MINUTES
City Council Public Works & Utilities Committee
Special Meeting

Wednesday, March 13, 2024 – 3:30 PM
City Council Chambers

Members Present:	Mac Morrow, Chair, Council Member Lauren Wise, Vice-Chair, Council Member Owen Carson, Citizen Member Mayor Maureen Copelof, Ex-Officio
Staff Present:	Wilson Hooper, City Manager Wesley Shook, Acting Public Works Director Dennis Richardson, Water Treatment Plan Supervisor Emory Owen, Wastewater Treatment Plant Supervisor Aaron Winans, WWTP Staff Alex Shepherd, Assistant to the City Manager Becky McCann, Communications Coordinator
Guests:	Bryan Wright, AECOM; Harvey Sankey

A. Welcome and Call to Order

Committee Chair Mac Morrow called the meeting to order at 3:32 pm.

B. Certification of Quorum

Assistant to the City Manager Alex Shepherd certified that a quorum was present.

C. Approval of Agenda

Motion by Mr. Wise, seconded by Mr. Carson to approve the agenda as presented. The motion carried unanimously.

D. WWTP Engineering Firm Selection

Mr. Morrow informed the committee that reviewing all the requests for qualifications (RFQ) had been a daunting task. He emphasized that the crucial aspect lies in the teams involved with each engineering firm. He noted that a couple of the firms appeared to be focused on upselling to expand or build a new Wastewater Treatment Plant, while others seemed inclined to focus on fixing existing infrastructure.

Mr. Wise stated that, among all the firms, his preference narrowed down to CDM Smith and KCI. He expressed admiration for CDM Smith's experience with the City and their skills. He appreciated that they offered options for both upgrading existing facilities and building a new site. He also praised KCI for their creativity and fact-based reasoning. While acknowledging that all firms could do a good job, he found CDM Smith and KCI to stand out the most.

Mr. Carson shared that he also ranked CDM Smith and KCI higher than the others. He appreciated McKim and Creed's subject knowledge of wastewater treatment plants and their adaptability.

Mr. Morrow pointed out that while CDM Smith has a history of working with the City and is well-known, they didn't convince him that they were the best fit.

Mr. Carson noted that he appreciated CDM Smith's proposal for building a new plant on a different site, whereas other firms were focused on expanding or improving the existing site.

Mr. Wright remarked on KCI's exploration of unique technologies and their creative solutions for wet weather treatment and operational challenges during construction.

Mr. Hooper highlighted KCI's project manager's expertise in wastewater treatment plants and their modular approach, making them one of his top candidates alongside CDM Smith.

Mr. Hooper mentioned that they are professional but slightly behind schedule, though not due to any fault of their own. GMC Engineering proposed alternative funding methods.

Mr. Owen expressed a preference for CDM Smith due to his positive working relationship with them. He noted that if he had to choose, he would prefer CDM Smith for a larger treatment plant and KCI for a smaller one.

Mr. Wright found it interesting to see which firms considered on-site versus off-site construction to be more expensive.

Mr. Morrow asked Mr. Owen about the current design by CDM Smith at the Wastewater Treatment Plant and the issues he is currently facing.

Mr. Owen responded that the issues with the tank stem from our decision not to install mixers, which has caused problems as the lack of mixing resulted in pumps clogging. Additionally, opting for a 3.2 million-gallon tank instead of a 5 million-gallon one has caused difficulties in quickly pumping out rainwater due to excessive head.

Mr. Wright inquired whether CDM Smith had pointed out these potential issues. Mr. Owen stated that he did not recall.

Mr. Morrow confirmed that, to his recollection, they did not point out the issues.

Mr. Hooper mentioned that while he thought GMC Engineering did a good job, their presentation focused more on previous projects than on ours. However, they were the only firm to provide a unique funding source. He said it was interesting that they use demographers to forecast future flow projections.

Mr. Winans remarked that KCI showed creativity in utilizing existing resources on-site. He noted that while all firms claimed they would pursue funding, only a few included it in their schedule, with CDM Smith proposing eighty hours and GMC proposing fourteen hours for funding research.

Mr. Wright proposed a phased approach to construction, suggesting building a plant for twenty years of capacity with the option to expand later.

Mr. Morrow agreed, expressing concerns about projecting fifty years into the future.

Mr. Wise questioned the importance of installing a new engine in the old plant, given the public's awareness of our current issues.

Mr. Hooper acknowledged that it would be a tough sell but believed it could be proven to the public.

Mr. Wright inquired about the feasibility of finding a site for a completely new plant.

Mr. Winans mentioned the possibility of repurposing the old Ecusta wastewater plant site, but acknowledged regulatory challenges. He noted that engineers discussed repurposing newer parts of the plant.

Mr. Carson observed that CDM Smith appeared to have put more effort into considering alternative sites.

Mr. Hooper asked Mr. Wright if it would be unusual to bring firms back for a second discussion.

Mr. Wright replied that it would not be unusual.

Mr. Hooper suggested bringing back CDM Smith and KCI.

Mr. Carson proposed providing the firms with questions beforehand.

Mr. Hooper agreed, stating that it would be best to give them the questions beforehand.

Mr. Morrow expressed interest in asking the firms about their projections for building a new plant and funding sources.

Mr. Hooper suggested asking CDM Smith why they believe building off-site is more economical and KCI why they think building on-site is more economical.

Mr. Winans mentioned that KCI has a dedicated employee for finding funding, while CDM Smith's engineers would handle the task.

Mr. Wright noted that some firms mentioned finding funding toward the end of the project, which he believed was too late.

Mr. Hooper asked the committee for their thoughts on this approach.

Mr. Wise suggested inviting them back to further evaluate and compare them.

E. Set Date for Next Meeting

The next regular meeting of the Public Works & Utilities Committee was scheduled for Wednesday, April 3, 2024 at 3:30 p.m.

F. Adjourn

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 5:03 p.m.

Minutes Approved: April 3, 2024

X

Mac Morrow
Chair, Council Member

X

Alex Shepherd
Assistant to the City Manager