

To: Board of Commissioners  
From: Michele Morris, Director of Communications  
Date: January 12, 2023  
RE: RFP20221017 – CSWD Website Development

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On October 17, 2022, District staff issued RFP 20221017 – CSWD Website Development, which we posted on the Vermont Business Registry and the CSWD website and sent to 18 website development firms on October 31. The RFP is for Phase 2 of a comprehensive overhaul and reimagining of the CSWD website.

Phase 1 of the work (RFP 20220331 –Website Research Services) was posted on the Vermont Business Registry, the CSWD Website, and sent to 31 prospective vendors. Gravity Works Design, based in Lansing, Michigan, was awarded the contract from among eight proposals received. Gravity Works completed the Phase 1 work in October 2022 for a total cost of \$44,403 on a budget of \$45,000.

The RFP for Phase 2 – Website Development, was sent to all firms that received the Phase 1 RFP plus any others that expressed interest subsequent to that process. We received and responded to questions from ten firms. We received 16 proposals within the timeframe specified in the RFP. Two arrived after the deadline and were disqualified.

Upon a comprehensive review of all proposals, which follow-up questions to five candidates, extensive exploration of each firm’s website portfolio, virtual interviews with the top three contenders, and vetting of references, staff recommends contracting with Bytes.co, based in Burlington, Vermont. Though the Bytes.co proposal cost was the second highest received, it is still within our budgeted expense of \$85,000. We are recommending this firm for three main reasons:

1. The Bytes.co portfolio best reflects the caliber of website we are seeking, and they have demonstrated they can build the functionality and taxonomy we require on WordPress (our current website’s Content Management System; or CMS). They have a robust and talented team of developers—with whom we have worked on some projects, and who come highly recommended by others. As a Burlington-based firm they know who we are and what we do from a customer/constituent perspective. We received favorable yet realistic comments from two customers who are still contracting with them for maintenance and on-call support. Their proposal came in at an estimated 560 hours of work at \$150/hour. The hourly wage compares to \$120/hr. for Four Nine Design and \$150/hr. for Gravity Works.

Here are a few examples of Bytes.co websites built on WordPress:

- <https://www.portermedical.org/>
  - <https://www.gbymca.org/>
  - <https://wildapple.com/>
2. While Four Nine Design also builds beautiful sites, is Burlington-based, and had a substantially lower bid, they contract out their development work as well as creative visuals (photography and video). We are uncomfortable with being one additional layer removed from the developers executing the build and we felt their sites did not quite exhibit the applications that aligned as closely with what we need.
  3. Though we are pleased with the Phase 1 deliverables, which provide an excellent foundation for the Phase 2 work, staff is not convinced Gravity Works possesses the design and development chops we are seeking. Perhaps more significantly, they are very pro-Drupal, an alternative CMS that we are not convinced will supply a better result than WordPress, and which would require complete retraining for our staff. Staff is also concerned that hosting and maintenance costs for a Drupal site would be significantly higher and they did not meet our requirement for a client-friendly and accessible project management platform.

The Proposal Evaluation Form is included as Attachment A.

The FY23 Capital Budget has identified \$85,000 for Phase 2 – CSWD Website Development. Staff recommends that CSWD enter a contract with Bytes.co for a not to exceed amount of \$85,000.

**BE IT RESOLVED that the Board of Commissioners authorizes the Executive Director to enter into a contractual agreement with Bytes.co, Burlington, VT, for the development of a new CSWD website as described in their response to RFP20221017 – CSWD Website Development for an amount not to exceed \$85,000.**