

DUVAL COUNTY TOURIST DEVELOPMENT COUNCIL
RFP DEVELOPMENT SUBCOMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES

Thursday, February 10, 2021 - 3:00 P.M.
Don Davis Room, City Hall

TDC Members In Attendance: Aaron Bowman (Chair), Angela Phillips, Dennis Thompson, Joe Hindsley, Sam Newby (arr. 3:05)

TDC Staff: Lillian Graning (TDC Executive Director), Phillip Peterson (Council Auditor's Office), Reece Wilson (Office of General Counsel), Jeff Clements (Council Research Division)

WELCOME

Chairman Bowman called the meeting to order at 3:01 and the attendees introduced themselves for the record.

Mr. Bowman said Visit Jax has been the TDC's tourism promotion agency for the last 25 years, continually serving on a series of short-term contracts that don't allow the agency to have a long-term strategic plan. He likened it to Visit Florida serving as the state's official tourism development agency in the form of a not-for-profit corporation. He has consulted with the Office of General Counsel about the ramifications of hiring Visit Jax under the auspices of a long-term, single-source contract. He believes that gives the TDC more, not less, influence over tourism promotion operations. He noted that Visit Jax's current contracts run through September 30 of this year.

Greg Pease, Chief of Procurement, said there are a number of considerations involved in justifying single-source procurement. One reason could be that the provider organization is the sole source of the good or service (i.e. Adobe or Oracle software only being available from one provider). Another is in the event that there are multiple companies that could provide the good or service, but there is a very strong reason for using a particular one (i.e. hiring an architect that has previously done design work on a building to do the design for an expansion). Another option would be for the City Council to waive the Procurement Code and directly award the contract to Visit Jax. Mr. Thompson said that he believes an RFP is appropriate if the TDC is looking to make a change, but if fully satisfied with Visit Jax's work then there's no reason not to do the direct contract. He has not heard of any other providers expressing any interest in handling the work. Ms. Phillips noted that Michael Corrigan, CEO of Visit Jax, had mentioned at a previous meeting that he was in favor of an RFP process as a means to help clean up some contract provisions. Mr. Hindsley said he would be somewhat concerned about giving the impression that other providers weren't given a fair chance to compete, but is happy with the job that Visit Jax is doing. The TDC needs a contractor that can be nimble and ready to change as conditions change and that can draw top talent to the city with a long-term contract. He would be in favor of the direct contract if that is in option.

Mr. Bowman gave some historical perspective on Visit Jax's past performance and on the last RFP process that split the various TDC functions into separate contracts to try and get competition that would produce better service. He will rely on the Office of General Counsel to opine on the appropriateness of a direct contract.

Michael Corrigan, CEO of Visit Jax, said that several years ago the TDC split the work into 3 contracts to try and improve the quality of service. He believes that Visit Jax is the best option for a comprehensive service provider. They bid on and won all 3 contracts when they were last opened a few years ago. The Visit Jax board of directors supported an RFP process this time if that's what it took to get the contracts reformed but would be appreciative of the opportunity to make those contract improvements under a single-source contract.

The Chair recommended getting the full TDC at its next meeting to make the recommendation for a direct procurement to the City Council for their approval. Should the Council not approve that route, then the existing contract could be extended for a period of time beyond its current expiration to allow an RFP process to take place. Dennis Thompson said that discussion of this direct contracting option might bring another agency into the picture offering its services. Mr. Pease said the Procurement Code does offer the option for other potential contenders to file an objection during a window of opportunity, which would then have to be addressed. Mr.

Bowman pointed out that Downtown Vision Inc. is a direct contracted organization, as is the Jacksonville Zoo, each providing a very specialized service. Reece Wilson of the Office of General Counsel said that including a termination for convenience clause in the contract would be very important to give the TDC an option to end the contract should circumstances warrant in the future.

Lillian Graning suggested putting the direct contract option on the TDC's February agenda to seek the board's approval for the Office of General Counsel to start working on a contract well in advance of the expiration date later this year.

Motion (Hindsley/2nd Thompson): recommend to the TDC that a direct contract with Visit Jax be established for an extended term with a termination option – **approved 4-0**.

Mr. Bowman thanked Ms. Graning for her efforts in putting the RFP documentation together.

Adjourn 3:35 p.m.

The minutes for this meeting was unanimously approved at the TDC meeting on February 24, 2022.