

 <p style="text-align: center;"><b>Council Communication</b> Office of the City Manager</p>	<b>Date:</b> April 11, 2011
	<b>Agenda Item No.</b> 29 <b>Roll Call No.</b> <u>11-601</u> <b>Communication No.</b> <u>11-224</u> <b>Submitted by:</b> Donald M. Tripp, <b>Director of Park and Recreation</b>

**AGENDA HEADING:**

Accepting proposal of Tom Rosburg, PhD for the provision of professional consulting services to conduct a natural resource inventory of the City’s park and open space land and authorizing the City Manager to sign an agreement for the provision of the same.

**SYNOPSIS:**

Acceptance of a selection committee’s recommendation that the proposal submitted by Tom Rosburg, PhD, 73448 260th Street, Colo, Iowa 50056, be accepted for the provision of professional consulting services to conduct a natural resource inventory of the City’s park and open space land, and authorization for the City Manager to sign an agreement for the provision of the same.

**FISCAL IMPACT:**

Amount: \$52,525

Funding Source: 2010-2011 Capital Improvement Budget, Park Improvements, Urban Conservation, PKS167, page 26.

**ADDITIONAL INFORMATION:**

The plan to conduct a natural resource inventory of the City’s park and open space land is a direct result of the City Council’s November 23, 2009, approval of plans for construction of a new multi-use trail connection to McHenry Park as part of the Corps of Engineers’ Birdland Levee Project (Roll Call No. 09-2143). Included in this approval was a recommendation that the Park and Recreation Department commit to a study of this nature, to determine priorities for preservation and restoration of unique and significant natural areas.

On October 25, 2010, by Roll Call No. 10-1742, City Council approved scope of services for a consultant to conduct a natural resource inventory of the City’s park and open space land and authorized the Procurement Administrator to issue a request for proposals.

On February 1, 2011, the Procurement Office received proposals from six organizations interested in conducting the natural resource inventory. Proposals were received from the following organizations:

1. Applied Ecological Services (\$84,050)
2. Bonestroo (\$66,914)
3. Conservation Design Forum (\$78,500)

4. Pizzo and Associates (\$107,407.60)
5. Snyder and Associates (\$187,975)
6. Tom Rosburg, PhD (\$52,525)

The following scope of services was included in the request for proposals document that was sent to parties interested in submitting proposals:

- Mapping and delineating major plant communities
- Describing the composition and structure of each community
- Identifying the successional stage of the land as it is today
- Identifying areas of high erosion
- Identifying large concentrations of ash trees that could be impacted by the emerald ash borer
- Identifying trees of special importance due to size, rarity or any other condition of interest
- Identifying areas of high invasive species infestations
- Identifying areas of high biological or ecological diversity
- Identifying areas with unique opportunities for passive recreation or environmental education
- Evaluating routinely-mowed land within the park and open space system for potential to be re-developed into a more natural state, thereby reducing mowing
- Preparing a report of the study's findings, including a series of recommendations for priority restoration areas within the park and open space system
- Providing the results of the study in a Geographic Information System (GIS) ready data package that will provide easy access to the information and be a valuable tool in making decisions on management, planning and construction projects.

In addition to the above scope of services, it was required that proposers' completed work meet criteria set forth by the International Council for Local Environmental Initiatives (ICLEI) – Local Governments for Sustainability on their STAR Community Index, which is currently under development. The Index is a new framework for improving the livability and sustainability of communities across the nation. It will provide a universal, consensus-based system that will help local governments set priorities and maximize their investments in strategic actions. Communities will have the opportunity to “certify” their achievements through independent, third-party verification, similar to the Leadership in Environmental and Energy Design (LEED) program for construction and rehabilitation of energy efficient buildings. Des Moines has notably been selected as one of ten communities in the country chosen to work with ICLEI to design and test the Star Index's online performance and management system.

One of the goals of the STAR Community Index is to protect, enhance and restore habitat and natural ecosystems. While details of the certification are still under development, the proposed first step in completing the “Natural Systems” portion of the Index requirements - Milestone One - is to conduct a natural resource inventory. The request for proposals required that the natural resource inventory be set up so that all data gathered is compatible with the benchmarks being established by the STAR Community Index.

To increase skill sets and knowledge, and also to foster a more sustainable and ecological land management philosophy among Park and Recreation Department staff on this subject, the request for proposals also required that, following completion of the inventory and associated report, the consultant host educational meetings to present key findings of the report to staff. The Municipal Arborist, Forestry and other staff of the Department of Public Works, as well as Engineering, Community Development and Des Moines International Airport personnel will also be invited to these educational meetings. These presentations will focus on the park and open space system's plant communities that are common and ones that are rare or of significant importance, in addition to areas that are highly-infested with invasive

species. Staff tours of some of these key areas will provide on-site information to supplement the information being conveyed in the study and report.

A selection committee comprised of representatives of the Des Moines Park and Recreation Board and staffs of the Polk County Conservation Board, Park and Recreation and Information Technology Departments and Public Works Forestry Division scored the applications. The selection committee interviewed representatives of the businesses having the three highest-scoring proposals, which were the Dr. Tom Rosburg, Bonestroo, and Conservation Design Forum submissions. The proposal presented by Tom Rosburg, PhD scored overall highest points among all six applicants and also received the selection committee's highest interview score among the top three applicants. Therefore they have recommended that the services of Dr. Tom Rosburg be accepted for the provision of professional consulting services to conduct a natural resource inventory of the City's park and open space land.

Dr. Rosburg is one of Iowa's and the Midwest's preeminent plant ecologists. In the past 25 years, he has conducted work as an ecologist, naturalist and photographer in all of Iowa's 99 counties. Since 1996, Dr. Rosburg has served as a Drake University Biology Department professor and, since 2006, as a volunteer representative of the university on the Des Moines Park and Recreation Board's Urban Conservation Advisory Committee.

This inventory and utilization/implementation of its findings are basic to the City's and Park and Recreation Department's transition toward more sustainable and ecologically-sound management of the park and open space system. As outlined below, environmental, social and economic benefits will result.

Environmental – Priority areas for protection and restoration will be identified. A high percentage of the land that comprises the city's parks and open spaces was purchased or set aside for this purpose in the 1890s and early 1900s. These undeveloped areas have therefore been all but protected for generations and are close to their natural state, providing significant environmental value to both the city and Iowa. The benefits of this protection and future restoration lead to improved water quality, reduced erosion, woodland health, and increased plant, tree and animal diversity of our most sensitive and important areas.

Social – The citizens of Des Moines are eager to and will be able to connect with nature in the City's park and open space system. Among respondents in a 2008 survey conducted by the Park and Recreation Department, nature trails and hiking were indicated as second only to walking and biking trails in importance to respondent households; wildlife habitat, nature and observation areas were indicated as third in importance. A more ecologically-sound and sustainable land management philosophy will provide more opportunities for citizens to easily connect with nature through environmental education and passive recreation including hiking, bird watching, canoeing, geo-caching and fishing.

Economic – Information provided by the inventory will allow the City to better use existing park and open space acreage rather than expanding the current property inventory. About 15 percent of the city's nearly 3,900 acres of park and open space land is in use for recreational purposes, the majority of which is active in nature – golf, sports facilities, swimming pools, etc. Assessment of all park and open space inventory, including that which is now not in use, will allow the city to expand recreational usage into additional, non-utilized areas for activities such as environmental education, nature hikes, and birding while at the same time encouraging citizens and visitors to the area to fulfill their desire for this type of activity within Des Moines.

Park and Recreation Department management agrees with the selection committee's recommendation of the consulting services of Dr. Rosburg and looks forward to the results of the survey, which will enhance and expedite existing sustainability and conservation efforts and practices on park and open space land.

**PREVIOUS COUNCIL ACTION(S):**

Date: October 25, 2010

Roll Call Number: 10-1742

Action: [Scope of Services](#) for consultant to conduct a natural resource inventory of the City's park and open space land and issuance of a Request for Proposal. ([Council Communication No. 10-643](#)) Moved by Mahaffey to adopt. Motion Carried 7-0.

Date: November 23, 2009

Roll Call Number: 09-2143

Action: [Recommendation](#) to construct a trail connection to McHenry Park as part of the rebuild of the Birdland Levee. ([Council Communication No. 09-828](#)) Moved by Mahaffey to adopt. Motion Carried 6-1. Pass: Cownie.

**BOARD/COMMISSION ACTION(S):**

Board: Park and Recreation Board

Date: September 28, 2010

Resolution Number: 10-078

Action: Park and Recreation Board received and filed scope of services to conduct a natural resource inventory of the City's parkland and open space.

Board: Park and Recreation Board

Date: November 19, 2009

Resolution Number: 09-110

Action: Approve the recommendation of the park staff with consideration that the Army Corps of Engineers look to remove the beavers before construction starts, ask if a complete look around the lake can be completed as part of the project, request a trail detour during construction be set-up and require that the City tree policy be followed related to tree protection for the trees that will be saved during the construction process.

Board: Park and Recreation Board

Date: October 27, 2009

Resolution Number: 09-104

Action: Approve staff recommendation to construct an accessible trail connection to McHenry Park as part of the rebuild of the Birdland Levee. The trail will connect McHenry Park, the Kiwanis Nature Island and the Neal Smith trail.

**ANTICIPATED ACTIONS AND FUTURE COMMITMENTS: NONE**

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