

Bethlehem Environmental Advisory Council
Special Meeting (Review Proposals for Climate Action Planning)
August 8, 2019

Attendees: EAC Members: Lynn Rothman, Mike Topping, Kathy Fox, Brian Hillard, Elisabeth Cichonski, Brian Nicas.

Andrea Wittchen (iSpring), Jane Cook (Monocacy Creek Watershed Association [MCWA] and Bethlehem Backyards for Wildlife [BBFW]), Julie Pineiro (MCWA), Lauren Fosbenner (Lehigh University and Nurture Nature Center), Kim Schaffer (Citizens Climate Lobby [CCL]), Karen Norvig Berry, Dana Grubb, Ed Gallagher (Gadfly), Bill Scheirer.

Call to Order at 6:38 PM.

1. Review proposals from consulting firms to write a Climate Action Plan for the City of Bethlehem

a. iSpring:

Pros:

- Would work with EAC
- PA-certified women business enterprise (WBE)
- Possible cost saving options were noted, which would be helpful since this proposal was high.
- Specifically mentioned including underserved communities, but do not address how that would be done
- Good community involvement (Lehigh roots in community, WFMZ, Bethlehem Press)
- Local
- Comfortable feeling, less professional, more personal
- Well-known, trustworthy Lehigh Professors would be involved
- Walkthroughs of the city sounded like a good way to understand the systems
- Greatest number of hours devoted to project

Cons:

- Presentation was not as impressive as others
- Discussed assembling teams, but only have two employees, then the work would be subdivided into work by two Lehigh professors and a subcontractor firm.
- Appreciate involving university, but not confident that this will be reliable
- Use subcontractors and undergraduates (this may also be a benefit—cost savings).
- Charging considerable amount on mileage
- Not enough background in Climate Action Planning
- Plan not clearly outlined
- Even with cost saving measures, this was the second highest priced proposal

b. Michael Baker

Pros:

- Good experience with other CAPs

- Tina Roseberry worked on the vulnerability assessment and climate action planning initiatives with the City of Easton as the City's Planning Director
- Good public works sessions
- Excellent graphical interface, allowing for greater public comprehension
- Good short-term and long-term goals and tool kits
- Competitive pricing and good estimate for hours
- Local, professional, clear, concise
- Resumes were great, in their proposal there is a link where we could evaluate other cities climate action plans
- Focused on community engagement

Cons:

- Specifics about how much time they would need from the City were not stated
- Lower cost than other proposals, therefore may not be as comprehensive as other plans
- Minor travel costs
- Two public engagement sessions (all had 2 or 3)
- Focused primarily on natural disasters/hazards

c. Stone House Group

Pros:

- Excellent experience with buildings and energy efficiency
- Good communication strategy
- Local
- Good experience in the industry, but may not be specifically what we're looking for

Cons:

- Timeline was extremely long, although they were willing to restructure the timeline to meet the City's goals.
- Not as much emphasis on community engagement
- Did not say how much time they needed from the City
- Highest cost with additional cost for "preparation of the climate action plan"
- Have niche experience but wasn't enough to make up for the high price point

d. WSP

Pros:

- Good national experience, could bring in ideas from other places
- Large company with many resources
- Good public engagement strategy. Working with the Nurture Nature Center for public engagement aspect
- Largest number of public engagement meetings
- Very qualified team

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- Very technical, lots of analytical tools
- Three Bethlehem residents are on the team
- Good two-phased approach
- Competitive cost
- Toolkits are available
- Would be willing to work with City with fee adjustment
- Have experience working with the City

Cons:

- A little more difficult to follow proposal than some of the others
- Asked the City for a significant amount of time from employees to keep the price down but we don't know if the City will be able to support them
- Can they put together a Climate Action Plan that is clear, concise, but simple enough for the general public to understand
- They noted that their cost for similar climate action plans has been significantly higher. They are relying on the city for 284 hours.

2. Make recommendations to the City regarding the proposals:

The EAC believes that all four firms are qualified. However, we recommend both WSP and Michael Baker International to the City as being the strongest candidates.

We also recommend that the City ensure that climate injustice and underserved communities would be addressed in plans written by Michael Baker International and WSP.

We suggest that the City consider their resources and determine how much time the consultants will require of City staff, understanding that to create an effective Climate Action Plan it will be necessary for the City staff to participate not only in the planning process, but on an ongoing basis once the plan is initiated. In addition, we suggest that the form of training and support for the toolkits be fully understood.

3. Meeting Adjourned at 7:55 PM.

Respectfully Submitted,
Elisabeth Cichonski, Secretary