



CITY OF FORT BRAGG

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COUNCIL COMMITTEE ITEM SUMMARY REPORT

MEETING DATE: July 9, 2019
TO: Visit Fort Bragg Committee
FROM: Tabatha Miller, City Manager
AGENDA ITEM TITLE: Contract Performance Evaluations and Proposed Work Plan
for Fiscal Year 2019-20

ISSUE:

On June 30, 2019, the three current contracts for the Visit Fort Bragg (VFB) Promotion Program expired:

- 360viewPR - Public Relations
- Cubic Creative, Inc. (formerly Cubic Inc.) – Marketing
- Playhouse Creative (dba Color Mill – Aspen Logan) – VFB Project Manager

At the June 4, 2019 VFB Committee meeting, a subcommittee was created to review the performance on each of the contracts. A second subcommittee was created to make a recommendation on a more detailed Visit Fort Bragg promotional work plan and budget for the 2019-20 fiscal year.

SUMMARY:

A subcommittee consisting of Jessica Morsell-Hayes, Debra DeGraw, James Sant (unable to attend) and Nancy Bennett was tasked with reviewing the Scope of Work for each of the of the contracts (see attached), evaluating whether the task was complete, the quality of the work product and how important the task was to the overall program.

360viewPR

The public relations firm contract provided for services from November 15, 2018 to June 30, 2019, with a not to exceed \$45,000 limit. Services provided as part of the monthly retainer of \$3,000 included: monthly PR consulting, a client approved PR plan with goals and return on investment, press release drafting, creation of a Media Press Kit, response to media requests, crisis communications, a monthly agency “What’s New” newsletter to the media, organization of press trips, liaison with Visit CA, and monthly reporting on results, intelligence and trends. Additional optional programs included an agency immersion trip, additional in-person meetings and Visit CA receptions. The City did approve and pay for an immersion trip for three members of the firm to visit Fort Bragg. No additional optional services were requested.

Overall, the subcommittee was a little underwhelmed by the overall performance of the PR firm. The media press kit product provided by 360viewPR was individually crafted for each contact but less formal than expected. It consisted of email and informal outreach supplemented by pictures of Fort Bragg. The subcommittee had expected a more detailed document with mass application that could be used going forward to relay information in a professional format. The annual group press trip, included in the monthly retainer never happened.

360viewPR did create some media attention for Fort Bragg. The firm was responsible for bringing Danny Mangin from Fodor's California to town for three days. Mr. Mangin's article is expected to be published this fall online and in the annual travel guide. A writer from Men's Journal magazine visited in May and his article is also expected to be published this fall. A number of bloggers and influencers visited Fort Bragg and posted stories because of 360viewPR's outreach. There is also interest by USA Today and the Chicago Tribune which was reported by the PR firm as a result of their contacts and outreach. The New York Times article and the Wall Street Journal Travel section article were outside the reach of 360viewPR.

360viewPR provided the City with a proposal for the 2019-20 fiscal year. The proposed monthly retainer was \$4,500, a fifty percent increase from the prior year. The reason stated for the increase was the unanticipated extra work necessary because Fort Bragg lacked the PR/marketing infrastructure and necessary local partner support typically already in place.

The subcommittee recommends not renewing the contract at the higher monthly retainer and looking at other sources to provide public relations services to VFB.

Cubic Creative

Cubic's contract for branding, marketing and advertising was the largest dollar value at not to exceed \$182,000. Additional work under separate agreements increased the total value of work to \$192,665.35, which includes an invoice for work not approved by the City which is in dispute. Cubic's work, especially the website, received the most attention and had the most diverse responses. At the end of the contract, most of the responses to the overall marketing campaign, including the website were positive. The social media campaign and the online marketing were the best received and committee members who worked on that campaign felt it was a good value for the City.

The relationship Cubic had with the City government and the community was less positive. There was an overall sense of dismissal and non-responsiveness to the community and the City's concerns. The term arrogant was used by many to describe the firm's response to Fort Bragg. One issue in the rolling out of the website was lack of quality control and local connection. The local control over the website and content wasn't as tight as it should have been.

The subcommittee discussed continuing the relationship with Cubic because of the significant investment in the marketing program and successes in social media and the advertising campaign. The website is generally acknowledged to be a significant improvement from the old site and will provide the City a foundation to build more content and clean up some of the functionality of the site.

In the end, the subcommittee does not recommend extending a contract with Cubic but does believe that the campaign provides the City ongoing value and should be built upon.

Playhouse Creative, Inc.

The project manager agreement commenced on September 15, 2017 and expired nearly two years later on June 30, 2019. The not to exceed \$70,184, contract provided for local project

management of the Visit Fort Bragg Marketing and Promotions Action Plan. The detailed scope of work included managing all aspects of branding, the website, interactive & social media marketing, content, advertising, public relations & media outreach, collateral materials, special events, administering the Visit Fort Bragg Committee, strategic alliances and regular reporting and evaluation of the program's success.

Aspen Logan provided the project management services and led the Visit Fort Bragg Promotional efforts. Implementing a destination marketing program was a new task for Ms. Logan and a learning experience. The program today is the result of Ms. Logan's hard work and dedicated efforts. Ms. Logan developed close relationships with the contractors and handled a diverse set of tasks in creating the marketing program.

A few challenges encountered with local project management included quality control over the website content and budget and contract management. City government is not set up to be creative or flexible and marketing, public relations and branding do not fit as well into the public procurement process as do public works infrastructure projects. The process and regulation associated with City procurement can be challenging for many of the City's contractors and vendors.

Staff and the subcommittee's recommendation is to manage the VFB promotional efforts with City staff for the next fiscal year. This will provide the program more resources than a single project manager, streamline the budgeting and contract management and provide City management more oversight of the project. Any project management overruns can be absorbed by staff time.

RECOMMENDATION:

A subcommittee of Lindy Peters (unable to attend), Anne Semans, Katie Carr and Jessica Morsell-Haye was tasked with recommending a work plan and detailed budget for the 2019-20 Fiscal Year. The proposed dollar allocations are included on the next page, followed by work plan notes. The focus of the plan is to continue to utilize the marketing materials and campaign provided by Cubic, including the existing website, while refining and growing the content. One aspect of VFB Management will be to evaluate the success of the program through metrics and other analytical review.

Primary Contracted Activities - Professional Services (Budget #110-4321-0319)		2019/20 Proposed (Action Plan)
1. Branding		\$0
2. Website		\$7,500
3. Interactive & Social Media Marketing		\$36,000
4. Content (word/Photo/Video)		\$18,500
5. Advertising		\$50,000
6. Public Relations & Media Outreach		\$5,000
9. Project, Contract & VFB Management		\$25,000
	Subtotal	\$142,000
Support Activities - Remaining Promotional Budget		
7. Collateral Materials, Banners, Signage, etc		\$15,000
8. Special Events, Tours and Attractions		\$45,000
10. Retreats & Business Meetings		\$0
11. Tourism Industry Communications		\$0
12. Leisure Sales & Trade Shows		\$0
13. Strategic Alliances		\$0
14. Research Evaluation & Measurement		\$0
Contingency		\$0
	Subtotal	\$60,000
	Total for Professional Services	\$202,000
Support Activities - Remaining Promotional Budget		
Dues & Memberships		\$10,000
Miscellaneous		\$6,500
	Subtotal	\$16,500
	Total	\$218,500

Action Plan Notes:

1. Branding – Current branding will be developed and refined through website, content, social media and advertising. No major change in branding is planned for 2019-20.
2. Website:
 - a. Maintenance will be performed by City Staff and charged to project (\$7,500)
 - i. Fix Media Page
 - ii. Create usable search engine and filters
 - iii. Create a better looking more functional Business Directory – rename and categorize
 - iv. Rotate Events
 - v. Create a regular Dashboard report on visits, use and reach
 - vi. Add blogs, additional itineraries and other content to match seasons and keep site refreshed
3. Social Media – Contract with the Chamber on a month-to-month basis – (\$36,000)
 - a. Stay with the current look and feel but with more local focus and more flexible updates to respond to local events
4. Content – to be used on all platforms (\$18,500)
 - a. Local photographers
 - b. Local writers

- c. Local designers
- 5. Advertising Campaign (\$50,000)
 - a. Social Media
 - b. Web-based
 - c. Focus on seasonality
 - d. Explore use of potential firms with a closer connection to Fort Bragg
- 6. Public Relations & Media Outreach (\$5,000)
 - a. Develop Relationship with Visit Mendocino County in an effort to share resources and reduce the City's costs.
- 7. Collateral Materials (\$15,000)
 - a. Decorations
 - b. Bags
 - c. Reprint Map?
 - d. Other local promotional materials?
- 8. Special Events (\$45,000)
 - a. First Friday Parties (\$5,000)
 - b. City Birthday (\$10,000)
 - c. 4th of July Fireworks (\$13,000)
 - d. Paul Bunyan Days Parade (\$3,000)
 - e. Event Planner (\$14,000)
- 9. Project, Contract & VFB Management (\$25,000)
 - a. To be done by City staff in order to reduce costs, allocate administrative tasks to lower costs, and provide more direct oversight
- 10. Dues & Memberships and Miscellaneous
 - a. Chamber of Commerce Agreement per Council approval (\$10,000)
 - b. Welcome to Fort Bragg Sign Costs (\$5,000) and miscellaneous expenses (\$1,500)

ATTACHMENTS:

- 1. Scope of Work 360viewPR
- 2. Scope of Work Cubic Creative, Inc.
- 3. Scope of Work Playhouse Creative