



Village of Itasca

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MEMORANDUM

TO: Mayor Pruyn and Village Trustees

FROM: Carie Anne Ergo, Village Administrator

DATE: June 28, 2019

SUBJECT: Discussion and possible action on a proposal to engage Strategia Consulting LLC to assist the Village with media relations and communications

Introduction

The purpose of this memo is to recommend that the Village of Itasca retain Strategia Consulting LLC for the purposes of assisting Village staff with media relations and communications.

Discussion

Last week, the Daily Herald published an article and editorial regarding Haymarket Center's intention to purchase Holiday Inn – Itasca for the purpose of converting the facility to a mixed-use residential drug treatment facility. The article also revealed that 60 elected officials were already on board in support of the proposal.

Upon publication, Village staff and elected officials immediately began receiving inquiries on whether they supported the proposal. Because Haymarket had not yet submitted a formal proposal to the Village, both staff and elected officials were not equipped to respond. In fact, many were unaware that Haymarket's proposal would be forthcoming.

The article wrongly asserted that "No tax dollars would be involved," – a statement that is not factual. Not only was the article factually inaccurate, it also failed to include any input from Village officials related to the project. As a result, I reached out to two communications firms to seek assistance in communicating accurate and timely information about the process and project to the public moving forward.

The Village does not have internal staff resources to manage multiple media relations/communications inquiries. It is therefore my recommendation that the Village engage Strategia Consulting to assist Village staff in meeting the following communications goals:

- Educate the public about the transparent and public approval process;
- Inform stakeholder of opportunities for public comment; and
- Provide accurate and timely response to inquiries received.

Strategia's founder and Chief Strategist Lissa Druss has extensive experience managing high profile communication issues for Northern Illinois municipalities. The firm's discounted municipal rate is \$250 per hour, plus reasonable expenses. The initial contract would be for 20 hours and would be structured to allow the Mayor or his designee to approve contract extensions in increments 20 hours, so long as the cost per hour does not exceed \$250 dollars.

The contract would also allow the Mayor, or his designee, to authorize Strategia to assist with communications for other projects, such as Starbucks relocation and the downtown plan, etc.

Recommendation

I recommend that the Village Board authorize Mayor Pruyn (or his designee) to enter into a consulting agreement with Strategia Consulting LLC for communication services.