

**OFFICE OF THE CITY COUNCIL**

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 **MEETING MINUTES**

**TOURIST DEVELOPMENT COUNCIL SPECIAL MEETING**

**Thursday, January 19, 2017**

**1:00 P.M.**

**City Council Conference Room A**

**Suite 425, City Hall**

**117 West Duval Street**

**I. Attendance**

City Council President Lori Boyer, Board Chairperson

City Council Vice President John Crescimbeni, Board Vice Chairperson (arr. 1:40)

City Council Member Greg Anderson, Board Member -Excused

Barbara Goodman, Board Member

M. G. Orender, Board Member

Kirit Patidar, Board Member-Excused

Craig Smith, Board Member (arr. 1:40)

Jeffrey Truhlar, Board Member

Annette Hastings, TDC Executive Director

Jeff Clements, Chief of Research

Kyle Billy, Assistant Council Auditor

Phillip Peterson, Council Auditor’s Office

Lawsikia Hodges, Deputy General Counsel

          **Meeting Convened: 1:04 p.m. Meeting Adjourned: 3:34 p.m.**

Introduction

Chairwoman Boyer convened the meeting and the attendees introduced themselves for the record.

Discussion Topics for Tourist Development Plan Request For Proposal

Greg Pease, Chief of the City’s Procurement Division, gave an overview of the City’s procurement awards processes, which vary based on the type of good or service being procured and the value of the contract. The Professional Services Evaluation Committee (PSEC) incorporates 10 standard evaluation criteria and may include price as a consideration (for non-design projects); membership is comprised of the Chief of Procurement, Director of Finance, a representative of the Office of General Counsel, and 2 representatives of the using agency. The Competitive Sealed Proposal Evaluation Committee (CSPEC) uses evaluation criteria designed for each project and may include price as a factor; membership is comprised of the Director of Finance, Director of Public Works, a representative of the Office of General Counsel, a representative of the Procurement Division, and a representative of the using agency. Mr. Pease reviewed a flow chart of a typical PSEC review and approval process and timeline, which runs 60 to 90 days from presentation of the RFP to the PSEC through evaluation to final contract award. Ms. Boyer noted that development of the RFP by the first of March would provide time for the PSEC or CSPEC process to take place for an award by the end of May, leaving a 3-month window for a transition process before the new contract takes effect in September. Ms. Boyer also noted the prohibition against TDC members speaking to representatives of any potential bidder during the RFP process. She asked Paul Astleford, CEO of Visit Jacksonville! to provide a list of the organization’s current board members so that TDC members can know to whom the prohibition applies.

Public Comment

Zachary Schwartz, founder and CEO of intoGo, advocated for the TDC to include the company’s mobile app as part of its strategy for marketing the city. The app provides information on a wide variety of entertainment and recreation opportunities for visitors and locals and hopes to be the most comprehensive source of information on attractions and happenings in the Jacksonville area.

Fred Pozin, a former TDC member, discussed the conflict of interest issue raised during the 2012 RFP process. He warned that the PSEC process tends to rely too heavily on the 2 user agency representatives while the other 3 members defer to their expertise. He recommended that there be 3 user agency representatives to promote a better evaluation and grading outcome. He also urged that the TDC determine specifically what it’s looking for in the responses at the outset so that there’s less opportunity later in the process for altering the original criteria based on information received in the RFPs. In response to a question from Chairwoman Boyer, Mr. Pease and Deputy General Counsel Lawsikia Hodges said that the number of user agency representatives on a PSEC scoring panel could be altered by means of a Council ordinance waiving the normal membership.

Timeline for RFP review and award process

Mr. Pease outlined an RFP review and evaluation process that would begin with initial presentation of the RFP to PSEC or CSPEC by March 16th in order to get the RFPs received and evaluated by the first week of May. Commissioner Truhlar cautioned that a 21 calendar day response period for the RFP is a very ambitious deadline for the hospitality marketing industry.

Consultant services for planning and evaluating proposed new tourism attractions

Ms. Boyer explained her concept for potentially hiring a consultant to evaluate ideas brought to the TDC or developed internally that propose the construction or expansion of tourist attractions such as aquaria, museums, theaters, etc. The hiring of such a consultant, which would be separate from the hiring of a convention and tourism marketing agency, would entail a separate RFP for an entity that could perform economic analysis, market analysis and the like to determine the likelihood of the proposed attraction being successful if constructed.

Ms. Boyer reviewed her initial draft of minimum qualifications for such consultant services. She asked the group to consider how many years of experience respondents should be required to have and whether the experience requirement should apply to the corporate entity or to the principals of an organization that may be brand new. There could also be separate factors for minimum years of experience and a narrative description of past experience that provides more context about the nature and quality of the work performed. Commissioner Goodman offered to obtain a copy of a similar RFP used by the National Park Service to procure consulting services.

Single versus multiple contracts for tourism plan components

Ms. Boyer explained the considerations involved in hiring one or multiple companies to perform the various functions, since an entity that might be the best at marketing conventions might not be the best at branding and marketing. The TDC will need to evaluate the benefits of grouping all the functions under one organization for coordination and unity purposes versus the benefits of hiring multiple specialty agencies with differing expertise in their specialty areas. The TDC will need to decide such parameters as where staffed visitor centers and kiosks are located, what hours they operate and what sorts of information and services should be provided there. This should be clearly spelled out in the RFP so respondents know exactly what they’re expected to provide under the contract. Katie Mitura of Visit Jacksonville explained how the current visitor centers (Jacksonville Landing, Greenleaf Building on Laura Street and Jacksonville International Airport) operate. Council Member Crescimbeni requested Visit Jacksonville to provide data to the Council Auditor’s Office describing how the JIA visitor’s center is funded.

Ms. Boyer urged the commissioners to read through the initial minimum qualifications proposals in the four tourism plan areas (tourism bureau/visitor centers, tourism marketing, convention sales and services, and consultant services) and to provide any suggestions for revisions/refinements/ improvements to Lawsikia Hodges. Commissioner Truhlar asked whether there are accreditation bodies that accredit tourism promotion entities and, if so, whether that should be a requirement. The TDC will need to determine whether it expects services to be provided by the winning proposer in-house or whether subcontracting some functions to other entities will be allowed. Mr. Pease urged the group to make provision in the RFP process for interviewing respondents and allocating a portion of the scoring to the results of those interviews. Professional service contracts for complicated service packages deserve an in-depth review process that encompasses more than just review of written documents. Ms. Boyer suggested that the TDC may wish to consider awarding separate contracts for different functions if a proposer is substantially superior to the other proposers in one area but not in others.

Length of contract and number and length of renewal periods

Commissioner Truhlar suggested that the contract for consultant services should be fairly short (i.e. two years) with renewal options. Commissioner Orender said that shorter contracts are more time-consuming and expensive for proposers because of the frequency of re-proposing, and can be problematic in keeping good employees if the contract has a short term. He recommended an initial term with automatic renewal provisions upon mutual agreement.

Future meetings

The group discussed how often to meet to accomplish the RFP development task – whether fewer, longer meetings or a series of shorter meetings on a weekly basis for the next month.

In response to a question from Council Member Crescimbeni, Ms. Hodges attempted to clarify the rules about having contact with potential bidders by explaining the difference between simple fact-finding and impermissible influencing. It was recommended that factual questions be directed to TDC or City staff rather than to Visit Jacksonville or other potential bidder for a response. Commissioner Goodman suggested that Visit Jacksonville inform its employees, board members and contractors about the upcoming RFP process and warn them not to speak to any TDC member about any matter related to the contract or RFP qualifications and process, lest the organization be disqualified as a bidder because of the impermissible contact. Mr. Truhlar felt that it would be advantageous to find a mechanism to solicit input from a broad range of the hotel industry, since there are only two hoteliers on the TDC.

Chairwoman Boyer will have staff poll the membership for availability for future meeting dates. Members were urged to read all the written materials and direct written comments or questions to the TDC Administrator Annette Hastings. The members were also asked to send in a list of all of their potentially conflicting memberships and personal relationships to Lawsikia Hodges.

The group will meet again on January 27th and early the next week (January 31 – February 2).

Public Comment

None

The meeting was adjourned at 3:34 p.m.

Jeff Clements, Council Research Division

Posted 1.24.17 10:30 a.m.