

TOWNSHIP OF LOWER MAKEFIELD
AD HOC PROPERTY COMMITTEE
MINUTES – DECEMBER 19, 2022

A meeting of the Ad Hoc Property Committee of the Township of Lower Makefield was held remotely on December 19, 2022. Mr. Steadman called the meeting to order at 7:30 p.m. He stated the purpose of the meeting is to review the proposals received as a result of the RFP process in helping create a Master Plan for the Patterson Farm property.

Those present:

Ad Hoc Property Committee: Dennis Steadman, Chair
Fred Childs, Vice Chair
Bette Sovinee, Secretary
Joe Camaratta, Member
John Mohan, Member
Jim Scott, Member

Others: James Majewski, Community Development Director
Jennifer Stark, Avison-Young
Fredric K. Weiss, Supervisor Liaison
Colleen Attara
Stephen Heinz, Historical Architectural Review Board Member

Absent: James McCartney, Supervisor Liaison

APPROVAL OF MINUTES OF DECEMBER 8, 2022: Ms. Sovinee

Mr. Camaratta moved, Mr. Childs seconded and it was unanimously carried to approve the Minutes of December 8, 2022 as written.

REVIEW AND DISCUSSION OF CONTRACTOR BIDS: Ms. Stark

Ms. Stark stated Bids came in on December 14. Five firms had been identified – four architects and one landscape architecture firm which has done plans of this caliber. She stated two of the architectural firms declined to respond, and the landscape architecture firm joined with Preservation Architect who she researched and found them to be acceptable. Ms. Stark stated we received two proposals out of the five as one firm advised they were too busy and two declined.

Ms. Stark stated there are two proposals – one from Connolly Hickey and one from Seiler Drury. She stated Avison-Young took those proposals and pulled apart the content so that they could prepare a leveling sheet which is a tool to compare the proposals and try to make an apples-to-apples evaluation to help the Committee see the merits of each proposal and to see where there may be questions to be asked. Ms. Stark stated she is recommending that once we go through the leveling sheet, she will collect comments from the Committee and invite the two firms to a virtual interview to discuss their proposals, their project approach, their take on what we are requesting; and if there are questions collected tonight, we will be able to pose them at that time. The intent is to help the Committee evaluate these proposals further and ultimately come to a consensus within the Committee and then a recommendation to the Board of Supervisors.

The leveling sheet was shown, and Ms. Stark noted that there is a big difference between the two firms as far as base fee with Connolly Hickey at \$134,700 and Seiler Drury at \$74,400. Ms. Stark stated the asterisk means that the number includes their MEP (mechanical, electrical, and plumbing) engineers, the structural engineer; and for Seiler Drury it also includes the landscape consultant, cost estimating, and their preservation consultant fees. Ms. Stark stated Connolly Hickey is also including MEP, structural; and they are doing the cost estimating in-house, and they have a landscape consultant and a preservation consultant on staff. She stated it is therefore apples-to-apples as far as the qualifications and the discipline that each team is offering.

Ms. Stark stated it was requested in the proposal that they focus on the main structures on the property – the barns and the homestead houses; and while Connolly Hickey broke this out, Seiler Drury did not. Ms. Stark stated we also asked them for additional fees to look at the structural integrity of the other smaller outbuildings. She stated Connolly Hickey provided an extra fee to look at these additional properties. She stated this was requested because we wanted to know what it would cost, and she was looking at a menu of pricing which would give the Committee more flexibility to pick what was important; and if the Committee wanted to purchase more evaluation and assessment, there would be a cost associated with that so the Committee could make an informed decision. She stated the additional fees were shown to do the evaluation.

Mr. Steadman stated under additional fees for Satterthwaite there is a row indicating “main barn - \$24,500,” and he felt that the main barns were included in the base; and that the base included the three houses and the two main barns. Ms. Stark noted the base includes the two homes and the caretaker’s cottage. Mr. Steadman stated they did not include the barns, and Ms. Stark agreed.

Ms. Stark stated we need to know what the value is for Seiler Drury, and that will be a question to ask them as to where are the alternate fees that were requested, and what they were including in the base scope of work.

Ms. Stark stated Connolly Hickey did not give a price for National Register nomination support, but Seiler Drury did provide a price for that as well as support for architectural documentation for the balance of the outbuildings. She stated it is \$3,800 versus the line items on the other side for Connolly Hickey. She added that she would like to discuss this further because she does not feel that discrepancy is something that we can ignore.

Mr. Mohan stated the \$3,800 fee is not enough to cover all of those buildings based on their hourly rate. Ms. Stark stated they need to look into this further.

Ms. Stark stated the total for the Master Plan and all alternates was tallied up so that the Committee could see what this was and to make a comparison between the two firms. She stated the proposals are structured differently, and they will need to discuss this further with the firms.

Ms. Stark stated they wanted to confirm that there were people on the teams that had Master’s in historic preservation, and both teams do.

Ms. Stark stated there is also a difference between their project duration with Connolly Hickey being 40 weeks, and the project duration for Seiler Drury being about 28 weeks. Ms. Stark stated she would like to discuss further the schedules that they have provided and ask them how they plan to proceed.

Ms. Stark stated another item that was broken out for the Committee were the names of the components of their project teams. Ms. Stark stated she is familiar with Jim Huffman, and he does structural and MEP engineering. She stated Seiler Drury has structural engineering, and they also have MEP engineering – two separate firms providing these services. She stated with

regard to cost estimating with Seiler Drury it is through a firm she is familiar with and has been around for decades, and cost estimating will be done in-house with Connolly Hickey. Ms. Stark stated historic preservation consulting is with Powers and Company for Seiler Drury, and she added that Bob Powers used to work for the National Park Service and has been in practice for three decades; and Powers and Company is a good, reputable firm. She stated historic preservation consulting would be in-house for Connolly Hickey.

Ms. Stark stated Simone Collins was the landscape architecture firm that she reached out to originally, and they have teamed with Seiler Drury. John Morgan Thomas is the landscape architect for Connolly Hickey.

Ms. Stark stated there are comparable skill sets for the teams. Ms. Stark stated they also decided to list relevant projects so the Committee could see the differences between the kind of work that the two firms have done. She stated there is a lot of similarity because preservation projects tend to have a common denominator. She stated all of the projects have been shown with photographs and scopes of work described in the RFP.

Ms. Stark stated she plans to document any questions the Committee has, and they will be distributed to the Committee so that we are prepared for talking points during the interviews.

Mr. Mohan stated he would like Seiler Drury to elaborate more on their fee structure because he does not see it working out to \$3,800, and Ms. Stark agreed. Mr. Camaratta asked if it is known what Seiler Drury meant by architectural documentation. He stated that Connolly Hickey were talking about AutoCAD for all of the buildings, and he did not sense the same from Seiler Drury that they would be going into as much detail on that. Ms. Stark stated they are supposed to be because we asked them to do exactly the same thing, and we wanted CAD drawings, floor plans, and elevations.

Mr. Scott asked at what point would they be evaluating the structures themselves and making recommendations on what needs to be done in terms of repairs and stabilization. Ms. Stark stated they will identify obvious issues with their structural engineer. She stated with the scenarios they are proposing, there may be different building requirements based on the type of use, and the structural engineer would be able to comment on whether the structure needs to be augmented to support the requirements for a specific use.

She stated she expects that they will prioritize repairs based on immediate, mid-term, and long-term needs. She stated that would tie in with the scenario of what they are proposing for the use.

Mr. Majewski stated the Township has done some good structural assessments of the buildings, and both bidders had access to the Google drive to access that information. He added that once they discuss a use, that could change what they need to do and the priorities. Ms. Stark agreed. She stated the team that gets the job will be provided the Township's archival information again as well as any documentation for preferences of stakeholders.

Mr. Steadman stated with regard to the cost estimating, it is his understanding that within the contract, their fees would include a number of estimates given varying uses; and it would not be for just one use, and if they were requested to consider another use, there would not be an upcharge. He stated he assumes they can run a number of scenarios on each building depending on the scenario of the Committee. Ms. Stark stated we asked for three, and that is what was included in the base scope of work.

Mr. Camaratta asked why they would not start by looking at potential uses as that would affect the way they would do the condition assessment and develop the recommendations. Ms. Stark stated she feels we will provide them with stakeholder information up front; and in the meantime they will be doing condition assessments. Ms. Stark stated all of the buildings are going to have conditions that need to be addressed regardless of what the proposed use will be. She stated the need to work on a foundation for example would not change whether it is to be used as a barn, turned over for public assembly, or for something else. She stated higher level scenarios for adaptive reuse would require additional condition assessments depending on a specific use.

Mr. Steadman stated he understands that the Township has done a number of engineering assessments over the years, and he asked if there are some that are recent enough that the engineers could rely on them and then do supplemental work. He stated money could be saved in some of these assessments if they are able to use the Township assessments if they are recent enough. Mr. Majewski stated all of the buildings have been assessed with some having been done in 2014 and the rest last year. Mr. Majewski stated he agrees with Ms. Stark that once they start discussing potential uses, they will need to look into the buildings more closely.

Mr. Childs stated he understands that we are not getting sealed drawings, but there may some concern from the firms' structural engineers about relying on previous studies that may or may not be completed. Ms. Stark stated it is very common to inherit archival information, and they would go out into the field to verify. She stated they will do their own survey work and create their own plans, but will also have the reference of plans prepared by others which is always helpful.

Mr. Childs stated his initial concern with the two proposals is the wide variation in the total fees and the schedule. He stated the initial estimate was about six months to prepare the plan, and the firms are coming up with seven to ten months. He stated there is also the large fee difference; and if there is a 20% difference in fees, that raises a lot of questions. He stated in this case, it is almost an 80% increase from one to the other. He stated adding in the additional fees that were listed by Connolly Hickey, there is almost a three times difference. He stated Seiler Drury did not include all of the details for the additional buildings. He stated he questions whether Seiler Drury had a full grasp of the scope. He asked if both firms participated in the site visit, and Ms. Stark stated they did. Mr. Childs asked Ms. Stark if she feels Connolly Hickey's fee is out of line. Ms. Stark stated she feels they are high if you take everything into consideration, but she feels their base fee is where she would expect it to be. She stated professional fees are easier to dissect than a contractor's fee because we are talking about investigation and services. She stated the interview process will be very helpful since we will be able to see if anything was missed or if something was over-analyzed.

Mr. Childs stated Connolly Hickey mentioned four relevant projects and included the project costs as a comparison. He stated the information provided by Seiler Drury did not seem to be the kind of magnitude that we would be dealing with in this case. He stated with Simone Collins Landscape Architecture being part of the team, Seiler Drury seemed to put a lot of emphasis on landscaping and trails, and park and rec items. Ms. Stark stated she feels we should discuss that further with them.

Mr. Heinz stated he feels a graphic could be provided to the two firms with the fulfillment of the requirements of the Bid as a check mark in each area that they did, although the numbers would not be attached. Ms. Stark agreed that would be a direct way to show them where they left something off. Mr. Steadman stated he agrees that prior to any interviews, we should go back to each bidder with the kind of guideline that Mr. Heinz has suggested.

Ms. Stark stated Connolly Hickey was low on the number of basic meetings as they only had four, and she feels that more meetings will be needed. She stated Seiler Drury seemed to understand what it is like to work for a public entity and having to attend multiple meetings. Mr. Childs stated Connolly Hickey only had two weeks for Township review and comments on the various stages of their report. Mr. Steadman stated he liked the verbiage provided by Seiler Drury, but he liked the detail provided by Connolly Hickey.

Ms. Sovinee asked when we get to the interviews, do we need to have standard questions for each of the bidders; and Ms. Stark stated she likes to have standard questions for both, but if something arises from the responses, there could be a dialogue. Ms. Sovinee asked what is the timeframe for setting up the interviews. Ms. Stark stated she was hoping to do it the week of January 3. Mr. Steadman asked if it would be possible to go back to them before the interviews, and Ms. Stark stated she would like to give them a tentative date and time for the interview and provide an outline as recommended by Mr. Heinz of areas where they missed components along with some of the initial questions so that they are prepared to talk about them during the interview.

Mr. Majewski stated it appears that Thursday, January 5 would be an option to hold the interviews beginning at 7:30 p.m. Mr. Steadman stated the regularly scheduled January meeting is January 12 which could be a fallback date. Ms. Sovinee stated if we hold the interviews on January 5, the selection could be made on January 12 so that we could get on the Board of Supervisors' Agenda of January 18. Dr. Weiss stated if the Committee has a recommendation by January 12, they could probably get it on the Supervisors' Agenda for January 18. He stated he understood that the Committee was looking to get a recommendation to the Board of Supervisors by the second meeting in February, so he does not want them to be rushed. Mr. Childs stated he would not be available on January 5 but all other Committee members were available.

Mr. Camaratta stated both bidders discussed involving key stakeholders and potential uses as well as looking at other nearby sites to gain inspiration. He stated he would like a little more detail as to how they intend to do that. He asked if there will be a public forum and how we will involve the neighbors especially those in close proximity to the farm.

Mr. Childs stated both firms should be asked to indicate what it would do to their schedule if they were to include all of the outbuildings.

Mr. Steadman asked if we should ask Seiler Drury to include the project cost and scope of comparable projects the same way that Connolly Hickey did, and others felt that would be helpful.

Mr. Mohan stated it seems that there are 259 hours for Seiler Drury and 2,090 for Connolly Hickey so there are scope differentials on a “massive scale” that need to be considered; and we need to understand what they are including. Mr. Majewski stated while he got different numbers than Mr. Mohan, it is still a big difference. Ms. Stark stated it is also skewed because Seiler Drury is missing a lot of the buildings. Mr. Majewski stated in their narrative it did appear that they would be looking at all of the buildings, so they do need to clarify that.

Mr. Steadman asked Mr. Majewski what he expected the base price to be, and Mr. Majewski stated when the Board of Supervisors budgeted up to \$300,000, he felt that was high. He added he felt this could be 700 to 1,000 hours’ worth of work which would equate to about \$100,000 to \$250,000.

Mr. Camaratta stated he wants to make sure that both proposals would include the lay-out and how traffic would move in and among the buildings based on the uses as that could be a factor in determining what the potential uses are especially if there is any use that could disturb the farmland.

Mr. Steadman stated if anyone has any other questions/comments that should be considered, they should send him an e-mail.

Mr. Camaratta asked Mr. Majewski if the prior submission for the National Register was included in the background information provided to the bidders; and Mr. Majewski stated he gave them the link to the Google One Drive we have for the Ad Hoc Committee which includes everything including the assessments, reports, prior historical data that had been compiled when they did I-95, and when the Application was submitted and the comments that came back from the State on our nomination. Mr. Childs asked if the Ad Hoc Committee’s Final Report was included as well, and Ms. Stark stated it was included in the RFP.

Mr. Childs asked if the questions to be asked of the bidders will be shared with the Committee, and Ms. Stark agreed.

December 19, 2022

Ad Hoc Property Committee

Mr. Steadman stated there had been discussion about organizing a potential Sub-Committee on community outreach and being sure that we get full involvement of the community. He stated Ms. Sovinee had expressed interest in being involved in this. Ms. Sovinee stated she has experience in this area as she was a public participation coordinator for a time at DEP; and while she would like to be involved, she would not want to Chair the Sub-Committee. Ms. Sovinee stated she feels that it was determined that would be part of the process by the consultant. Mr. Steadman stated he feels a Sub-Committee could work with the contractor on this. Mr. Childs stated he would be willing to help with this.

PUBLIC COMMENT

There was no one from the public wishing to speak at this time.

There being no further business, Mr. Steadman moved, Ms. Sovinee seconded and it was unanimously carried to adjourn the meeting at 8:20 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

Bette Sovinee, Secretary

