



Date: October 15, 2019

To: Board of Education

From: Dr. Kevin Russell, Superintendent
Todd Drafall, Assistant Superintendent for Business

Re: Community Engagement Consultant (updated)

Executive summary

The administration, at the request of the Board at its July Board meeting, submitted a Request for Qualifications (RFQ) to six (6) different community engagement firms across the country. The District received responses from five of those firms. After review of the submission using the rubric attached, the administration recommended to the Board of Education to contract with Paul Hanley. During the review process and about the time of the Board approval in August, the bond firm Paul worked for was sold to another firm. Paul, being the only person in his firm that did his type of work decided to not go with the new firm and instead accepted a position with a newly created subdivision of Wight and Company called Beyond Your Base (BYB). Hanley submitted a proposal with BYB that was the same as his first proposal (cost, personnel, services, etc.).

While there was no concern with the initial proposal, the Board of Education was concerned with the second. The concern with the new proposal was that there could be the perception of a conflict of interest with Hanley working for the architectural firm that would likely be awarded any capital work resulting from the master facility plan the District is considering. The Board directed the Superintendent to reconsider other proposals and to schedule a meeting where Hanley and other consultants could present to the Board and answer any questions related to the proposed work.

From that point, the administration reviewed the other proposals and at a special board meeting on October 7, 2019, the Board received presentations from BYB and Unicom-ARC. The Board had a lengthy discussion after those presentations and asked for a further recommendation from the administration.

The District had its attorney review the process, IL School Code, and policies to determine if there is any conflict of interest. Understanding the roles BYB plays in the process of engaging the community and the independence of the polling system, it appears that there is no conflict of interest. In reviewing both the presentations and the initial recommendation at this time, there was

nothing presented at the October 7 meeting that would change the initial recommendation made to the Board of Education in August.

Background

At the July Board meeting, the Board was presented with the DRAFT master facility plan. At the August meeting, the Board received the background detail information of that preliminary draft plan. That plan was developed as part of the strategic plan approved by the Board of Education in May 2018. For the last year, the Facility Planning Council (FPC) worked with staff from every building and through community engagement sessions to develop the criteria and priorities based on that strategic plan, which has resulted in the draft document submitted to the Board for review.

As mentioned at the July Board meeting, it is the administration's recommendation that the District engage the services of a third-party consultant to continue the work of the FPC with a more in-depth community engagement and prioritization of the draft facility plan to determine the next steps for the District in updating its capital facilities to meet current and future needs. The Board asked the administration to move forward with this process and bring back a recommendation for the Board's consideration.

Process

The District developed an abbreviated RFQ process based on a similar process used by the high school district. District 99 shared their RFQ with the District, and that format was adjusted to fit both the timeline and where we were in our process. The responses were received by July 29. The administration then reviewed the submissions based on the developed rubric and determined the firm that best fit the criteria. Though we believe all the firms are high quality, this process was about which firm best fit the needs of Downers Grove Elementary District 58 at this time.

The RFQ process the District engaged in is specific to the District's need to hire a consultant to assist in determining the community's support for facility updates based on the priorities established so far. The engagement of a firm is specific to that process and need by the District. The review is based on those needs. In the event the Board of Education chooses to place a question on the ballot, firms do offer additional services to community-based groups that organize to support the referendum. These groups are separate from the District. Some firms may provide *pro bono* support for such groups. Given the fact that these firms' reputations rest on successful passage of referendum questions that their process leads to, it is often in their best interest to either assist and or to offer such services. This review does not evaluate or take into account the potential of a future committee of citizens who would organize in favor of a referendum question; rather, it is based solely on the services the District currently sees as the next step in the master facility plan.

Budgetary Considerations

The District has continued over the last three to four fiscal years to include a consultant line item in the budget, which it used for Hazard, Young, Attea and Associates for the work on the strategic plan, and Wight and Company for the master facility plan. Those funds continued in the current budget, understanding that there may be a need for such services as the District continues to evaluate its facility needs. It is likely that the services of this consultant will extend into the next fiscal year.

Perception of a Conflict of Interest

The administration understands the Board's concern of a perception of a conflict of interest. In an effort to minimize that perception of conflict of interest, the community engagement process will minimize the work of the architect division as much as possible and the administration will work as a conduit whenever possible. Additionally, as the task force does its work in leading the next stages of this process, the work can be reviewed by the Board of Education. Additionally, all contracts will be reviewed by the District's legal counsel to ensure that the Board's concerns about conflict are addressed.

Recommendation

We would like to thank the Board for all of its patience as the District has worked through the process of selecting a third-party community engagement consultant. The process has been much longer than intended because Paul Hanley's company was sold in the middle of the process. The administration truly appreciates all of the feedback and questions received during the process. The Board has clearly made every effort to ensure transparency and that everything it discusses is in full public view. We commend the Board for all of its work as it is important that the community sees that the members value transparency and feedback.

We have reflected a great deal since the discussion on Monday, October 7, 2019. We have met with several local superintendents (including District 99), the ASC Administrative Team, and sought the advice of our legal counsel. After reflecting and hearing the thoughts of others, our recommendation will not change and we believe the best person to assist the District with this work is Paul Hanley from BYB. Paul Hanley has a proven record of success in Downers Grove. Paul's emphasis on community engagement and what is best for taxpayers also were major factors considered in the recommendation.

We reached this final conclusion after our counsel stated there is not a conflict of interest. To that end, we have asked counsel to review the proposal from Beyond Your Base and add language to ensure that a conflict cannot arise. Additionally, we have asked counsel to draft a letter that the District could post publicly so the community is aware that the administration and Board has done its due diligence regarding any potential conflict of interest (both are attached). We truly believe the Board and administration has been transparent throughout this process and allowed for community feedback. To date, the District has not received any concerns from the community.

Should the Board accept our recommendation, we would advise proper safeguards be put in place to ensure a conflict does not arise. This includes but is not limited to the Board approving key action steps.