

City hires firm to update Beachfront Park master plan

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The future use and look of Beachfront Park got a little closer as a firm was hired to craft the city's vision of the popular public space.

Holly Wendt, Recreation Manager, told the City Council March 2 that staff selected PGAdesign, Landscape Architects to update the master plan for Beachfront Park. Wendt said staff selected the Oakland firm over three other presentations originating from a Jan. 22 request for proposals (RFP).

The City Council unanimously approved the bid application. Mayor Pro Tem Heidi Kime was not present.

"Their presentation was unique," Wendt said. "Rather than an objective list with funding at the end before applying for grants, they said before we do all these design alternatives, why don't we look at funding opportunities and do a funding analysis before we come up with plans and designs and incorporate some themes and projects together. That was really insightful."

Wendt recounted the recent history of Beachfront Park's plans.

In February of 2019, staff had a strategic priorities meeting and was advised by the City Council to actively work toward being competitive for upcoming funding opportunities for Beachfront Park, primarily through Prop. 68.

The city was awarded \$20,000 through a California Endowment Grant for comprehensive community outreach. Then Greenway Partners, Inc., began working with city staff and finalizing a community outreach project in mid-March. The city was then awarded a \$90,000 grant from California Coastal Conservancy to update the master plan.

Staff interviewed the four firms Feb. 20 and chose PGAdesign's bid of \$89,995. Wendt said PGAdesign was more experienced with parks (70 parks and 44 park master plans).

In addition, they recommended the city look into alternative funding sources to implement the master plan from California Endowment of the Arts, Inclusionary Play Grants, California Cultural Heritage, Endowment California Conservation and land/water and conservation funds.

Wendt said also in the firm's favor was its experience incorporating downtown connections, working with tribal communities and national parks. Plus they presented the best alternative plans.

"And they demonstrated they're committed to telling the story of a community through the park design," Wendt added.

PGAdesign will work with Hattin Construction Management for cost analysis. They typically come within 5% of bid, better than a lot of other cost estimators, Wendt said.

She said PGAdesign came with a unique approach:

- Promoting coastal access
- Creating a framework for long-term development
- Establishing a design statement for Beachfront Park
- Designing a sustainable and environmentally sound plan
- Reflecting the great ideas of the community
- Creating a setting for success with grant funding
- Understanding potential California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) concerns

"They really came at us with comprehensive plan and approach with strategies to make that happen," Wendt said.

She then broke down the PGAdesign's timeline for developing the master plan:

- Project Launch, with community contact and review of background materials, March 2-27, 4 weeks
- Overlap with three alternatives, amenities & design feature recommendations, March 23 - May 8, 7 weeks
- Preferred Alternative, outreach and presentation, May 11 - June 12, five weeks
- Final Beachfront Park Master Plan Update, plan graphics & report, June 15 - July 31, 7 weeks
- Preparation for grants, Prop 68 and other sources, Aug. 3-21, 3 weeks

Mayor Blake Inscore said he was impressed with PGAdesign's proposal.

"Having been a part of the process for the original 2012 design plan, one of the downsides was while it was comprehensive with really great ideas, it was one big plan," Inscore said. "Reading through their proposal allows us to do something we couldn't do with the 2012 plan — to have a really clear understanding of what the costs will be to do these projects if we don't get \$10 million to do the whole thing. They're going to give us a strategy to move forward, even if it's a piece at a time."

Wendt then gave an update on Prop. 68 funding announced last week. She said 478 people applied for Prop. 68 dollars, 62 were granted. Multiple parks projects received grants between \$6-\$8.5 million, including Eureka's 2030 park for renovation at \$6.4 million.

"With the community outreach, the intensive, thoughtful, really strategic way we're going about it, that really looks good for us," Wendt said.

Eric Wier added the current round of applications for Prop. 68 dollars was very competitive but is worth the effort with the high dollars associated with it.

"When we looked at that grant application, it was really dependent on the community outreach piece," Wier said. "Which is why all this is important. There will be another round, there will be millions of dollars awarded. You have to be in the right position. And through these efforts, I think we will be in a very competitive position."