



AGENDA SUMMARY EUREKA CITY COUNCIL

TITLE: Request for Proposals for Comprehensive Marketing Services

DEPARTMENT: Development Services

PREPARED BY: R. Holmlund

PRESENTED FOR: Action Information only Discussion

RECOMMENDATION

Receive report.

FISCAL IMPACT

No Fiscal Impact Included in Budget Additional Appropriation

COUNCIL GOALS/STRATEGIC VISION

- Unique and abundant attractions/tourism choices for the community and visitors to enjoy
- Vibrant, flourishing, and safe community where people want to live and visit
- Financially stable, effectively run city with an engaged public
- Strong collaborative relationships with partner organizations and community
- Community that attracts and retains diverse, skilled workforce through business investment

DISCUSSION

For many years, the City of Eureka has partnered with Humboldt County and other local jurisdictions to jointly fund the Eureka Humboldt Visitors Bureau (EHVB), which until recently was known as the Humboldt County Convention and Visitor Bureau (HCCVB). The City provides an annual allocation of \$370,000 to the organization, which is 43% of the EHVB budget. The next largest contributor is Humboldt County, with approximately \$350,000 contributions annually. Combined, Eureka's contribution and the County's contribution come to approximately 84% of the organization's budget. Of the other six incorporated cities in Humboldt County, only Ferndale remains as a contributor to the EHVB, contributing only \$3,000 per year. Other income to the organization is generated through membership dues, advertising, and from the Humboldt Lodging Alliance. The EHVB reports to a board of directors that consists primarily of owners of Humboldt County based businesses. The City's contract with the EHVB expires in June of 2019 and either needs to be renewed, renegotiated, or not renewed at that time.

Staff intends to release the attached Request for Proposals (RFP) on 1/16/19 with the objective of reallocating Eureka's \$370,000 investment into an entirely new strategic approach to marketing. The City will actively encourage the EHVB to submit a proposal, but will require that future marketing services take a different direction than what Eureka has asked for in the past. It is likely that several marketing firms will submit proposals. The City Council could select a different marketing firm other than the EHVB to provide the requested services. In this scenario, the City would not renew its contract with the EHVB. However, if the EHVB elects to submit a proposal, and if Council ultimately selects the EHVB as the winning proposal, then the City's currently contract with the EHVB would be renewed but with very different contract requirements than those that are in the current contract.

Under its current form, the EHVB promotes tourism associated with the general Humboldt County area, predominantly focusing on Redwood forests and parks north and south of Eureka. The Title of the organization's website (www.visitredwoods.com) and the organization's marketing materials are all focused primarily on redwoods as this has been the board-directed strategy since the organization's founding. The target audience of the EHVB is "destination tourists" that live outside of the North Coast region and the EHVB's objective is to attract tourists to visit Humboldt County. The organization is driven by the unofficial slogan "Heads in Beds." While this "redwoods-focused" and "hotels-focused" approach has served the City to some degree, and while generating traffic to Eureka hotels is an excellent goal, staff suggests that the City shift its strategy and expend its resources to promote Eureka more predominately and more strategically than has been done in the past.

To the right is an image of a brochure rack in a hotel in Mount Shasta. As this image demonstrates, the City of Redding has a full brochure about the City of Redding and a full brochure about trails in and around Redding. Eureka, on the other hand, only has a two-page spread in the 24-page "Redwood Coast" brochure. Promotion of Redwoods is important and staff supports the continued promotion of the Redwood Coast. However, it is time for Eureka to believe in itself as a place special enough to promote as an individual city, just as Redding has done. In addition, Eureka needs to evolve beyond the target audience of remotely-located destination tourists. The brochure rack is merely an example. It may be that this type of marketing is not cost effective; a qualified marketing professional can best answer this question. But, there is no question that it is time for Eureka to invest more specifically, directly, and tactically into the marketing and branding of Eureka.



Staff proposes that Eureka deliberately and strategically shift its funding and destination marketing efforts towards a marketing strategy that concentrates specifically on Eureka while simultaneously expanding the target audience to include local/regional residents and the local business community. This is based on a well-recognized need to help many local and regional residents revitalize their image of Eureka. It is difficult to sell Eureka

as a destination if residents of Eureka and neighboring communities hold negative impressions of the City. Accordingly, staff proposes that the City shift its strategy and seek assistance from marketing professionals to create and promote a positive image of Eureka, among both locals and visitors. A primary mission of the City's new strategy is to promote the City of Eureka not only as a desirable destination to visit, but also as an amazing place to live, work, and run a business. Therefore, as a part of the process of focusing our destination marketing efforts more specifically on Eureka, the City's new approach will also include the task of thoroughly re-inventing the "Eureka brand" and how the City represents its identity and image (internally and externally). Eureka, unlike many places, actually has a story. A true, authentic story. This is perhaps our greatest attribute. Mining this story and discovering the layers in the past, then penning the future tales will be the essence of the City's new approach.

Unless Council objects to this new approach, staff will release an RFP on 1/16/19 and the City will be accepting proposals for marketing services per the schedule provided in the attached RFP. Proposals may be submitted by non-profits, private businesses, and other entities.

ATTACHMENTS: Request for Proposals: City of Eureka Marketing Services (2019)

REVIEWED AND APPROVED BY:

- City Attorney
- City Clerk/Information Technology
- Community Services
- Development Services
- Finance
- Fire
- Human Resources
- Police
- Public Works