

CITY COMMISSION AGENDA MEMO
May 12, 2008

FROM: Lauren Palmer, Assistant City Manager

MEETING: May 20, 2008

SUBJECT: Authorize Negotiation of a Contract for Museum Consulting Services for the Development of the Flint Hills Prairie Discovery Center

PRESENTER: Lauren Palmer, Assistant City Manager

BACKGROUND

In April 2004, the City Commission appointed an Attractions Committee to define the tourism and attraction components of the Downtown Redevelopment Project. On August 31, 2004, the Commission received a report from the Attractions Committee recommending a Prairie Discovery/Visitors Center featuring a Smithsonian exhibit and temporary exhibit space in the facility.

On December 1, 2006, the City received an award of Sales Tax and Revenue (STAR) Bonds for the Downtown Redevelopment Project. The award of \$50 million from the State of Kansas will go, in part, toward the construction of a Flint Hills Prairie Discovery Center. As part of the award's matching requirements, the City will invest up to \$27 million on related public improvements for the project and furnishing of the exhibits and equipment for the Discovery Center.

The community has not engaged in significant discussions about the concept for the Discovery Center since submitting the STAR bond application over two years ago. In order to move the project forward and to be able to begin construction, work is needed to further develop the concept, exhibits, management structure, business plan and development strategy for the Discovery Center. To this end, on March 18, 2008, the City Commission authorized a request for proposals to obtain professional consulting services to assist the community in further developing the concept for the Discovery Center.

DISCUSSION

Proposals were received from fifteen consulting firms. The following selection committee was assembled to review the proposals:

- Ron Fehr, City Manager
- Tom Hollinberger, College of Engineering, Architecture, Planning & Design at Kansas State University (registered architect with LEED expertise)
- Bob Keckeisen, Director, Kansas State Historical Society Museum
- Lauren Palmer, Assistant City Manager
- Lorne Render, Director, Marianna Kistler Beach Museum of Art at Kansas State University
- Jim Sherow, City Commissioner
- Scott Shoemaker, Director, Sunset Zoo
- Bruce Snead, City Commissioner
- Valerie Wright, Education Director, Konza Prairie Biological Station

After an initial review, the selection committee narrowed to five finalists that participated in interviews. Following the interviews, the committee selected the consulting team of E. Verner Johnson and Associates, Inc. (EVJA), of Boston, Massachusetts, and Hilferty and Associates, of Athens, Ohio, to recommend to the City Commission to negotiate a scope of service. Both of these firms have strong reputations in the museum industry and have a proven planning approach that has been applied in numerous projects around the country.

EVJA works exclusively in museum planning and architecture and has worked on over 200 planning and design projects. Their projects include many types of museums that have ranged in size from 7,500 to 1,250,000 square feet. EVJA also has experience working with new museums, including Museum L-A in Lewiston-Auburn, Maine, and The Academy Museum of Motion Pictures in Hollywood, California. Other clients include the Smithsonian Institution, for whom EVJA has provided planning and design services for over 20 years. A key reason that EVJA stood out among other finalists was because of their experience with Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED). Every member of the EVJA staff has been trained in LEED principles, and half of their architects, including the one assigned to this project, are LEED certified. EVJA was the only firm to indicate that pursuing LEED standards for the Discovery Center building and exhibits could potentially be cost neutral.

EVJA will subcontract with Hilferty and Associates for the exhibit design planning components. Hilferty is a full-service design firm that specializes in planning and designing interpretive experiences. Since 1971, Hilferty has collaborated with clients on more than 150 projects nationwide. The selection committee was particularly impressed with Hilferty's experience on other projects involving grassland ecosystems and local history. Those projects include the Neal Smith National Wildlife Refuge in Prairie City, Iowa, and the National Historic Trails Interpretive Center in Casper, Wyoming.

EVJA and Hilferty are partnering with Economic Stewardship, Inc. (ESI) as the project's marketing and economic consultant. ESI will be responsible for analyzing market forces, consumer behavior, and organizational capacity to make recommendations regarding the financial viability of the project. Since 1999, ESI has worked with attractions throughout the United States including the Chattanooga History Works in Chattanooga, Tennessee, and the Children's Discovery Center in Johnstown, Pennsylvania.

The interview presentation revealed a seamless integration of the various team members into the overall project. In particular, the committee appreciated that ESI's economic planning role will happen concurrently with the interpretive planning and exhibit design work being led by EVJA and Hilferty. This approach ensures that design decisions will be informed by economic analysis throughout the process.

FINANCING

Though a final scope of work and fees will be negotiated, the team proposed a 20-week process for a total project cost (including expenses) not to exceed \$194,000. Compared to the other fourteen proposals received, the committee determined this is a competitive fee that is appropriate for the work described. The contract for museum consulting services is an eligible expense that can be financed from the State of Kansas STAR Bonds for the South End Redevelopment Area.

ALTERNATIVES

It appears the Commission has the following alternatives concerning the issue at hand. The Commission may:

1. Authorize City Administration to negotiate a contract with E. Verner Johnson and Associates, Inc., for the concept development of the Flint Hills Prairie Discovery Center.
2. Deny the recommendation to negotiate a contract with E. Verner Johnson and Associates.
3. Modify to meet the needs of the Commission.
4. Table the request.

RECOMMENDATION

City Administration recommends the City Commission accept the recommendation of the Selection Committee and authorize City Administration to negotiate a contract with E. Verner Johnson and Associates, of Boston, Massachusetts, for concept development of the Flint Hills Prairie Discovery Center. EVJA will subcontract with Hilferty and Associates and Economic Stewardship, Inc. to complete the project team.

POSSIBLE MOTION

Accept the recommendation of the Selection Committee and authorize City Administration to negotiate a contract with E. Verner Johnson and Associates, of Boston, Massachusetts, for concept development services for the Flint Hills Prairie Discovery Center.

LEP
08073

Attachments:

1. Proposal Summary Letters from EVJA and Hilferty
2. Project Personnel Summary

E. Verner Johnson and Associates, Inc.

Museum Architects and Planners

April 11, 2008

City of Manhattan
1101 Poyntz Avenue
Manhattan, KS 66502
Attn: Lauren Palmer

Dear Selection Committee Members:

Principals

E. Verner Johnson
Louis Sirianni
Bradley K. Nederhoff

We are pleased to submit our team qualifications to develop a Conceptual Master Plan for the Flint Hills Prairie Discovery Center. For more than 40 years, E. Verner Johnson and Associates has specialized exclusively in the planning and design of museums of every type and size. We take particular pride in designing new museums and cultural centers that succeed in revitalizing urban communities.

Director of Museum Planning

Guy Hermann

We are delighted to have Gerard Hilferty and Associates as a partner for this project as our firms have a long history of working together successfully. Economic Stewardship brings a unique perspective of programming and financial sustainability to the project. Together, our team of seasoned professionals brings a variety of skills to the project: museum visioning, market research, operational planning, interpretive and exhibit planning, and architectural master planning.

Senior Associates

Glenn D. Remick
Jonathan Kharfen

Drawing on our unsurpassed experience in working with over 200 museums, we know it takes more than a dramatic building, inspiring exhibits, and community enthusiasm to make a new cultural attraction work. Our conceptual master planning process is designed to find the right balance of exhibits, programs, and activities that will make the Discovery Center both exciting and financially sustainable. Equally important, our master planning process also results in presentation materials that will help consolidate support among stakeholders and help stimulate additional economic development in the area.

Associates

Linda Cataldo
Michael McHugh
LEED Program Director

We would like to work with you in planning a cultural anchor for Manhattan's South End that will inspire and engage the community and its visitors. Our team is ready to commit the creative and critical resources needed to make the Flint Hills Prairie Discovery Center a resounding success. We look forward to the opportunity of discussing our ideas and our approach with you.

Sincerely,



Brad Nederhoff AIA, Principal
E. Verner Johnson and Associates



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athens, ohio 45701
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fax 740.448.2331
www.hilferty.com

April 11, 2008

Lauren Palmer, Assistant City Manager
City of Manhattan
1101 Poyntz Avenue
Manhattan, Kansas 66502

Dear Lauren,

The Flint Hills Prairie Discovery Center has a powerful story to convey. It will inspire visitors, using Manhattan as their base, to explore the region, experience its natural beauty and appreciate the rich history of this remarkable prairie/hill country. Working together with you, our team will create a well-considered conceptual design that will inform all future steps in the process.

Many of our best projects have sprung from a solid visitor experience concept and facility planning effort. One that informs the evolving architecture and allows for a hand-in-glove fit with exhibits. The surprise reveal of a multi-story projection screen at the International Game Fishing Hall of Fame, the walk thru "Orange Dome" at the Orange County Historical Center, the semi-circular theater in the National Historic Trails Center in Casper, Wyoming and the under ground prairie walk at the Neal Smith Tall Grass Prairie Center exist only because the concepts were in hand prior to creating the buildings. These examples are included for your review.

We have enjoyed the privilege and resulting success of working with E Verner Johnson who we are joining with in this proposal. Our past joint efforts include, the North Carolina State Museum of Natural History, the Texas State Museum, the South Carolina State Museum, and the Kentucky Derby Museum in Louisville, Kentucky with its 360 degree Great Hall Theater.

As you know, we are very familiar with your project and have enjoyed visiting with your team during early planning stages. We experienced the Konza Prairie first hand and understand the potential of its story. Hilferty brings three decades of experience helping national, state and regional institutions reach their goals. We commit to partner with you to create a compelling, engaging, and immersive visitor experience.

Thank you for the opportunity to propose our services. We are eager to clarify any questions you may have regarding our proposal. We look forward to the possibility of working with you on this important project.

All the best,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Dean Clouse".

Dean Clouse, CEO
Hilferty





Project Personnel

E. Verner Johnson and Associates

Guy Hermann: Guy Hermann has a unique combination of skills and experience and brings planning project leadership, institutional planning, architectural programming, and operational planning experience to the project. Mr. Hermann served as Lead Planner developing Conceptual Plans for the Smithsonian's planned National Museum of African American History and Culture in Washington, DC, for the NASCAR Hall of Fame bid for Atlanta, GA, and for the Academy Museum of Motion Pictures in Hollywood, CA. He has also led planning, facility programming, and budgeting for the firm's planning work with the Carnegie Museums of Pittsburgh and numerous other museum projects. He came to EVJA after seven years in management at Mystic Seaport Museum.

Brad Nederhoff AIA: Brad Nederhoff has worked at EVJA for 24 years in key management and design positions on a variety of museum projects. His design and planning experience includes: NASCAR Hall of Fame, Atlanta, GA; World Golf Hall of Fame, St. Augustine, FL; St. Louis Science Center, St. Louis, MO; Great Lakes Science Center, Cleveland, OH; Dekelbom Science Center, West Palm Beach, FL; Guangdong Science Center, Guangzhou, China; Hong Kong Science Museum, Hong Kong; and the Liberty Science Center in Liberty State Park, NJ. His current projects include the National Infantry Museum in Fort Benning, GA, the Tampa Bay History Center in Tampa, FL, and the Caguas Science Center in Caguas, Puerto Rico.

Hilferty and Associates

Gerard Hilferty: Gerry Hilferty, founder of Hilferty and Associates, has offered his creative talents to help find an inspiring vision for engaging exhibits for over 35 years. Gerry is involved in the creative and business sides of every project and joins our team as the Creative Director for the Interpretive Planning of the Flint Hills Prairie project.

Economic Stewardship

Elaine Van S. Carmichael: Elaine Van S. Carmichael founded Economic Stewardship, Inc. in 1999. She provides business planning services to a wide range of commercial and not-for-profit attractions throughout the United States, offering insights into the relationship between experience and interpretation objectives and concomitant market, feasibility and operations implications. Her goal is to help organizations parse physical and programmatic alternatives in ways that strengthen audience appeal without jeopardizing financial stability.