

 <p style="text-align: center;">Council Communication Office of the City Manager</p>	Date: August 23, 2010
	Agenda Item No. 33 Roll Call No. <u>10-1396</u> Communication No. <u>10-521</u> Submitted by: Donald M. Tripp Park and Recreation Director

AGENDA HEADING:

Approval of exception to competitive procurement process and approval of agreement with Prairie Landscapes of Iowa, LLC for ecological planning and planting services for the Park and Recreation Department.

SYNOPSIS:

Approval of exception to competitive procurement process and approval of agreement with Prairie Landscapes of Iowa, LLC (Inger Lamb, owner) for ecological planning and planting services for the Park and Recreation Department through December 31, 2011 under Ordinance Section 2-710(a) (The City Council may on a case by case basis, upon the recommendation of the City Manager for good cause shown, exempt contracts for the provision of goods and/or services from the competitive procurement requirements of this subdivision, or waive the formal competitive bidding procedure and authorize use of informal competitive bidding procedure for the procurement of goods and/or services to cost in excess of \$25,000.00.)

FISCAL IMPACT:

Amount: \$60,000

\$35,000 FY2011 Capital Improvement Budget, PKS176 CP040 PKS990000, Urban Conservation, Park Improvement, Page 26

\$25,000 Spread between the following operating accounts based on projects as needed:

- FY2011 Operating Budget, GE001, PKS070300, Downtown Maintenance, page 189
- FY2011 Operating Budget, GE001, PKS070410, Horticulture Zone 1 North, page 190
- FY2011 Operating Budget, GE001, PKS070420, Horticulture Zone 2 East, page 191
- FY2011 Operating Budget, GE001, PKS070430, Horticulture Zone 3 South, page 192
- FY2011 Operating Budget, GE001, PKS070440, Horticulture Zone 4 West, page 193
- FY2011 Operating Budget, GE001, PKS070600, Trails, page 195
- FY2011 Operating Budget, GE001, PKS100104, Grays Lake, page 198

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION:

The Parks and Recreation Department, as stewards of the City’s park and open space system, sharpened its focus toward more sustainable and ecologically sound land management techniques. Currently the

Parks and Recreation Department does not have sufficient expertise in this area and has worked for many years with local experts at Drake University, Iowa State University and the Polk County Conservation Board to assist in these efforts. Over time, the department has formed excellent working relationships with many of these experts, but in recent years, City needs have outgrown their ability to help guide the department's new philosophy toward a more sustainable and ecologically sound management of the City's park and open space system.

As a result, the Parks and Recreation Department sought a private company that could meet the expanding needs in this field. The result of that search was that in April 2009, the Parks and Recreation Department hired Prairie Landscapes of Iowa, LLC to perform some of the needed services including helping to develop the department's rain garden program and helping to establish prairies at Gray's Lake and along the Meredith Trail.

Based on the research, there are no other contractors that can provide the service that Inger Lamb and her company, Prairie Landscapes, will provide to the City. There are a couple other similar contractors in the central Iowa area, but their focus is larger restorations projects for wetland and conservation reserve programs. They do not work in the urban areas which is the focus of the City's work.

There are other experts in this area located in central Iowa, but they are employed by universities and conservation boards and are not available for contracting. Some of these experts include Loren Lown at Polk County Conservation Board, Tom Rosburg and Keith Summerville at Drake University and Cathy Mabry at Iowa State University, all of which are on our Urban Conservation Advisory Committee. The only other option is larger companies located in Minnesota and Illinois, but they are not experts in the native plants and ecology of Des Moines and Central Iowa and would not be able to provide daily service as we expect.

Inger Lamb is the owner of Prairie Landscapes of Iowa, LLC and is the day to day expert that works with staff on these projects. In addition, she employs a staff of experts that will assist staff in labor services related to establishment and maintenance of specific project. Inger was highly recommended to the City as one of the only experts in Iowa that could assist the City with its need to change toward a more ecological and sustainable focus on the maintenance of the City's park and open space system. A letter of support is attached to the roll call. The qualifications that Inger brings are unrivaled in the private world of native landscape management and ecology. She brings education and expertise in botany, plant ecology as well as a PhD in plant physiology/agronomy. In addition to the education she brings to the table, she has the following other experience that is beneficial to the City:

Native Landscaping Expertise:

- Over five years of experience using native plants for general landscaping in central Iowa
- Experienced in identifying native species suitable for specific landscaping projects
- Knowledgeable of different soil moisture and light requirements of specific native species
- Experienced in establishing native plantings from seed
- Experienced in creating native seeding composition lists using seeds/unit area (not by weight)
- Experienced in working with invasive species
- Experienced in evaluating proposed native planting species lists
- Experienced in identifying most native plants species, and can identify weeds, invasive species and native species during development (*i.e.*, before flowering)
- Experienced in working with problem native landscaping areas (difficult sites, plantings that have not thrived)
- Experience with rain garden, bio-cell, and wetland vegetation establishment and management.

- Experienced in maintenance of native planting areas

Other experience

- Experienced in talking to public about use of native plant species
- Experienced in writing native landscaping educational literature and signage
- Experienced in incorporating native plantings into construction specifications
- Experienced in working with government staff on natural areas management issues.
- Knowledgeable of infiltration-based storm water management principles. Has thorough knowledge of how native plants are used to improve water quality
- Familiar with natural areas experts in central Iowa
- Familiar and knowledgeable with the Des Moines park and open space system

The previous contract with Prairie Landscapes of Iowa ended on December 31, 2009, and was extended until June 30, 2010. This new contract would be in effect until December 31, 2011, and include the following scope of work, but not be limited to:

1. **Review and Preparation of Seeding Specifications for Parks:** Prairie Landscapes will prepare seeding specifications for different areas of the park and open space system. These specifications shall list all common and Latin names for seeds. In addition, each seed specification shall come with a one page explanation sheet about the seeds and potential other areas where the seed specification could be used in the park system. Prairie Landscapes will also review seeding specifications for projects completed by the City on park and open space land.
2. **Native Seeding in Parks:** Prairie Landscapes will assist staff in the preparation of seeding and with the actual native seeding of an area. Prairie Landscapes will manage the transition of some parkland from mowed lawn to prairie or woodland. This work will be done in conjunction with the park planners or the horticulture inspectors with implementation through being completed through in house staff and/or Prairie Landscapes staff.
3. **Staff Education:** Prairie Landscapes will provide education classes to staff on selected ecological topics to give existing staff a better understanding of more ecologically based land management strategies.
4. **Maintenance of Natural Areas:** Prairie Landscapes will help to determine and implement best practices for maintaining prairie or forested areas to combat the increase in invasive species and to promote the native vegetation. In addition, Prairie Landscapes staff will assist in the removal of invasive species within the City's park and open space system.
5. **Rain Gardens:** Prairie Landscapes will assist planners and horticulture inspectors in analyzing the status of parks and open space rain gardens. This could include; identification of weeds and other invasive species, effectiveness of existing rain gardens, etc. In addition, Prairie Landscapes will prepare a rain garden guide that answers some of the most frequently asked questions and provide education for staff on the maintenance and development of rain gardens in the park and open space system.
6. **Public Outreach:** Prairie Landscapes will prepare articles, public walks, and naturalist programs to assist in the education of staff and the community in relation to ecological issues within the park and open space system.
7. **Monitoring Projects:** Prairie Landscapes will evaluate the status of native planting and rain garden projects in the City's Parks and Open Space System. Written reports of concerns or the general status will be submitted to the planner and the Horticulture Inspector responsible for maintenance of the area to assist them in better management of the City's lands.

Staff recommends hiring Prairie Landscapes of Iowa, LLC to a new contract valued at \$60,000 that will be effective until December 31, 2011. This includes services for professional ecological planning to be

charged at \$50/hour and labor services up to \$20/hour. Approval of a contract with Prairie Landscapes of Iowa, LLC to perform ecological planning and labor services for the Park and Recreation Department through December 31, 2011, under Ordinance Section 2-710(a). (The City Council may on a case by case basis, upon the recommendation of the City Manager for good cause shown, exempt contracts for the provision of goods and/or services from the competitive procurement requirements of this subdivision, or waive the formal competitive bidding procedure and authorize use of informal competitive bidding procedure for the procurement of goods and/or services to cost in excess of \$25,000.)

PREVIOUS COUNCIL ACTION(S): NONE

BOARD/COMMISSION ACTION(S): NONE

ANTICIPATED ACTIONS AND FUTURE COMMITMENTS: NONE

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