



Provo City Municipal Council

Staff Memorandum

Public Engagement Tool Recommendation

October 4, 2016

Council Coordinator

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Item Short Title

A report on vendor selection for software related to the Council priority to improve public engagement. (16-042)

Intended Outcome of Discussion/Requested Action

Council selects a proposal and instructs staff to: 1) commence an appropriations process to fund the proposed procurement; 2) to prepare necessary contracts to complete the procurement; and when these are completed, 3) to install and implement the public engagement tool.

Summary of Key Issue

- Council identified “encourage public engagement with the Council” as one of its priorities.
- Current use of social media, blogs, and newsletters is improving public engagement but there are gaps. Those gaps include a safe environment for quality conversations, tools for more useful feedback, and ability to connect with more stakeholder groups.
- Research showed a variety of products available to facilitate public engagement in an online environment.

Budget Impact Summary

- \$10,800 to \$14,000 from the General Fund, to be appropriated.

Policy Considerations

1. Will this digital public engagement tool make the Council more accessible to Provo citizens?
2. Will this encourage and enable interested stakeholders to learn about, follow, and engage in issues that the Council is addressing?
3. Will this improve engagement with students, businesses, HOAs, and landlords?
4. Is the benefit from the use of this tool worth the expenditure of funds and staff effort required?

Background

Council, with its Public Engagement priority, expressed a desire to find an online tool to facilitate engagement with Provo residents in a safe, moderated environment. An informal committee of Council and IT staff researched and talked to a variety of suppliers, in product demonstrations, and reached out to other cities using the products being researched.

A request for proposals (RFP) was issued in order to compare products against the desired features established by the Council office. Six suppliers submitted proposals.

Proposals were reviewed by the Council office with a scale of 0-3 on each requirement in the RFP. A zero was given if that requirement was missing. If the product didn't meet the minimum requirement, a one was given. If the product met the minimum, a two was given. Products exceeding the minimum were awarded a 3. Points were totaled for all six vendors and an overall ranking was established based on the point totals and other information included in proposals.

The top three suppliers, based on points, were Peak Democracy, Bang the Table, and Polco. All three provided products that satisfied most of the minimum requirements. Key areas of differentiation were in the support provided, data download availability, site customization (branding), comment moderation provided, searchable content, ability to incorporate into the Provo.org website, and verification of user's Provo address.

Polco's product "Polco" has a friendly user interface but exists only as an external site, doesn't allow for customization to match Provo City's branding, and doesn't provide the content moderation desired. After the RFP closed, Polco advised us of planned updates to its product that include address verification based on voter records.

Bang the Table's "Engagement HQ" is relatively new to the United States. They provide an external site for their product but are able to customize to Provo City's branding. Engagement HQ stood out as being easily accessible in terms of GRAMA requests and in the variety of ways the data can be searched.

Peak Democracy's "Open Town Hall" was the only product that could be incorporated into the Provo City website. They are able to customize it to the City's branding and they make all the data available to us in perpetuity. Their ability to verify Provo addresses would allow the data to be filtered to show input from Provo residents. Open Town Hall had fewer ways to search the data and didn't allow for downvoting, although downvoting may not be a desired feature.

Providing adequate support and handling the task of monitoring content minimizes the impact on Council staff. Both Open Town Hall and Engagement HQ stood out in this area. Peak Democracy's Open Town Hall has been in use for several years and their clients highly recommend it. Salt Lake City has been using Open Town Hall much in the same way we would.

Policy Considerations

Council Priority: Encourage public engagement with the Council

Desired Outcomes Improved engagement with students, businesses, HOAs, and landlords. Technological tools which make the Council more accessible to citizens Council policies and practices which encourage and enable interested stakeholders to learn about, follow, and engage in issues that the Council is addressing.

Acquiring a public engagement tool as is proposed here, would improve results by obtaining timely input on current issues, before Council decisions are made; would provide useful information and could be evaluated based on geographic location, demographic information, etc., would appeal to students because of their desire to use online tools; allow for more interaction outside of public meetings and regular business hours, eliminating many barriers to entry; information would be able to reach constituents where they are instead of requiring them to come to us.

Evaluation of Alternative Actions

Adopt Proposal

Top three products based on evaluation scores are Polco, Open Town Hall and Engagement HQ. Scores and proposal prices are below with no points allocated due to cost:

| Product | Polco | Open Town Hall | Engagement |
|-------------------|-------------|----------------|----------------|
| Vendor | Polco | Peak Democracy | Bang the Table |
| Year 1 cost | \$12,000.00 | \$10,800.00 | \$14,000.00 |
| 5-Year total cost | \$60,000.00 | \$54,000.00 | \$74,000.00 |
| TOTAL SCORE | 29 | 47 | 45 |

Status Quo (Do Not Adopt - No Action) - This is always an option.

Other Alternative to Consider - Continue looking.

Recommendation

To be presented at the October 4, 2016 meeting.

Next Steps

1. October 18, 2016, Council meeting - request for appropriation
2. Prepare and execute contract with vendor
3. Develop work plan with procedures for use of product
4. Internal testing of product
5. Public relations effort to invite Provo residents to use the product

Timing, from signature of contract to first external use, is expected to be 2-3 weeks maximum.

Appendix 1 - Current Public Engagement Efforts Neighborhood Program

Outreach through the Neighborhood Program continues but is limited as people are unable to attend meetings or have not connected to their Neighborhood Chair to be included in notifications.

Social Media

Over the past two years:

- Council's Facebook page has nearly tripled the number of followers
- Twitter followers have increased 247%
- Blog views have tripled
- YouTube views have increased 300-600% (depending on the video)
- Newsletter subscribers have increased to 400 people

The drawback to social media is that it can be an uncomfortable or ineffective environment for discussions on serious matters.

Appendix 2 - Scoring of Proposals Submitted

Top 3 Suppliers

After scoring the six proposals submitted, the top three are shown here. All three had duplicate scores in the following areas:

- | | | |
|---|--|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Unlimited data storage • responsive design of site • ability to post with 300 words of text, photos, videos, hyperlinks, and question and answer • download of data as PDF or CSV • social media/outreach capability • unlimited number of | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • user accounts • Customized registration details • Email notifications • SMS notifications • Actions that trigger notifications • Users can flag uncivil posts • Automated content filtering (profanity) • Allow users to edit | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • their submissions • Administrator tools • Budget allocation tool • Demographic filters • Upvoting • Surveys • Single sign-on (to incorporate with Provo 360) • Content search by single user, multiple users, and key word |
|---|--|---|

The remaining areas differentiate among the three finalists:

| Product | Polco | Open Town Hall | Engagement HQ | Notes |
|--------------------------------|--|---|---|-------|
| Vendor | Polco | Peak Democracy | Bang the Table | |
| Year 1 cost | \$12,000.00 | \$10,800.00 | \$14,000.00 | |
| 5-Year total cost | \$60,000.00 | \$54,000.00 | \$74,000.00 | |
| TOTAL SCORE | 29 | 47 | 45 | |
| Minimum Requirements | | | | |
| Adequate support for our staff | 1 | 3 | 2 | |
| Support details | Website, phone, video conference, email 8 am - 9 pm, emergencies 15 minutes response | Primary point of contact 8 am - 9 pm 1 hour response | Account manager, help desk 24 hrs email 2-4 hrs, 1-2 business days response | |
| Data owned by us | 1 | 3 | 2 | |
| Data details | Limited data available upon contract termination | Data available in perpetuity and downloadable at any time | Data download available at any time | |
| Supplier moderates content | 0 | 3 | 3 | |
| Content monitoring details | User moderated, automated | They provide moderation under our guidelines, | They provide moderation, also automated | |

| | Timing depends on users | also automated Timing depends on human workflow process | Content reviewed within 2 hours of posting | |
|---|-------------------------|--|--|--|
| Web Hosting | Amazon Web | iWeb | SaaS | |
| Incorporate into Provo.org | 1 | 3 | 1 | |
| Embedded or external site location? | External site | External site or embedded iframe | External site | |
| Customization capabilities of site | 0 | 3 | 3 | |
| Logs changes/edits to user submissions | 0 | 2 | 1 | |
| Can limit the number of times a user comments | 0 | 2 | 2 | |
| Heat mapping | 0 | 2 | 2 | |
| Document markup | 0 | 3 | 2 | |
| Downvoting | 2 | 0 | 2 | Not necessarily a desired feature |
| Filtration of user input | 6 | 8 | 8 | Filter by issue topic, page views by topic, all feedback by user, feedback frequency |
| Admin messaging to individuals, groups | 2 | 3 | 3 | |
| Unlimited number of admin accounts | 2 | 2 | 0 | |
| Verified Provo address | 2 | 3 | 1 | |
| Allow unregistered users in certain areas | 0 | 2 | 2 | |
| GRAMA / records retention | 2 | 3 | 3 | |
| Content search by date range | 2 | 2 | 0 | |
| Content search by key word (in attachments) | 2 | 0 | 2 | |
| Content search by document name | 2 | 0 | 2 | |
| Content search of edited records | 2 | 0 | 2 | |
| Content search of archived records | 2 | 0 | 2 | |