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<b>Title:</b>	Select Vendor and Authorize Contract of Phase II Website Design/Build Project	
<b>Resolution number:</b>	22-009	
<b>Prepared by:</b>	Name: Helen Schnoes Phone: (952) 641-4524 hschnoes@minnehahacreek.org	
<b>Reviewed by:</b>	James Wisker, Administrator, and Chuck Holtman, Legal Counsel	
<b>Recommended action:</b>	Select Love Communications as vendor and authorize District Administrator to execute contract for Phase II Website design and build	
<b>Schedule:</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Phase II begins by March 2022</li><li>• New website launches October 2022</li></ul>	
<b>Budget considerations:</b>	Fund name and code: 1-1003-4320 and 4-4002-4320 Fund budget: \$103,000 Expenditures to date: N/A Requested amount of funding: N/A	
<b>Past Board action:</b>	Res #: 19-060 Res #: 20-088 Res #: 21-093	Authorization to contract for web content strategy Acceptance of Phase I website content strategy Authorization to release Request for Proposals for Phase II Website design and build

**Summary:**

At the December 16, 2021, Minnehaha Creek Watershed District (MCWD or the District) Board of Managers meeting, the Board authorized the release of a request for proposals (RFP) to complete the design and launch of the District's new website ([Res #21-093](#)). The RFP builds upon the Phase I Website Content Strategy approved and adopted by the Board on November 19, 2020 ([Res #20-088](#)). This plan defined the site's architecture, the key content items needed to achieve the District's goals for the website, and laid the foundation for a Phase II design and build. It was the product of nearly two years of work and engagement with staff, Board Managers, Citizens Advisory Committee (CAC) members, and external stakeholders.

On February 10, 2022, staff will review the process undertaken to release the Phase II Website RFP, review proposals, select and interview finalists, and present an overview and rationale of the recommended vendor for Board consideration and approval.

**Background:**

Phase I Content Strategy

MCWD selected the firm Vendi ([Res #19-060](#)) through a competitive process to develop a content strategy to guide the design and building of the new website. Based on the collection of diverse input, three goals were identified:

1. Connect people to the information they value
2. Highlight the value MCWD provides across the watershed
3. Provide transparency and organizational information

Through that process, a few key principles emerged for developing the plan:

1. Begin with a judicious focus on the most important content.
2. Weave in MCWD's brand position throughout.
3. Leverage high-quality third-party content whenever possible.

The Board-approved Phase I Content Strategy outlines the major sections of the website and the key content needed to achieve the goals of each section, and outlines guidelines for design, copywriting, and coding. At the time of approval, it was understood that design and copywriting decisions would occur during Phase II.

## **Phase II Website Redesign Summary:**

### Aging Website and Technology

The District's website relies on an aging content management system Drupal 7.82, and general purpose scripting language known as PHP 7.4. Security support for PHP 7.4 is scheduled to sunset November 28, 2022. This would leave the current website vulnerable. Migration to Drupal 9 and PHP 8 would be as rigorous and costly as redesigning and building a new website. This information offers two key insights regarding the District's website, (1) the planned website build must be completed by mid-fall 2022; (2) the new website should be maintained and updated more frequently.

### Phase II Scope

The Phase II Scope of Work, as outlined in the RFP, will build directly on the approved Phase I Content Strategy.

The major tasks outlined in the RFP are:

1. Review Phase I research, Content Strategy, and current organizational needs
2. Determine workplan to launch new site no later than October 2022
3. Establish design elements for website and MCWD communications based on content strategy
4. Create content for new website and edit current content selected for migration
5. Build and develop new website
6. Test site pre-launch and train staff for content management
7. Launch new website
8. Create plan for on-going support, maintenance, and enhancement projects

### Timeline

The RFP process and design/build project unfolded on the following timeline:

- RFP released December 17, 2021
- Letter of Interest + Questions due January 7, 2022
- Proposals due January 19, 2022 at 11:59pm CST
- Finalist interviews January 31, 2022 – February 4, 2022

### Budget

The budget for Phase II is \$103,000. The 2022 budget allocates funding from the IT and Outreach program areas to support the website design/build (about three-quarters) and content creation (about one-quarter). The RFP listed a budget range of \$80,000 – \$100,000. On-going site hosting and general maintenance will not be included in the Phase II contract, but most proposals included an overview of such services and fees offered by vendors.

### RFP and Vendor Selection Process

1. **RFP Solicitation:** MCWD solicited the RFP to potential vendors through posting the RFP on the MCWD website, with the League of Minnesota Cities, with the Minnesota Chapter of the American Planning Association, and through direct outreach to pre-vetted vendors that staff felt were well positioned to submit strong proposals.
2. **Letters of Interest + Questions:** MCWD received letters of interest from 19 firms by the deadline on January 7, 2022. MCWD received a large volume of questions and followed up on January 11, 2022, with comprehensive answers. Answers included example files of MCWD water level data and links to some existing online data

visualizations managed by MCWD. Only those vendors that submitted a letter of interest were allowed to submit a final proposal.

3. **Proposals:** On January 19, 2022, MCWD received final proposals from 12 firms. Following review by a staff team of three, five firms were selected as finalists and invited to interview. Finalists were Love Communications, Room 34 with Background Stories, Software for Good, Spectrum Media Solutions, and Vendi.
4. **Interviews:** Interviews occurred February 1-3, 2022. Two additional MCWD staff participated in the interviews with technical perspectives on permitting IT connections and MCWD's real-time water level data. Manager Olson participated in all interviews as the IT Liaison. Finalists prepared presentations in response to a prompt shared in advance and answered panel questions asked during the interview. Following the interviews, District staff issued additional follow up questions, to obtain clarification and specificity where needed.
5. **Finalist Selection:** The interview panel briefed the District Administrator on the outcomes of the interviews and reviewed the vendors in relation to the District's needs to select a consensus choice. The group used the criteria included in the RFP (Experience; Project Vision, Alignment, Process; Cost and Value; Creativity and Collaboration) to arrive at a recommendation.

### Recommendation

Based upon the process outlined above, staff is recommending that Love Communications be selected as the consultant and awarded the contract for services detailed in the Love Communications Website Design/Build Proposal, which is provided under separate cover to the Board of Managers.

Love Communications, a full-service advertising and creative agency based in Salt Lake City, Utah, has the experience, project team, and approach to meet the needs of the District. They have a strong understanding of our needs and bring an approach that is both creative and collaborative, utilizing Design Thinking and a "MoSCoW" prioritization approach (must-have, should-have, could-have, won't-have). In answer to our follow-up questions after the interview, they ran a few experiments with the water level data previously supplied by MCWD and impressed staff with the skill, quality, and output generated in just a 3-hour exercise. Example projects provided from Love include other public entities with complex, real-time data to share and natural resource organizations looking to communicate their value to the public.

Their final budget, \$98,200, comes in under the maximum level listed in the RFP. Upon dialogue during the interview and the finalist selection discussion, MCWD staff are recommending to not pursue original photography as part of this contract, as included in the RFP, and instead independently contract with a local photographer. Based upon staff knowledge of the local market for freelance photographers, it is expected that a quality contract will be able to meet our needs and support an enticing website's design for no more than \$5,000. This step will keep overall District expenditures aligned with budgeted amounts.

### Next Steps

Following contract execution, work will commence with the project kickoff. Major anticipated milestones include:

- Project initiation and kickoff: Q1 2022
- Website design and content creation: Q2 2022
- Website development and testing: Q3 2022
- Launch of updated website and staff training: October 2022

The Board liaison to the Website Phase II Rebuild will continue to be involved in the process to provide input and guidance to staff at major milestones in the project. Staff and liaisons will also provide periodic updates to the Board to ensure managers are fully informed of key decision points and overall project direction.

In accordance with the Data Practices Act, Minnesota Statutes 13.591, subdivision 3(b), until a contract has been executed, only the names of those firms that submitted proposals are public. As the submitted proposals are not presently part of the public record, they will have been distributed to the Managers for review via email prior to the

February 10, 2022, meeting. Even though proposal content is not public, a manager may discuss or ask questions about the content at the meeting, if she or he believes that doing so assists the Board's deliberation on the matter.



**RESOLUTION**

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**Resolution number:** 22-009

**Title:** Selecting Vendor and Authorizing Contract for Phase II Website Design/Build Project

WHEREAS in 2019 and 2020 District staff and contracted Phase I vendor, Vendi, led an intensive input process that resulted in a website content strategy report to serve as the blueprint to design, prepare copy for, and build the new website, which was accepted by the Board of Managers in Resolution 20-088; and

WHEREAS in Fall 2021 Outreach staff conducted Phase II preparation activities including conversations with experienced peers, vetting of preliminary approach, budget, and timeline ideas with potential website design/build firms, and internal program manager review of the Phase I content strategy to develop a sound approach for successful website update by October 2022; and

WHEREAS the approved 2022 budget allocates \$103,000 for the full design and build project, approximately three-quarters for website design and build and one-quarter for website content creation;

WHEREAS on December 16, 2021, the Board adopted Resolution 21-093 authorizing the release of a request for proposals for consulting services for the Phase II website design and build;

WHEREAS the MCWD published the request for proposals in several locations and distributed it to certain vendors known by MCWD staff, pursuant to which 12 proposals were received, and a core team of MCWD staff evaluated the proposals to select the following for interview: Love Communications, Room 34 with Background Stories, Software for Good, Spectrum Media Solutions, and Vendi;

WHEREAS an evaluation panel of MCWD staff and Manager Olson, IT Liaison, interviewed the five finalists as to experience, project vision/alignment/process, cost and value, and creativity and collaboration;

WHEREAS on the basis of its evaluation, staff recommends the selection of Love Communications, based on the quality of approach to project prioritization and management, team expertise, focus on MCWD's data visualization needs, and cost;

WHEREAS the Board of Managers finds that the evaluation has been thorough and properly structured, and that the work proposed by Love Communications is demonstrated to be competitive and within budget;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Minnehaha Creek Watershed District Board of Managers authorizes the District administrator, on advice of counsel, to execute a contract with Love Communications and in an amount not to exceed the amount set forth in the proposal, and authorizes the Administrator to execute contract amendments in his discretion up to an additional 10 percent, in aggregate, of the contract amount.

Resolution Number 22-009 was moved by Manager \_\_\_\_\_, seconded by Manager \_\_\_\_\_. Motion to adopt the resolution \_\_\_ ayes, \_\_\_ nays, \_\_\_ abstentions. Date 2/10/2022.

\_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Secretary