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Memorandum

To: City of Columbus City Council

From: Megan Rogers, Assistant City Attorney

Date: November 17, 2023

Re: City Administrator Search Process

Over the past several Council meetings and workshops, the City Council has discussed its process for hiring a new City Administrator. There are currently multiple open positions at the City and with such a significant departure from City leadership, the City Council hired organizational development expert Ellen Hinrichs. Ms. Hinrichs has been tasked with developing a new job description for the City Administrator position and advising the Council on how new staff positions may be created to optimize operations.

The City Council directed the Personnel Committee to draft a request for proposal (RFP) targeted at local and national search firms specializing in the recruitment of city administrators. The Personnel Committee drafted an RFP (attached) for City Council review and consideration. Over the last week, Ms. Hinrichs began interviewing staff, Council members, community partners, advisory board members and City consultants. She is developing a recommendation for the City Administrator job description and in the process is learning much about the City, its culture, and its day-to-day operations.

The City Council may elect to use a search firm to solicit applications for the new city administrator position, it may handle recruitment on its own, or it may expand Ellen's existing scope of work to assist in the hiring process. Cities that do not use a consultant will often designate the mechanics of the recruitment and hiring process to the city clerk or finance director. In Columbus, your current city administrator serves in both of these roles and we understand that the selected interim administrator intends to apply for the full time position. For these reasons, the Personnel Committee recommends that the City either 1) utilize a search firm or 2) retain Ellen under an expanded scope of work. There are benefits and limitations to either option.

Option 1: Issue RFP for Search Firm

The draft RFP is enclosed for review. Fees for hiring a search firm for this process will likely range between $15,000 and $25,000. While the search fee is significant, cities have found it to be a good investment in keeping the recruitment process objecting and in hiring an administrator well suited to their City. If a hired candidate is not a fit for the City, search firms often guarantee their results and will undertake a new search for no additional cost. The approved RFP would be posted and sent to local search firms on Tuesday, November 21. Responses are due December 8, allowing the Council to select a firm at its December 13 regular meeting. The preferred timeline for the selected partner to initiate the search in January 2024; conduct interviews in February-March 2024; Offer extended by end of March 2024, with an anticipated start date May 1. A search firm is equipped to conduct background checks of applicants, in addition to processing and screening applications. A search firm may have knowledge of and be able to recruit candidates currently employed by other cities that may be well suited to the open administrator position. The RFP prioritizes those firms who have worked with cities similar to Columbus and emphasizes the use of the firm's existing knowledge of candidates from other searches. A search firm should have a broad understanding of the hiring landscape for city administrator positions, be able to provide guidance with regards to pay and candidate experience, and draw upon its knowledge of a candidate's skills and abilities in their current position and how those skills and abilities would apply to the city administrator role.

Option 2: Expand Consultant's Scope of Work to Include Recruitment and Hiring

Ms. Hinrichs is an experienced human resources consultant. She is currently engaged in an extensive review of the City's processes, people, and procedures. For these reasons, she is well suited to describe the "right" candidate for the City. She has experience in recruitment and hiring processes, can assist the Council in developing procedures for selecting a candidate, and can screen the initial pool of applicants to an appropriate number of semi-finalists. While Ms. Hinrichs has extensive experience in organizational development and hiring, a search firm may have additional contacts within government and be better able to draw additional applicants for review. Staff and your consultant team may be able to supplement Ms. Hinrichs' work by reaching out to contacts in other cities and further publicizing the posting. If utilizing Ms. Hinrichs services, the City can post the job description as soon as it is available, without the delay of hiring the search firm and bringing a new consultant up to speed on the City hiring process. Under this model, finalist background checks can be conducted by the Anoka County Sheriff's Office.

Staff is seeking City Council direction on whether to issue the draft RFP or to expand the scope of Ms. Hinrichs services to include the city administrator hiring process.

REQUEST FOR PROPOSAL

EXECUTIVE SEARCH CONSULTING SERVICES

TO SELECT A CITY ADMINISTRATOR

FOR THE

CITY OF COLUMBUS, MINNESOTA
16319 Kettle River Blvd.
Columbus, MN 55025

Proposals Due December 8, 2023

INDEX

The City of Columbus, Minnesota invites proposals from experienced executive search consulting firms to assist the City with conducting a search that will lead to the selection of a new City Administrator.

SECTION I GENERAL INFORMATION ABOUT COLUMBUS

The Columbus Community

The city of Columbus has a population of 4180 residents (2020 census) and includes a mix of residential and commercial property. Columbus boasts large tracts of public land (37% of total area), including Carlos Avery Wildlife Management Area and Lamprey Pass WMA. We provide a full level of municipal services in the community, including street and park maintenance, planning and zoning, elections, licensing, public utilities, building inspection, prosecution, and general administration. The City operates a paid on-call fire department and jointly owns the equipment through a joint powers agreement with the City of Forest Lake. The City owns its own fire substation. Police protection is provided through a contract with the Anoka County Sheriff's Office. Columbus is located within the Forest Lake Area School District (ISD #831).

Columbus is located on approximately 47.6 square miles in Anoka County. It is northwest of the I-35E/1- 35W split and shares a border with Forest Lake, Lino Lakes, Ham Lake, East Bethel, Linwood Township, and Wyoming. It is approximately 35 minutes from the Twin Cities of Minneapolis and St. Paul. The motto of Columbus is Rural Nature. Urban Access.

According to the Metropolitan Council, the City of Columbus is designated as a Diversified Rural and an Emerging Suburban Edge Community. Emerging Suburban Edge (ESE) communities include cities that are in the early stages of transitioning into urbanized levels of development. ESE communities are expected to plan for forecasted population and household growth at average residential densities of at least 3-5 units per acre for new development and redevelopment. The ESE portion of Columbus is in the southeast corner of the city, closest to I-35 and the freeway split. This area has public utility access (municipal water and sewer). While ESE communities are targeting opportunities for more intensive development, Diversified Rural (DR) cities are directed to manage land uses not to exceed forecasts and in patterns that do not exceed 4 units per 40 acres on average, with an eye towards protection of natural resources. DR cities allow for farm and nonfarm land uses including very large lot residential, hobby farms and agricultural uses within the broader metro area. Adjacent areas of East Bethel, Linwood Township and a portion of Forest Lake share this designation. Most of the city's land is DR and except for the area designated ESE, is serviced by private wells and septic systems. The City is also 60% wetlands, which limits development and provides for natural buffers, abundant wildlife, and flora, as well as a sound rationale for the large lot size ordinance.

City Government

The City of Columbus was incorporated in 2006; prior to that time, it operated as a township, having been organized as such in 1857. Columbus operates as a statutory Type A city and is governed under a weak mayor-council form of government. The City Council is a five-member elected body with the Mayor elected at-large for a two-year term and Council members elected for four-year staggered terms. The Mayor and Council are elected on a non-partisan basis.

The current Mayor and Council Members are:

		Expiration of Term
Jesse Preiner	Mayor	December 31, 2024
Robert Busch	Council Member	December 31, 2024
Ron Hanegraaf	Council Member	December 31, 2026
Janet Hegland	Deputy Mayor/Council Member	December 31, 2026
Sue Wagamon	Council Member	December 31, 2024

The City Council appoints the City Administrator who serves as the City's Chief Administrative Officer responsible for the day-to-day management of the City, its operations and overall financial administration/condition. The City currently employs ten full-time and one part-time personnel and functions with a $5.2 million annual operating budget. Several commissions and committees support municipal government including, but not limited to, Planning Commission, Economic Development Authority, Public Works Advisory Board, Parks Advisory Board, as well as others on an as-needed basis.

Services

The City Administrator is responsible for the daily operations of the City. Currently, all employees report directly to the City Administrator except 3 Public Works employees, who report to the Public Works Director. The Council delegates operational authority to the Administrator who, in turn, delegates specific functional authority and budgetary responsibility to the Director of Public Works or other employees in accordance with Council Policies. The City has engaged the services of an organizational development consultant, the proposed job description for the position of City Administrator will be provided to the Vendor for use. The departments that report to the City Administrator and the personnel in these departments are listed below.

Department	**Positions***
Administration	City Administrator/City Clerk/Treasurer, Code Compliance Inspector, Public Communications Coordinator, Planning and Zoning Permit Tech, Deputy City Clerk, Senior Planner (Consultant), Open Positions: Associate Planner, Assistant to

	City Administrator
Public Works	Public Works Director, (3) Public Works II
Finance	Senior Accountant/Deputy Treasurer
Building	MNSPEC (Contractor - Building Official/Inspector), Permit Coordinator

*Black text= current staff positions: Red text = budgeted but vacant staff positions; Blue text = contracted consultant

SECTION II PERFORMANCE SPECIFICATIONS

Scope of Services

This preliminary scope of work is presented as a reference. The selected consultant will work with the City to develop the final scope of work.

The City is seeking a search firm to conduct recruitment for the position of City Administrator. The search should yield the broadest possible pool of highly qualified candidates meeting the City's and community's needs for this position. As noted above, the City has engaged the services of an organizational development consultant who will be developing a revised City Administrator job description. The preferred timeline is to initiate the search in January 2024; conduct interviews in February-March 2024; Offer extended by end of March 2024, with an anticipated start date May 1. We expect a transitional overlap with the new hire and existing Interim City Administrator and anticipate rotating out the Interim City Administrator by June 1st. The search firm's tasks include, but not limited to:

1. Review recently established job description, candidate profile, and organizational information and translate the requirements into a detailed recruitment brochure.
2. Recommend and reach consensus on the appropriate recruitment/interview process. Develop a timeline for the recruitment process up to the final offer based on the City's preferences gleaned from the above processes.
3. Conduct a search that includes the appropriate recruiting activities (targeted mailings, selected advertising, networking and direct inquiries, and use of consultant's knowledge of candidates from other searches).
4. Screening the initial pool of applicants to an appropriate number of semi-finalists. Provide summary reports on all semi-finalists and respond to questions.
5. Work with the Personnel Committee to narrow the semi-finalist group to finalist candidates, determine an appropriate interview process, develop interview questions, and discuss preliminary terms of employment.
6. Conduct in-depth interviews, detailed background investigations, and verify references and credentials of finalists. Prepare a detailed report on each finalist.

SECTION III INSTRUCTIONS ON SUBMITTING PROPOSALS

Proposals must be submitted by 4:00 p.m., Friday December 8, 2023 to:

Personnel Committee
City of Columbus

16319 Kettle River Blvd.
Columbus MN 55025

Ten hard copies and one electronic copy of the proposal must be mailed, or hand delivered to the delivery address listed above, no later than the deadline. All proposals must be sealed in an opaque envelope and clearly marked "Personnel Committee--City Administrator Search Firm." The official clock for submissions is located at City Hall (address listed above). Vendors accept all risks of late delivery of mailed proposals regardless of fault. Proposals received by the City after the posted deadline will not be considered for selection. Faxed or emailed proposals will be rejected. A person who is authorized to legally bind the Vendor must sign the proposal. A Vendor may edit or withdraw their proposal prior to the closing date, no extensions will be permitted. Vendors shall submit questions in writing; all responses shall be shared with any proposer who has submitted an application or registered with the City. Questions and requests for information should be submitted to mrogers@larkinhoffman.com. Vendors may find instances where they are unable to provide services that meet all of the expectations defined in the RFP. In such cases, the Vendor should identify the areas where they find that the requested service is not available, deviates from the specific request, or is deemed to be an unwise or unwarranted approach. Vendor will describe exceptions to the RFP and identify their impact to the City, including but not limited to, workarounds, reductions in performance, capacity, flexibility, and ultimate cost and value. The City reserves the right to disallow exceptions it finds are not in the best interests of the City.

MINIMUM PROPOSAL REQUIREMENTS

1. **Executive Summary:** Summarize your proposal and include your firm's contact information.
2. **Methodology:** Explain how your firm would approach the process, including estimated timelines (please put in table format), your candidate vetting process, and how you would involve stakeholders and work together with the Personnel Committee and City Council towards final appointment of the successful candidate. Include key milestones, deliverables, timeline, and meetings with the City during the recruitment.
3. **Pricing:** Provide information on your firm's proposed fee schedule. Include a breakdown of this by phase (e.g., research, data gathering, recruitment/interviews, negotiation) showing the hours to be worked by category of personnel, hourly billing rate, estimated out-of-pocket expenses, and total cost.
4. **Qualifications:** Identify the individual you propose to assign as project manager and all members of the project team. Include a resume and/or statement of qualifications for each member.
5. **Experience:** Please provide specific examples of a minimum of 3 recent City Administrator/Manager searches, preferably in cities of similar size as the City of

Columbus. Include jurisdiction contact information and the total cost (i.e., fees plus all other billables or reimbursable expenses) of each search.

6. **References:** Include a list of references, with contact information for at least 4 clients who can verify your firm's ability to provide the scope of services requested. References from Mayors in cities of similar size who have recently hired City Administrators/Managers are strongly preferred.
7. **Work Samples:** Please include samples of recruiting specifications, community profiles, recruitment brochures, invitation letters, announcements, etc.
8. **Contract Sample:** Please include an example of your firm's standard contract/agreement.
9. **Guarantees:** Please include an explanation of your firm's guarantees: (1) if the selected candidate resigns or is terminated, or (2) if a candidate is not selected for hire at the conclusion of the recruitment, or (3) if the search must be extended due to loss of candidates from the interview pool.

The Proposal should not exceed 20 pages (10 double-sided sheets of paper). The front cover, back cover, and work samples and contract samples may be in addition to the 20-page limit. All costs for developing proposals in response to this RFP are the obligation of the firm/consultant and are not chargeable to the City

SECTION IV SELECTION PROCEDURE

The proposals will be evaluated by the City Council upon the following factors:

Evaluation Criteria	**Weight**
Staff expertise and overall qualifications of personnel assigned to the work.	15
Thoroughness and understanding of the tasks to be completed. Overall content quality and responsiveness to RFP requirements	25
Background and experience your firm has with similar projects.	30
Cost	30
Total	100

The Personnel Committee and City Council may conduct oral interviews with some or all the firms that submit proposals.

SECTION V GENERAL CONDITIONS

The City reserves the right to reject any or all proposals or parts of proposals, to accept part or all of proposals on the basis of considerations other than lowest cost, and to create a project of lessor or greater expense than described in this RFP or the Vendors reply based on the component prices submitted. The City reserves the right to waive irregularities in the proposal content or to request supplemental information from Vendors. The City reserves the right to contact Vendors individually for the purpose of clarifying proposals.

The City is not responsible for any costs incurred by the Vendor in the preparation of the proposals or for any other cost to the Vendor associated with responding to the RFP. No reimbursement will be made by the City for any costs incurred prior to a formal notice to proceed should an award be made under this solicitation. This RFP does not obligate the City to award a contract or complete any specific project or service. The City reserves the right to cancel this solicitation or to change its scope if in the best interests of the City. All proposals submitted in response to the RFP will be retained by the City and not returned.

SECTION VI CONTRACTING WITH THE CITY

1. Terms and Conditions.

The selected Vendor will be required to sign an agreement with the City. Vendor shall maintain insurance coverage, naming City as additional insured with the following coverage requirements:

- Worker's Compensation Insurance as required by Minnesota Statutes, Section 176.18;
- Professional Liability in an amount not less than $1,000,000.00 per occurrence; and
- Commercial General Liability in an amount of not less than $1,500,000.00 per occurrence for bodily injury or death arising out of each occurrence, and $1,500,000.00 per occurrence for property damage.

To meet the Commercial General Liability requirements, the Consultant may use a combination of Excess and Umbrella coverage. The Vendor shall not commence work until all insurance has been obtained and copies have been filed and accepted by the City. The Vendor shall be responsible for maintaining a valid certificate of insurance throughout the term of the Agreement.

2. Negotiations and Contract Execution

The City reserves the right to negotiate the final terms and conditions of the professional services agreement. In the event the City and the Vendor are unable to agree upon all terms, the City reserves the right to cease negotiations, and to move on to select another Vendor, or to reject all Proposals.

3. Contracting Ethics

No elected officials or employees of the City who exercise any responsibility in review, approval, or implementation of the proposal shall participate in any decision which affects his or her direct or indirect financial interests.

It is a breach of ethical standards for any person to offer, give, or agree to give any City employee or elected official, or for any City employee or Council person to solicit, demand, accept or agree to accept from another person or agency, a gratuity or an offer of employment whenever a reasonable prudent person would conclude that such consideration was motivated by an individual, group, or corporate desire to obtain special, preferential, or more favorable treatment than is normally accorded the general public.

The Vendor shall not assign any interest in its agreement and shall not transfer any interest in the same without the prior written consent of the City.

4. Minnesota Government Data Practices Act

All materials submitted in response to this RFP will become property of the City and will become public record after the evaluation process is completed and an award decision is made.

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