



COMMUNITY & ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT OFFICE

149 CHURCH STREET • ROOM 32 • CITY HALL • BURLINGTON, VT 05401
(802) 865-7144 • (802) 865-7024 (FAX)
www.burlingtonvt.gov/cedo

MEMO

TO: Councilors Joan Shannon, Ali Dieng, and Karen Paul

FROM: Luke McGowan, CEDO
Grace Ciffo, CEDO

DATE: Friday, January 17, 2020

RE: Memorial Auditorium RFP Update

This memo is to provide an update on the RFP for an operator for Memorial Auditorium that CEDO issued on October 7. The RFP was open for a period of eight weeks, with a mandatory site visit on October 17. Of the three parties that attended, one submitted a bid. The following is a preliminary analysis of the bid and the expected next steps in the process.

City Priorities

As laid out in the RFP, the City has been guided by the public process that took place in 2018 with the goal of Memorial remaining a publicly-owned, public assembly space. Particularly, the City is interested in hosting civic events such as Highlight; political caucuses; banquets for civic organizations; commercial events beyond performing arts to serve a wider audience; and a winter home for the Burlington Farmers Market.

Bid Summary

CEDO received one qualified bid from Higher Ground of South Burlington. Higher Ground has a 20+ year history of programming and operating venues in the Burlington area, as well as one comparable facility in Portland, ME. They are interested in leasing the entire building with a proposed term of 10 years plus four extension terms of five years each. Higher Ground's proposal is to operate Memorial "as a multi-purpose events space that focuses on community gatherings that range from music to culinary events to civic debates and town meetings" and for the building to be active 365 days a year.

City staff conducted an interview with the respondent on January 6 to further understand their priorities and how their proposal might meet the interests expressed by the City and the public process.

Next Steps

The CEDO team has determined that this a viable proposal and is deserving of further consideration. City staff have scored the proposal and graded the interview and are analyzing the

results. CEDO and the Mayor's office will continue to remain in contact with the respondent as we move forward with this phase of the process. The City team plans to brief and seek reactions from the full council in executive session in February.