



CITY OF RAPID CITY

RAPID CITY, SOUTH DAKOTA 57701-2724

Office of the Mayor

300 Sixth Street

605-394-4110

E-mail: mayorsoffice@rcgov.org

May 12, 2016

Rapid City Common Council
300 Sixth Street
Rapid City, SD 57701

Re: Request for authorization to contract with Waters & Company for Public Works and Community Planning Director recruiting

Dear Council Member:

The department directors for Community Planning and Public Works are different than other City department directors. Rapid City has tremendous challenges when it comes to these two functions.

We have 420 miles of streets and under most of them, sewer and water service as well as storm sewer systems. Rapid City is unusually large in surface area for a town of 70,000 people. 55 square miles which is approximately the same area as Minneapolis. Much of our infrastructure is aging and is on a replacement schedule and this provides operational and prioritization challenges for Public Works.

Public Works is the largest City department with over 230 full-time employees, several of which are professionals such as engineers. The education, training and experience required to provide leadership and vision not only for the employees but also for the community at large is significant. The last director search approximately five years ago, employed all of the modern technology the City could get its hands on. Extensive use of the internet, publications in national journals, and other industry advertising methods were used. In the end, one candidate met both the minimum qualifications and desirable experience level. The selection group and mayor at that time chose to select this candidate rather than start another months-long process. The result was a director who was employed for five years and was unable to forge a relationship with the community, the elected officials and was unable to make significant improvements within the department. We are literally back to square one.

The Community Planning Director is another position that is essential to the successful development of our city. Many of this department's functions, such as zoning regulations can be quite controversial so the director must not only be a visionary with specific professional education and training, but also someone who can educate the community and build consensus among council members and citizens. The last selection process, approximately five years ago, resulted in one qualified candidate with the desirable experience and education. This candidate, from the Denver Colorado area, moved here, leaving his family behind and there was never really a full commitment to Rapid City. Furthermore, the controversial nature of his job, and inability to forge a positive philosophical and working relationship with the council and mayor, left him largely dissatisfied. A couple of months ago he resigned and moved back to Longmont Colorado where he is now the community planning director.

To wonder why we would spend money on a recruiting firm when we can advertise our self, is to wonder why a business uses a professional marketing company. Results, not the effort, matter. The recruiting company is, in fact a professional marketing company. They will spend as much time

marketing our city and the benefits of living and building a future here as they will looking for qualified candidates. The recruiting firm will travel to Rapid City to interview city staff, understand the needs of the position being sought, and develop a profile of Rapid City that will draw candidates to our community rather than just to a job opening. The chances of longer-term employment under this scenario is increased, as are the chances of more highly qualified candidates.

The national search does not necessarily correlate to a higher starting wage, although we may be in a position to weigh the cost/benefit of available candidates. I believe there are potential local candidates, but there is a significant benefit with these two particular positions to having local candidates compete in a national search. We only know what we know, and as for me it's been hard comparing our managerial talent with the national standard, especially in these two departments.

The recruiting firm guarantees the selection. They will screen candidates initially and provide the City with the top several qualified candidates. When a selection is made by us, the selection is guaranteed for two years against resignation or termination. What that means, is that the firm will complete all of the recruitment duties again free of charge. This process costs \$22,000 per position. The Public Works director left in December and the Community Planning director left in March. Since they've been gone, there are budgeted wages which have not been spent on those positions that will be used to pay for the service. In other words, no additional or non-budgeted funding will be required. The \$22,000 is a sound investment into a position that pays in excess of \$100,000 annually.

The Human Resources Dept. and I contacted known recruiting companies, reviewed their work examples and have selected Waters & Company as the most qualified company. I urge your support in approving this request and as always, I am open to your comments, concerns and feedback. The City Council will be represented on the selection committee.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "Steve Allender", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Steve Allender, Mayor
Rapid City, South Dakota

Cc: Rapid City Common Council