoods that will receive CDBG funds, so he will pass it.

Commissioner Vahey questioned whether the CAPER was filed before December 31, 2018 and who performed that work?

Mr. Strother replied yes, that has been submitted, and Urban Design Ventures performed that work.

Commissioner Vahey asked was that work performed under prior contract?

Mr. Strother replied yes.

Commissioner Vahey asked for a copy of the Annual Action Plan, the CAPER, Five-Year Consolidated Plan, Analysis of Impediments and Environmental Review Record to be provided to the Board for review.

Mr. Strother agreed.

Commissioner Spiegelman requested that Mr. Strother make some inquiries prior to next week's Board meeting.

Mr. Strother agreed.

Commissioner Spiegelman asked for any public comments.

Lora Lehmann, 1431 Bryant Lane, suggested looking into consultants working for other local communities.

Commissioner Spiegelman made a MOTION, seconded by Commissioner DiPlacido to move this item forward to the full Board without recommendation.

MOTION FAILED 2-2.

Commissioner Bowman asked what portion of the CDBG funds goes towards design, planning and implementation.

Mr. Strother replied 5%-10% on an annual basis.

Commissioner Bowman asked is the administration capped at a certain amount?

Mr. Strother replied yes, 20% of annual allocation.

Commissioner Bowman asked how much has Urban Design Ventures used over the past few years?

Mr. Strother replied approximately 10%.

Commissioner Bowman made a MOTION, seconded by Commissioner Myers to move this item forward to the full Board with recommendation of approval.

MOTION was ADOPTED 3-1. Commissioner DiPlacido opposed.

Item PA-02-031419:

Commissioner Spiegelman made a MOTION, seconded by Commissioner DiPlacido to request approval to submit a Park Rehabilitation and Development Grant application to the Pennsylvania Department of Conservation and Natural Resources (DCNR) that is due on April 10, 2019.

Ms. Greta Brunschwylter, Director of Briar Bush Nature Center, said there was a Master Site Development Plan completed with a grant from DCNR and there were several public meetings held where residents provided input indicating they were in favor of this project, and this item is the implementation part of it. This project is to improve the site for safety, accessibility and enjoyment by the community and information has been posted on both the Township and Briar Bush Nature Center's websites.

Commissioner Spiegelman asked for any comments from Commissioners. There were none.

Commissioner Spiegelman asked for any public comments. There were none.

MOTION was ADOPTED 4-0.

Commissioner Spiegelman made a MOTION, seconded by Commissioner Myers to Ratify Keystone Communities (KC) Program Grant for the Abington Township Veterans' War Memorial Island application in the amount of \$17,000.00.

Mr. Andy Oles, Director of Parks and Recreation, said KC requires a new resolution stating that it is Keystone Communities as opposed to Greenways, Trails & Recreation (GTRP) Grant and this grant is still through the PA Department of Community and Economic Development (DCED).

Also, there will be a meeting held tomorrow evening in regards to the War Memorial Island project at the Roslyn Boys & Girls Club at 6:30 p.m.

Commissioner Spiegelman asked for any comments from Commissioners.

Commissioner Vahey asked why more funds are not being applied for?

Mr. Oles replied \$17,000 is what is needed for our match for this grant of \$90,000.

Commissioner Spiegelman asked for any public comments. There were none.

MOTION was ADOPTED 4-0.

PUBLIC COMMENT – general matters relating to Public Affairs:

Lora Lehmann, 1431 Bryant Lane, expressed concern about the Township's television channel.

ADJOURNMENT: 8:57 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Richard J. Manfredi, Township Manager/Secretary

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