



AGENCY: City Council
MEETING DATE: November 25, 2019
DEPARTMENT: City Manager
PRESENTED BY: Tabatha Miller
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AGENDA ITEM SUMMARY

TITLE:

Receive Report and Consider Adoption of City Council Resolution Approving Professional Services Agreement with Creative Thinking, Inc., DBA The Idea Cooperative for Marketing Strategy Development and Execution and Authorizing the City Manager to Execute Contract (Amount Not to Exceed \$99,000: Account No. 110.4321.0319)

ISSUE:

City Council considered this contract November 12, 2019 and remanded the contract to the Visit Fort Bragg Committee for further review and recommendation, and to develop more measurable milestones and deliverables in the Scope of Work.

The Visit Fort Bragg Committee met on November 19, 2019 and voted unanimously to recommend that the City Council approve the contract and authorize the City Manager to execute it on the City's behalf.

ANALYSIS:

The contract with Cubic Inc., expired on June 30, 2019. The City owns the website and other creative content and marketing materials produced under that contract. The website is being maintained by City staff and the social media is contracted to the Mendocino Coast Chamber of Commerce. The plan was to continue to use the creative content Cubic generated, including the website, but hire a firm that would be willing to leverage the already owned creative with new fresh content.

At the September 17, 2019, Visit Fort Bragg (VFB) Committee meeting, the Committee directed staff to review the Proposals received in August of 2018 and contact potential marketing firms to evaluate the City's current marketing materials, most of which were created by Cubic Inc., and provide a plan to incorporate those materials into a new campaign. Staff reached out to three of the original Responders to discuss the work.

At a meeting of the VFB Marketing/Advertising Subcommittee on October 2, 2019, the subcommittee recommended moving forward with either of the two firms staff recommended. The Subcommittee stressed the need to move quickly. Staff requested action and cost proposals from both firms. The Abbi Agency, located in Reno, NV was the runner up in the 2018 selection process and staff had promising phone conversations with the firm regarding the possibility of working together. However, it took nearly a month to receive a 4-page proposal that was not as comprehensive as anticipated or requested. The proposal contained some great ideas but staff was concerned with the lack of future steps and their ability to move forward quickly. Without future steps clearly defined in the proposal, the City's future cost and path forward were difficult to chart.

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The Idea Cooperative, located in Petaluma, provided staff an updated Proposal within three days of the conference call with their team. That proposal fit with what staff believed the VFB Committee envisioned as next steps. The firm has been and continues to be timely and responsive.

In an effort to keep the marketing program moving forward and respond to concerns from subcommittee and committee members, approval of a proposed contract with The Idea Cooperative was scheduled for the November 12, 2019 City Council meeting. City Council considered the contract but provided staff direction to remand the contract to the Visit Fort Bragg Committee for further review and recommendation, and to develop more measurable milestones and deliverables in the Scope of Work.

At that November 12th meeting Councilmembers raised concerns that the postings on The Idea Cooperative's own business Facebook page and Instagram account were sparse. In a conversation with Tom Kavanaugh, The Idea Cooperative's President, he explained that social media is not a tool they use to advertise their business. He did provide several examples of current social media campaigns they manage for clients. Links to those campaigns are set forth below:

OutThereSR – City of Santa Rosa

- [Instagram](#)
- [Facebook](#)
- [OutThereSR.com](#)

Point Reyes Farmstead Cheese Company

- [Instagram](#)
- [Facebook](#)

Faribault Woolen Mill

- [Instagram](#)
- [Facebook](#)

The Idea Cooperative's website also provides some additional examples of the firm's work product - www.theideacooperative.com.

As of November 12, staff had only played phone tag with Idea Cooperative's references. Since then, staff was able to speak to two of the three references provided by The Idea Cooperative and asked the following questions:

1. What was your selection process when you hired The Idea Cooperative and why did you select them?
2. How long is the relationship?
3. What is the impact or value added to your organization from the campaign or ongoing projects?
4. How responsive is the Idea Cooperative to requests, changes and other input?

5. Were there any hiccups or areas for improvement in the initial campaign or project?

The Executive Director of the Sonoma Valley Vintners & Growers Association provided a glowing reference. Her organization had received a \$360k grant to rebrand and selected the Idea Cooperative from approximately twenty responses. Idea Cooperative was selected because her organization liked its small size which translates to lower overhead and better value, its location in Sonoma County, the firm's design style and the firm's staff. The relationship has continued for more than four years as Idea Cooperative continues to work on a variety of smaller projects and events. She described the firm as "really good at listening" and getting back to you. As an example of responsiveness and as to hiccups, she noted that she had to communicate her concern with the "dark" look and feel of some of the firm's work and wanted something cleaner and brighter. She was very positive about their response and I noted in Sonoma Valley Vintners' campaigns, that the images are bright and not at all what would be described as dark. She stated that their return on investment was 100% and her organization was very happy with the results.

The Economic Development Director from Santa Rosa also provided a solid reference. She has worked with Idea Cooperative for five years plus and was really proud of the OutThere brand created for the City of Santa Rosa to revamp the City's market placement. Her selection was based on not wanting a big Bay Area firm and getting away from the formula or template based idea of selling the visitor center. Creativity and edgier designs were what she was looking for in a new brand. She described Idea Cooperative as fantastic, amazing strategists and wildly creative. She talked a lot about the relationship with the Idea Cooperative and that she had the latitude from the City to push the envelope and run with something different. She did caution that ongoing regular communication was really important to the end product and larger committees or review groups could hinder the final product.

She did admit that she sometimes had to push or ask the firm for what she wanted. An example she provided was keeping updated on metrics and measurables. The Idea Cooperative admitted to the VFB Committee that they had implemented new reporting in response to her requests.

The Idea Cooperative team attended the Visit Fort Bragg meeting on November 19, 2019, made a presentation and spent well over an hour answering questions and providing feedback to the committee and members of the public. The firm had already planned on visiting Fort Bragg during that time period as a way to connect with stakeholders and get a better feel for the vibe and character of our town.

There has been additional discussion with The Idea Cooperative on developing more defined measurables and milestones. This is difficult to add to the Scope of Work at this point because The Idea Cooperative has not had an opportunity to complete the review and audit of the City's creative inventory. To address this issue, the Scope of Work for the contract has been modified to add a task in Phase 1 that includes creating a project roadmap

which will provide a detailed schedule with completion dates and deliverables. Additionally, the revised Scope of Work provides a time table for each Phase.

The Idea Cooperative team is scheduled to attend the November 25, 2019 City Council meeting to make a presentation and answer questions. The team is prepared to provide additional information on what that project roadmap will look like.

RECOMMENDED ACTION:

Adopt Resolution approving the professional services agreement with The Idea Cooperative and authorize the City Manager to execute the contract.

ALTERNATIVE ACTION(S):

1. Do not approve the Resolution and do not hire a Creative firm; and/or
2. Provide staff additional direction.

FISCAL IMPACT:

The total budget available for Visit Fort Bragg for the fiscal year 2019-20 is \$216,500.

VFB Expenditure	Budget Amount	Available for Marketing
Website	\$ 5,500	\$ -
Interactive and Social Media Marketing	36,000	21,000
Content (word/photo/video)	18,500	13,500
Advertising	50,000	50,000
Public Relations and Media Outreach	5,000	5,000
Project, Contract and VFB Management	25,000	25,000
Collateral Materials, Banners, Signage	15,000	-
Special Events, Tours and Attractions	45,000	-
Dues & Memberships	10,000	-
Miscellaneous	6,500	6,500
	<u>\$ 216,500</u>	<u>\$ 121,000</u>

GREENHOUSE GAS EMISSIONS IMPACT:

A successful Visit Fort Bragg Campaign will increase travel to and from Fort Bragg, essentially all of which would be by personal vehicle. The additional trips will increase greenhouse gas emissions.

CONSISTENCY:

Hiring a creative firm to continue to build the Visit Fort Bragg brand is consistent with City Council Priority Area: Jobs/Industry and Goal 3 – Foster and help sustain local businesses.

IMPLEMENTATION/TIMEFRAMES:

If Council approves the contract on November 25, 2019, The Idea Cooperative will begin work as soon as the contract is executed.

ATTACHMENTS:

1. Resolution
2. Contract
3. Presentation from Idea Cooperative to VFB

NOTIFICATION:

1. Tom Kavanaugh, The Idea Cooperative
2. Economic Development Planning, Notify Me Subscriber List
3. Tourism and Marketing, Notify Me Subscriber List
4. Visit Fort Bragg Committee Members