

**TOWN OF LINCOLN
COMPREHENSIVE LONG RANGE PLAN**

**MINUTES OF RFP REVIEW COMMITTEE
August 7, 2007**

PRESENT: Tim Higgins, Peter Sugar, Stu Haber, Joel Freedman, Chris Klem, Peter Von Mertens, Mark Hochman, Mark Whitehead

RESPONSES RECEIVED

Mr. Whitehead reported that two responses to the Request for Proposals for consultancy services have been received: one from Community Opportunities Group (COG) in conjunction with VHB, Dodson Associates and Community Planning Solutions, and one from Community Preservation Associates (CPA) in conjunction with Martha Lyon and Earth Tech. The RFP was well publicized, including circulation to thirteen consultants on the Massachusetts list of consulting planners. Although the number of responses is low, they are from teams that include several of the competent firms.

Mr. Whitehead said he had researched whether the number of responses was abnormally low; the experience of other Massachusetts planners is that the number of responses to similar proposals has varied from one to five, and the average is between two and three. Some comments elicited from non-responding firms include: doubts about the complex reporting structure; lack of major issues in town; concern that consultants who have done prior work with the town may have an advantage; and inability to find a suitable partner to cover the scope of the work. Mr. Whitehead had been assured that the RFP was well-written.

Mr. Higgins suggested that although the low number of responses was a little disappointing, the responses were from credible groups and it should be feasible to have a genuine interview process.

PROCESS

Mr. Higgins explained that costs are not referred to at this point although they have been submitted under separate cover. Interviews are based on qualifications, and costs are examined or discussed later.

DISCUSSION OF RESPONSES

The Committee noted that the COG response is more process-oriented whereas the CPA response is more task-oriented. This may be partly a reflection of the different strengths of the consultants, and partly due to COG's greater familiarity with the organizational structure. Some members considered COG's submission to be more responsive to the RFP. COG's quantification of meetings was considered helpful; CPA could perhaps be asked for something similar.

It was noted that neither respondent had put forward ideas on the governance topic, but this may be because the RFP stated that the sub-committee intended to take the lead on it.

The composition of the two teams and the strengths of their various members were discussed. It was noted that CPA appeared to have little track record as a company, but that team restructuring was not unusual in this line of work, and may be unimportant if there is a good record of individual performance and cooperative working. Questions could be asked in interviews about teams' vulnerability to loss of principals.

Some members were disappointed that the respondents had done little work in Lincoln's usual 'comparison towns'. However, Mr. Higgins suggested that different towns are comparable on different issues and that there are some reasonable comparisons in the mix.

Overall, the committee was in agreement that the responses were of sufficient quality to proceed with interviews.

MAIN REQUIREMENTS

There was some discussion of the most important things to obtain from the consultancy work. It was agreed that helping to integrate the sub-committees' work and pull together an implementation plan will be important. A question could be asked about this in the interviews. One member felt that writing a lucid document that expresses the relationships between different strands may be important. Another considered that sowing the seeds of ideas may be more important. A consultant may be able to orchestrate debate on contentious issues such as affordable housing or the extent of land conservation.

It was reported that some of the sub-committees may need help in producing written work. The RFP was written with flexibility in mind, but it was agreed that it is important to clarify this need before the consultants are hired.

INTERVIEWS

Interviews will be held on August 16. Members' availability before then was checked.

There was a brief discussion of whether to send out questions in advance. This may encourage the consultants to fill out gaps in their submissions (especially more detail on process by CPA). Members agreed to send any suggestions of points to be addressed, to Mark Whitehead who will compile a list.

Submitted by Catherine Perry