

City Council
Date: 9/18/07
REGULAR
Item: 7
Motion

ITEM: Consider a contract for services to evaluate the planning and building department

SUBMITTED BY: Susan Hoyt, City Administrator

REVIEWED BY: Ben Gozola, Senior Planner
Karl Horning, Acting Building Official
Jack Griffin, City Engineer
Tom Bouthilet, Finance Director

SUMMARY AND ACTION REQUESTED: The city council is being asked to authorize the city administrator to contract for planning and building evaluation services with Dennis Welsch for a not to exceed \$ 5,000. Mr. Welsch is very experienced in managing and evaluating planning and building services given his thirty year history in managing community development departments, which include both planning, building and code enforcement services. With the vacancy in the planning director position, who will oversee this department, and the vacancy in the permanent building official position, it is a good time to evaluate how the city manages its planning, building and code enforcement activities for customer service and efficient, cost effective service delivery. This request is not being made in anticipation of the new sewer development, but is being made to be sure that these critical city services are functioning well and that the city has the processes in place when it comes to planning and building to assure ourselves that our land use goals are being implemented. The evaluation will result in recommendations to be implemented. The funding will come from salary savings in the 2007 budget that results from the August 3, 2007 retirement of the building official.

The administrator, as well as the planner and engineer, consider this a high priority for the city operations because it impacts so many property owners, developers and residents and because planning, building and relate engineering costs are \$562,881 (not counting legal fees) 16% of the total general operating budget and has represented a minimum of 4 full time employees in planning and building plus significant administrative, engineering and legal time. The small size of the consulting and permanent staff makes it imperative that their function be both accurate and efficient.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Over the past six months with the arrival of Jack Griffin as city engineer and Ben Gozola as senior planner, the staff has been working diligently to create some internal systems and accountability for the city's planning, development and building reviews. Progress has been made in creating some forms and systems. However, the workload required keeping up with the planning applications, building and engineering requests makes it difficult to coordinate and implement the internal and external measures required.

It is also critical to evaluate our customer service, our code compliance and our consistency and follow through in planning, engineering and building.

Getting an outsider's review of operations and recommendations will be very helpful as well as fiscally prudent. Mr. Welsch is known for his capacity to create a systematic, understandable approach to managing planning, land use and building services in his work as a public employee and in his consulting business over the past years. He is also known for an ability to work with a variety of employees, contractors and developers.

It is a good time to do this so a new planning director can react to and implement the recommendations.

The evaluation is not a performance review of any former or current employees or a plan to organize the planning/building department.

Mr. Welsch is out of the state until September 20 and cannot be here this evening. He will meet the city council and representatives of the planning commission during his evaluation of these services.

RECOMMENDATION

Proceed with a not to exceed contract to accomplish the tasks in the proposal (Attachment 2). If approved the specific tasks in the proposal will be prioritized and tailored for Lake Elmo.

PROPOSED MOTION FOR CONSIDERATION

Move to authorize the city administrator to enter into a contract for planning and building evaluation services with Dennis Welsch for \$115.00 per hour and not to exceed \$ 5,000.

ADOPTED ORDER OF BUSINESS

- | | |
|---|--|
| ○ Introduction | Susan Hoyt, City Administrator |
| ○ Report | Susan Hoyt, City Administrator |
| ○ Questions to the presenter | Mayor and Council members
Round Robin |
| ○ Questions from the public, to the council
(3 minutes/person) | Mayor facilitates |
| ○ Call for a motion
(to move business along) | Mayor facilitates |
| ○ Discussion | Mayor facilitates
Round Robin |
| ○ Action | City Council |

ATTACHMENTS

- | | |
|---|--|
| 1 | Description of Dennis Welsch background and services |
| 2 | Proposal for consideration |