

CURRITUCK COUNTY ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT BOARD

SPECIAL MEETING

June 30, 2008, 7:00 pm

Historic Currituck Courthouse

Attendance: Kevin Burwell, Brian Innes, HD Newbern, Fannie Newbern, David Palmer, Matt Converse, Tameron Kugler

Absent: Bob Collins, Barry Nelms,

Item I. Call to Order

Chairman Burwell called the meeting to order at 7:05 pm.

Item II. Introductions and Welcome

Chairman Burwell welcomed the three marketing groups to the county and thanked them for their time. Director introduced each team to present. Participants are listed below.

Item II. Marketing RFP respondent presentations

919 Marketing: (David Chapman, CEO; Jenny Mizelle, Consultant)

919 Marketing is a consulting and firm based in Holly Springs, North Carolina, meaning that the group works with both strategic marketing initiatives and communications deployment. The group has served several national clients including Hanes and Rosetta Stone as the agency of record.

The presentation started off with David Chapman, CEO, taking some questions from the board: Where would this project be in the firms' order of importance? What does our community look like from the outside? Does this firm grasp the vision aspect of our marketing rfp?

In response, Mr. Chapman said that 919 Marketing analyzed Currituck County data, assets and opportunities, and felt the area could be seen as an underdog – a high upside community that needs a strong plan and message to position itself for growth. The project would be covered by principals (he and Jenny Mizelle) and senior design staff.

919 has been successful with clients because of their research and strategy using their trademarked LINK planning system, which systematically identifies areas of importance according to audits, interviews, surveys and analysis. The result is generally a blueprint to marketing success, Mr. Chapman said.

The group would employ its LINK planning system to assess Currituck and create a comprehensive marketing plan that suggests media, tools, milestones and resources matched with a brand position that identifies target markets and drives department communications.

Jenny Mizelle, Economic Development Director of the Town of Holly Springs and consultant with 919, shared her city's experience working with David in branding their town as a center for biotechnology, as they were adjacent to the RTP area. Ms. Mizelle would be a lead associate on our project.

The total cost for the proposal ranged from \$38,500 - \$56,000, depending on travel and final scope of work discussions.

The board thanked Mr. Chapman and Ms. Mizelle for their time and presentation, and wished them safe travels back to Raleigh that evening.

Howell Creative Group: (Kathy Howell, CEO; Brittany Mangold, Account Executive; Tiffany Francis, Account & Media Coordinator)

Howell Creative Group is an advertising, design and public relations firm based in Williamsburg, Virginia. Led by Kathy Howell, the group looks to incorporate design, vision and strategy to best position clients. Howell has worked previously with the Currituck County department of Travel and Tourism to develop a media relations kit.

Howell's presentation highlighted the group's familiarity with Currituck County and their research of the UNC vision study for economic development. Based on these experiences, Howell felt the marketing approach should pull from community strengths in quality of life, natural resources and location.

The group has experience in economic development in working with several peninsula-area governments on developing branding and media. Howell has also developed strategic marketing plans for Pliant Corporation, Avid Medical and Basofil Fibers.

Howell closed with recommending the marketing strategy leverage regional partnerships, build better brand awareness through communications and media, and to bolster both niche markets (eco-tourism) and industry relations. The total cost for the proposal was \$22,990.

Mr. Converse asked if the group would work with the board on developing a vision and relating this marketing project to that vision. Mrs. Howell responded that the group would attend any retreat or visioning exercise the board felt was important to the project.

The board thanked Mrs. Howell, Ms. Mangold and Ms. Francis for their time and presentation.

Lawrence-Park: (Carol Norris, Partner; John Prince, Partner; Margie Johnson, Consultant)

Lawrence-Park is an advertising, marketing and public relations firm based in Virginia Beach, Virginia. Led by partner's Carol Norris and John Prince, the group consists of senior consultants with specialized knowledge and experience in economic development marketing.

The presentation, led by Ms. Norris, first highlighted the specific economic development experience the team leveraged in re-branding the City of Norfolk as a location for investment. The group then alternated speakers, between John Prince (the principal for our contract) and Margie Johnson, an Outer Banks native and rural development specialist.

Mr. Prince talked about the firm's capabilities to link creative concepts with branding and press opportunities. The firm's outlook is similar in public relations and communications –interaction with the community, stakeholders and local government are vital to any government marketing program's success.

Mrs. Johnson discussed her own experience in rural Midwestern towns dealing with change and the need for economic diversity. Mrs. Johnson has also worked with several communities in developing community vision and facilitating public meetings.

The recommended strategy for Currituck County would include inventories of assets, inventory, feelings, beliefs and opinions of economic development and combine those results with data and market research on industry clusters and leads. The combined information would lead to a strategic marketing plan and recommendations on investments for the department in electronic, print and trade-show/mission/recruiting efforts.

The board thanked Mrs. Norris, Mr. Prince and Mrs. Johnson for their time and presentation.

Presentation Discussion

The board wished to discuss each of the presentations further while in session and make a decision on whom to support. Chairman Burwell requested comments and discussion on each of the presenters in preparation for a motion on which firm to choose.

919 Marketing:

Overall, the board agreed that the strategy was well thought-out and the firm could provide a good strategic plan. The group was impressed with the client list and results of Mr. Chapman's previous work. The Board was cautious about the research and LINK aspects of the plan, as much existing research has been done on Currituck's existing economy.

The director noted that Ms. Mizelle is an economic developer for the Town of Holly Springs and a professional in the field. Mrs. Kugler wondered if Ms. Mizelle's job and the overall distance of the firm (Raleigh) could be a factor in how the county and the firm work together. Ms. Newbern agreed that they may not know enough about the county. Mr. Converse agreed that travel costs and convenience could be troublesome. Mr. Burwell liked the firm's overall pitch and strategy; however the group worked mostly with private companies and very few government offices. The director noted that an outside perspective could be helpful in recruiting businesses.

Howell Creative Group

Overall, the board was eager to hear from Howell as they presented the lowest cost proposal and had worked previously for the county. The group was impressive in their knowledge about the county and the UNC study document, and that work was evident in the presentation. The director pointed out that Howell best underlined the importance of creating a brand that identified Currituck as a great place to live, vacation and work, not just a beach and a highway.

Chairman Burwell and Mrs. Kugler were very impressed by the visuals and the physical presentation by Howell; other members noticed the distinctive style throughout the sample work. Mr. Painter liked both the value and experience that the group offered.

Chairman Burwell, though, felt that while Howell was clearly the best at creative design and turning a plan into a series of mixed media, he felt other firms tackled the strategic issues better. Mr. Converse agreed, and since the bulk of our work was vision-strategy related, the group needed a stronger background in this side of the RFP.

Lawrence Park:

Overall, the board was very impressed by the combination of local experience and past clients' served in the presentation by Lawrence-Park. Mr. Converse and Mr. Innes felt that Lawrence-Park gave the best presentation and they were very comfortable with that firm. Ms. Newbern and Mrs. Kugler agreed, especially in regard to team member Margie Johnson, who was born in Nags Head and has facilitated economic development strategy efforts in rural areas before.

The director was equally impressed with the experience the group had in Norfolk and the comfort level overall in dealing with the firm leading up to the presentation. Ms. Johnson personally delivered the RFP and the firm kept in touch often in preparation for this evening and the RFP.

Considering the need for public support in the overall process, Mr. Converse and Mr. Painter felt the group was best able to represent the board and departments goals for this project.

Chairman Burwell completed the discussion and entertained a motion on selecting a group for marketing services. Mr. Converse moved to select Lawrence-Park as the agency for this RFP. Mrs. Kugler seconded the motion. Motion passed unanimously.

Director stated that he would get in contact with each firm after the Fourth of July holiday and inform them of our decision. The director will then prepare the proper budget documents and coordinate with the agency and staff on a press release, initial meetings, contract and modifications to scope of work, if any.

Item XI. Adjourn

Mr. Converse moved to adjourn. Ms. Newbern seconded the motion. Motion carried.