



PENINSULA TOWNSHIP

13235 Center Road, Traverse City
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Township Board Special Meeting

September 29, 2022, 10:00 a.m.

Township Hall

Minutes

1. Call to Order by Wunsch at 10:00 a.m.

2. Pledge

3. Roll Call

Present: Wunsch, Achorn, Sanger, Rudolph, Chown

Absent: Wahl, Shanafelt

4. Brief Citizen Comments (for agenda items only):

5. Approve Agenda

Rudolph moved to approve the agenda with a second by Sanger. Motion approved by consensus

6. Conflict of Interest: none

7. Consent Agenda: none

8. Business:

1. Award contract for updating Peninsula Township's five-year parks and recreation plan

Wunsch: we received three bids, one from Networks Northwest, one from Beckett & Raeder, and one from LIAA. The executive committee unsealed those bids yesterday. Do we have any applicants here today? Yes, Barry from LIAA. How do we want to proceed?

Chown: I was unable to attend the parks meeting last night but I watched it this morning and have a few comments I can share. Also, Michele Zebell is here and might be able to provide input. The parks committee went through the three bids and here is a rough summary of what I heard. Committee members are very appreciative of receiving the three bids. They appreciated the Networks Northwest bid and that organization's roots in the community but felt the bid was less complete and detailed than the other two bids. It was the lowest bid but it wasn't as complete. It didn't reference other similar projects. The Beckett & Raeder bid was presented well. It was visually pleasing and the organization has a lot of experience creating these plans. It was the middle bid in terms of cost. The committee found it very tempting. When the group discussed the LIAA bid, it rose to the top. LIAA has great familiarity with our parks system. LIAA helped with the feasibility study we worked on last year and is already up to speed with the township and our needs. Parks committee member Dave Murphy said, "I have a professional bias toward LIAA." The group agreed. Another comment was that although LIAA's bid is higher by \$4,000 than the next bid, LIAA understands better how much work there is going to be in updating this plan in part because LIAA understands how many parks we have. We are a parks-heavy township. Pete Dahl said "LIAA already has ownership here." In sum, the committee felt we wouldn't need to bring LIAA up to speed and appreciated the familiarity, the continuity, and the experience LIAA brings.

Rudolph: is that the parks committee's recommendation?

Zebell: the majority of the parks members were in favor of LIAA. One member thought both LIAA

and Beckett & Raeder would be great. The majority of us felt that LIAA would put together a rec plan that would help us get grants.

Chown: Barry, the Beckett & Raeder plans look just beautiful. That's an element we've been missing. Ours is not especially beautiful and looks a little clumsy. Will LIAA's plan be beautiful? Sophisticated? Visually pleasing? Will it reflect the best that Peninsula Township is and can be? We are updating our parks and rec plan because it is a requirement for state funding. We have not been successful to date and we want to be successful.

Barry Hicks: I'm one of the planners at LIAA and I put together the parks committee's funding feasibility study this past winter. Thank you for that opportunity. We would be building off the existing plan, and we put in our proposal ideas for content that will change based on the survey we already did. In the process of doing that, yes, we have the flexibility to make the plan more visually pleasing. We can add more projects and map updates and clearly delineate some of the boundaries and size and acreages.

Chown: the content has to be there and will be there but I also want the presentation to be a success. I think that potentially has been a factor. And we need to clearly convey what the needs are, what the possibilities are, and what the existing conditions are at our parks and why.

Achorn: I saw on the Beckett & Raeder Charlevoix plan a mechanism to monitor the time people spend in the parks and the number of people in each location. It sounded like an interesting opportunity using cell phone data. I think that would be a feature that would help us in the grant proposal. Do you have the ability to do that?

Barry Hicks: to track cell phone data? I'm not sure we have access to that. That's not something we built into our study. I'd have to talk to our GIS person to see what data they could get. I'm not as familiar with that or with the Beckett & Raeder proposal.

Achorn: it appears that Charlevoix has a hotspot in each of their parks if that's what you call it and can monitor that type of activity. It sounded like an interesting feature to put into our plan that might assist us.

Barry Hicks: you would like to have that?

Achorn: yes, it sounds like it could help us.

Chown: yes, and it would be legally sound. At Pelizzari Natural Area some years ago, there was a discussion about tracking people with cameras in parking lots and there was conversation about the legal aspects of that. This might alleviate that concern. I'd love to look into it. We'd really like to know how many people are using these parks.

Sanger: it's picking up the pings. That information is available.

Chown: do you just purchase it? How do you get that information?

Rudolph: I think you buy it from the cell phone companies.

Sanger: you might recall issues with the most recent general election that a group was able to get ahold of pinging information. Law enforcement can pick up pings to determine where in the forest a lost person is.

Chown: is it an option to put this into our plan?

Hicks: I don't know if we could do it right now, but if there is a tracking mechanism you want us to look into, there is a company, Esri, that does a lot of GIS work and sells data, but I don't know the full spectrum of that.

Chown: please do look into it. I'm curious and want to know if it's available retroactively. The summer season is over and consequently our biggest parks usage is behind us for the year yet this parks and rec plan is due in a couple of months.

Barry Hicks: the plan might discuss that you would be interested in tracking this information but don't have the means to obtain it now.

Wunsch: please check with your staff and see.

Sanger: I have nothing negative against any of the three that responded, and I appreciate the strong relationship with both Networks Northwest and LIAA. I see the proposal from Beckett as an opportunity to engage with a third very qualified firm. I'm extremely impressed with the nine parks and rec plans they've done in the area. I'm also very impressed by its master plan capabilities. I sat around this table with Isaiah for 23 months during Covid coming to terms with how to do a master plan and I'd like the board to consider that, money aside, I think we should look carefully at this Beckett bid and ask ourselves, "Why not?" The firm has been very active in our northwest Michigan community. Unless I hear something negative, I'd like to go with Beckett. For one thing, we're asking the one bidder to incorporate an approach that was presented by Beckett.

Wunsch: I'm comfortable narrowing down to Beckett or LIAA. There are elements of the Beckett proposal that give us a little more data but then we have LIAA's continuity with the parks group.

Rudolph: we have set up this parks group to guide us in these things, and I think it would be perhaps not the right thing to do to not follow their recommendation. If they are recommending one of these, and they understand what needs to be done better than I do, I feel like I need to take their recommendation. The fact that they are already comfortable working with LIAA means a lot to me.

Sanger: I take a more global view. We don't have a master plan that's up to date. If I'd known about this Beckett firm years ago, I would have selected them to work with the township.

Chown: Barry, does LIAA do master plan work too?

Barry Hicks: short answer, yes. We did a lot of resilience master plans starting in 2011, 2012, or around that time. The most recent one was done in 2021.

Chown: Dave, I also want to say that it's not presented in LIAA's bid, but if I'm not mistaken, LIAA undertook the city of Traverse City's five-year rec plan and the rec authority rec plan.

Barry Hicks: yes, we are the staff for the rec authority, the joint authority between Garfield Township and the city of Traverse City. We are updating that five-year plan again starting in January.

Chown: are the two plans different?

Hicks: yes, there's the city's plan and then there's the joint efforts between the two municipalities.

Chown: can you comment on the success of those plans?

Barry Hicks: Matt Cowell, our director, had another meeting today and couldn't be here. He could answer this better. Yes, they've received awards.

Chown: I'm pretty sure the rec authority received a significant trust fund grant based on the rec plan you guys did and the city did too this summer for new bathrooms, which is something we are in desperate need of.

Wunsch: do you offer back-end support on getting the grants? We have not been able to leverage DNR funds off our current plan. What do we need to do to get our rec plan in shape to bring grant dollars in and does LIAA continue to work with municipalities to get those grant dollars after the plan is done or are we on our own?

Barry Hicks: this proposal doesn't discuss that, but we could discuss it going forward. Ultimately, the township has to be the applicant but that doesn't mean LIAA couldn't assist with preparing those applications for you.

Michele Zebell: when we looked at the number of hours both Beckett and LIAA expected to spend, because of the rates, it looked like LIAA would spend more time on the plan. We also looked at what was required of the township and we were concerned about how busy our planner is. That was another consideration because LIAA would assist more.

Achorn: you're saying that because of LIAA's prior experience, they already have the information

that is expected to be provided by the township?

Zebell: I think they have a good amount of it so it would be less of a burden.

Chown: I think that's pretty significant. We have a lot on our plates, and nobody more than Jenn.

Nancy Heller: part of the discussion last night was making sure all of the bids include all the historic sites. The committee wanted to make sure those are included as well.

Achorn: we didn't include that in the bid or is that assumed?

Barry Hicks: we looked at all those properties when we did the feasibility study. They weren't all under township ownership or maintenance?

Achorn: they are all owned by the township.

Wunsch: Dougherty has a foundation.

Hicks: we don't do a lot of these bids, but given our past with the township, we thought we could more or less be your planner for this and take as much off the township's plate as possible.

Chown: Dave, I do like the idea of considering working with Beckett & Raeder on the master plan update. I think the process could be streamlined a great deal and take the burden off our planner. It's still out at neighboring jurisdictions, I believe, and it will soon be time to start it again. I want to second what Rudy said about honoring the parks committee's preference given their work to date with LIAA, especially since I think LIAA has a more realistic understanding of what is involved. My preference is to award the contract to LIAA and explore what Marge brought up about tracking usage at the parks. There are places on the peninsula where cell phone coverage is very poor. Perhaps that matters. My druthers are to go with LIAA on this.

Wunsch: is that a motion?

Chown: yes.

Rudolph: I'll second that.

Sanger: I'll support my position. Given the economics of the township and this is \$4,000 more, we can stay with this horse and there's nothing wrong with that, but as a business person, this is an opportunity to save money and gain experience with a major player. It's an opportunity for us and I see no downside risk at all. The upside is that we get to know a very qualified firm that can help us in the future. I'm impressed with this firm. It's a private sector firm, not a public sector firm like the other two non-profits are. It's an opportunity for the township.

Achorn: I'm leaning towards LIAA because of the extensive well of information and data they already have that the staff will not have to provide. Even though there is a dollar difference now, I think LIAA will be able to produce a product similar to Beckett & Raeder in pizzazz and beauty that will award us grants. I think Networks Northwest is somewhat of an outsider to us right now and it would be a big jump to get them on board where they would need to be to provide a product that would be as good as LIAA's.

Rudolph: I understand what you're saying, Dave, but I see the continuity of the work LIAA has already done and that the parks committee is familiar with them and understands and likes them. The one downside risk I see with going with the other firm is that they don't have the familiarity with us. I don't know what that would mean in terms of additional work for us here in the township. I think it's best to support our committee and ride the horse we already know.

Sanger: if it were my business, I would check some references. Did the executive committee do that?

Wunsch: no, we just received the bids yesterday.

Chown: I'll also say that had we not had the upheaval we had in early spring and summer with the lawsuit and the board changes and an election in August...We were very busy all summer. This fell off our radar, the need to update this plan by the end of January. The timeline for preparing the

bid, which didn't exist, getting it out, giving the bidders time to put a bid together, submit it to us, then do the work and hold all the required public hearings...we are under the gun. That is why the bid deadline was yesterday and the decision is hopefully today, so that we can contact the winner and they can get to work. The draft of the new rec plan is due Nov. 30. They have two months to do the work and put it together for public review and discussion. I'd like to be able to do what Traverse City is doing – starting it in January so that you have a full year to do the work. We just don't have the time right now to do that.

Wunsch: I'd like to give Beckett & Raeder some piece of work but I have a preference for the continuity. I see a possible downside that we undermine the parks if we don't go with LIAA. Also, what's the resource load that we're tying up if we don't go with LIAA? If there were a substantive difference between the work LIAA has done for us up to this point and the parks plan, I'd be less inclined to go with LIAA, but I see it as more of a continuation. I don't think it makes sense to break off and go with a separate contract. I do want to see how we bring those other guys in.

Sanger: it's unfortunate that Beckett & Raeder isn't here today. If it were my business, I'd make contact with them and have a discussion. It's too bad I don't have the information today to make a good decision. I want to get this township back on a timetable and get the master plan done. We put in a ton of work and the master plan is sitting on someone's desk. Was there a reason why Beckett didn't attend?

Chown: the RFP said we would have a meeting today to make a decision. LIAA reached out to ask if it would be helpful if they attended. I said yes, and they sent Barry.

Sanger: I'm troubled that we have to make a decision overnight.

Chown: I think it speaks to the challenges inherent in the township structure that we have and the specific challenges and tasks we have been dealing with for many months now. I'm a member of the parks committee and on the township board. It probably falls on me that we didn't get going on this earlier. It fell off everyone's plates. We can put this on a calendar and get to it when we should for the next five-year rec plan. Organization is a vital part of our success. We can do better and we have to.

Wunsch: this is the second one I've been involved in, and this has definitely been a more deliberate and well-thought-out process than the last one.

Achorn: yes, I was there, and on the last weekend, trying to type it. It was a total fiasco.

Nancy Heller: at the meeting last night, my interpretation is that Beckett & Raeder was depending a lot more on staff and the parks committee, and that involves dollars and cents. They spent a lot of time discussing and soul searching but that entered heavily into the discussion, how much staff time was needed and how much the committee would be taking on.

Chown: Nancy, that's a really important point. The staff who help with these things are Jenn and I. I have another election in November and don't have a lot of time right now. Jenn's hands are full, as I've already said. That's why, given the circumstances we find ourselves in, it's prudent to go with LIAA.

Wunsch: I think we've got consensus even if we don't have hundred percent agreement. I respect the position that you've taken, Dave.

Board agreement.

Chown moved to award the five-year parks and rec plan to LIAA with a second by Rudolph.

Roll call vote: Yes – Achorn, Rudolph, Chown, Wunsch

No – Sanger

Motion passed

Wunsch: we will add a calendar update to put out an RFP in fall of 2026, four years from today.

Peninsula Township
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Becky Chown, Recording Secretary

9. Citizen Comments:

10. Board Comments:

11. Adjournment

Sanger moved to adjourn the meeting with a second by Rudolph.
by consensus.

Motion approved

Meeting adjourned at 10:51 a.m.