

REPORT

REPORT TO:

Chair and Members of the Community and Corporate Affairs Committee

REPORT FROM:

Clare Hanman, Library Manager of Content and Technologies and Website Renewal Project Manager

DATE:

August 20, 2019

REPORT NO.:

CORPSERV-2019-0037

RE:

Award of the Website Renewal Project Request for Proposal P-062-19

RECOMMENDATION:

THAT Report No. CORPSERV-2019-0037 dated August 20, 2019 regarding Award of the Website Replacement Project Request for Proposal #P-062-19 be received;

AND FURTHER THAT Council approve the award of contract for the website renewal to eSolutions Group, Ltd., 455 Phillip Street, Waterloo ON N2L 3X2 to an upset limit of \$143,150 (excluding HST) for both the Town of Halton Hills Website and the Halton Hills Tourism Website, including year-one hosting and maintenance costs;

AND FURTHER THAT the Manager of Purchasing be authorized to issue a purchase order to eSolutions Group, Ltd., 455 Phillip Street, Waterloo ON N2L 3X2 in the amount of \$143,150 (excluding HST);

AND FURTHER THAT Council approve the award of the website hosting, maintenance and support contract for both websites to eSolutions Group, Ltd., 455 Phillip Street, Waterloo ON N2L 3X2 in the amount of \$13,250 (excluding HST) per year, beginning in year two (2), for a three (3) year term with the option to renew annually thereafter, subject to satisfactory performance and price negotiations;

AND FURTHER THAT the Manager of Purchasing be authorized to issue a purchase order to CSDC, 255 Longside Drive Unit 102, Mississauga ON L5W 0G7 for the AMANDA web services module in the amount of \$42,000, including year-one support and maintenance (excluding HST);

AND FURTHER THAT Council approves the funding of this project in the amount of \$188,409 from the capital projects identified in Table A;

AND FURTHER THAT the request for annual operating costs of \$20,250 commencing in 2021 be referred to Budget Committee for consideration;

AND FURTHER THAT the Mayor and Clerk be required to authorize all necessary and ancillary documents with eSolutions Group, Ltd.;

AND FURTHER THAT the Mayor and Clerk be required to authorize all necessary and ancillary documents with CSDC.

BACKGROUND:

The recommendations in the 2018 Corporate Technology Strategic Plan identified the need to expand online services, leverage more cloud-based solutions, and integrate systems, to improve service availability, ease of use and process efficiencies.

Based on these recommendations, staff explored the possibility of renewing the Town of Halton Hills website (haltonhills.ca) and the Tourism Halton Hills website (visithaltonhills.ca).

In addition, staff identified the importance of providing municipal services directly to the public through the website, in addition to the current in-person and telephone service. Online services are the expected normal for conducting business today, and will be of benefit to residents, businesses, and visitors to Halton Hills.

The key outcomes for this project are:

- **Website stability:** Websites are a key communication method and need to be available during power outages and other emergencies. This can be achieved through a hosted website solution.
- **Service method options:** Adding online services as an option for residents to receive municipal services (in addition to more traditional methods, such as phone calls and service-counter visits.)
- **Website content creation and management:** A content management system that allows non-technical staff to update and modify web content and receive approval, all through an easy to use and intuitive interface.
- **Effective use of existing website structure and content:** A cost effective solution that re-uses existing content and design, only changing what would best improve service delivery.
- **Efficiencies by renewing both haltonhills.ca and visithaltonhills.ca at the same time and with the same vendor:** Using the same vendor, content management system, and development/implementation process for both websites reduces the cost.

- **Website integration:** The ability for e-service forms, payments, etc. to interface directly with existing business management systems improves efficiency, effectiveness and responsiveness.

Based on these recommendations and desired outcomes staff issued a Request for Proposal to deliver a hosted solution for the Town of Halton Hills website, add e-services to improve the use and efficiency of the website, facilitate content management, and update the Town's tourism website, visithaltonhills.ca.

COMMENTS:

A Request for Proposal (RFP) was issued on June 28, 2019. The bid was posted on the Town's bids and tenders portal <https://haltonhills.bidsandtenders.ca>. Twenty (20) firms downloaded the document. The RFP closed on July 23, 2019 and five (5) submissions were received from the following five (5) vendors:

Vendor	Location
DevLift Media	London, Ontario
eSolutions Group	Waterloo, Ontario
Perceptible Group	Burlington, Ontario
Random Access	Toronto, Ontario
The Little Dev Shop	Vancouver, British Columbia

Bids were evaluated by a staff team that included: the Manager of Information Services, Manager of Corporate Communications, Manager of Content and Technologies (Library), Deputy Clerk-Administration and Special Projects, Business Solutions Supervisor, Website Applications Analyst, Digital Communications Specialist, and a consultant from Perry Group Ltd. The evaluation was facilitated by the Manager of Purchasing, based on the following criteria:

- Experience, project team credentials, and references
- Approach, methodology, project plan and value add
- Functional and technical requirements
- Cost effectiveness

Based on submissions and the above criteria, the evaluation team determined that eSolutions Group was the highest ranked respondent. eSolutions was invited to demonstrate their products to the evaluation team.

Based upon this review, staff recommends that eSolutions Group be awarded the bid to renew two existing websites: haltonhills.ca and visithaltonhills.ca.

eSolutions Group is a leading website, marketing and technology company with over 20 years' experience. They have worked with over 350 municipalities throughout North America.

eSolutions Group was also the developer and designer of the Halton Hills Public Library's website, launched in December 2018. Since its launch, the Halton Hills Public Library website has received two awards: a Platinum Hermes Creative Award and an APEX 2019 Award for Publication Excellence. The re-design of the Halton Hills Public Library website has resulted in substantial increases in website use, program registrations and study room bookings. Overall, visits to the Library's website have increased by 69%.

Both haltonhills.ca and visithaltonhill.ca will be based on the same content management system and will be hosted offsite at eSolution's facility in Waterloo, Ontario.

The move to a renewed, industry-standard website in a hosted environment provides multiple benefits for both websites:

- Cloud-based software solution which will allow website stability, ensuring 99.99% uptime and availability.
- 24/7 technical support.
- The assurance that the websites will be available to the public in times of power outages, etc.
- An easy-to-use Content Management System that allows for multiple levels of staff to input website content, along with an efficient editing and approval process to ensure that content meets the Town's communication standards.
- New online services for the residents, businesses and visitors to Halton Hills.
- Reviewed website content that meets or exceeds current AODA communication guidelines.
- Continued PCI compliance for online payments, including the ability to offer online service payments not previously possible.
- Reviewed website content that will be written at a basic level, accessible to English-as-a-second-language learners.
- Responsive designs that adjust to all screen types and sizes, including desktop computers, tablets and smartphones.
- New flexible, easy-to-read event calendars with multiple categories.
- A robust search engine for website content.
- Comprehensive reporting on website use, which can be used to improve the effectiveness and efficiency of online municipal services.

In addition, the renewed haltonhills.ca website will incorporate direct integration of online services with existing corporate business applications such as:

- Licenses
- Permits
- Service Request
- Enforcement Complaints
- Certificates and statements

The majority of the new online services will involve integration of the haltonhills.ca website with the corporate business management application, AMANDA.

AMANDA is the Town's Enterprise Solution that handles applications related to Permitting, Licensing, Development Engineering and Planning. It is also used by Enforcement for complaints, Public Works for requests for service and Clerks for dog licensing and portable sign applications. It stores the information for these applications, runs processes on the information, records financial transactions related to these applications, and assists in initiating actions such as notices and renewals.

The new haltonhills.ca website requires the purchase of the AMANDA web services module. This module facilitates communication between the haltonhills.ca website and the AMANDA database. It allows for data entered by the public into forms on the website to be written directly into the AMANDA database. In addition, data such as fees calculated in AMANDA can be passed from the AMANDA database to the website. The web services module ensures that the database is updated correctly as if the user were connected directly to the AMANDA Enterprise Solution. It also gives the ongoing benefit of being able to correctly interface with the AMANDA database as the database changes with continued AMANDA software updates.

Integrating haltonhills.ca with AMANDA using the AMANDA web services module has many benefits such as:

- Seamless transfer of information and payment transactions from the public into other systems, eliminating the need for re-keying information or repeating requests for information to the public.
- 24/7 availability of services that previously could only be achieved by making a service counter visit or phone call during Town Hall business hours.
- The amalgamation of multi-step services into a single online step.
- Data such as fee schedules entered into AMANDA automatically update in the online service on the website.
- Some processes can be entirely automated, freeing up time for staff to focus on more complicated processes and reducing wait times for the public.

The visithaltonhills.ca website will also be renewed as part of this project. The renewed visithaltonhills.ca will have all the benefits of a hosted website as listed above along with:

- A image-rich design that reflects the natural beauty of the Halton Hills Area
- A simple to user interface that displays attractively on all sizes of screens including smartphones
- A business/tourism directory for local accommodations, dining, shopping, etc. with a multi-category searching
- A flexible structure that can be easily modified to support future tourism promotion projects and services

The new Town of Halton Hills website will be in place before the end of the second quarter of 2020, with the tourism website expected to follow shortly after.

RELATIONSHIP TO STRATEGIC PLAN:

C. Foster a Prosperous Economy

C.10 To promote opportunities for tourism that are linked to the Town's natural and cultural heritage and countryside character.

C10.(a) Work with the Chamber of Commerce, BIAs and the Region to promote tourism that leverages agri-tourism, eco-tourism, heritage and Countryside opportunities.

I. Provide Responsive, Effective Municipal Government

I.3 To foster excellence in the provision of customer service.

I.3.(b) Optimize the use of the Town's website to offer as many on-line services and transactions, thereby enhancing time and flexibility for customer service

I.5 To expand opportunities for communication with our community.

I.5.(b) Continue to optimize the use of the Town's website as a primary tool for warehousing comprehensive information related to all aspects of Town services and activities.

This report also supports the strategic priorities of Municipal Service Delivery and Communications, as identified in the Top 8 Strategic Priorities.

FINANCIAL IMPACT:

The total purchase price for the two websites is \$185,150 exclusive of HST and is itemized as follows:

Description	Amount
Town of Halton Hills Website	\$95,200
Tourism Website	\$34,700
Hosting, maintenance and support for both websites (year 1)	\$13,250
TOTAL website cost (eSolutions) (exclusive of HST)	\$143,150

In addition, the AMANDA web service module must be purchased:

Description	Amount
AMANDA web service module	\$35,000
Maintenance and support for AMANDA web services (year 1)	\$7,000
TOTAL AMANDA costs (CSDC) (exclusive of HST)	\$42,000

Total cost of the project:

Description	Amount
Websites (eSolutions)	\$143,150
AMANDA web services	\$42,000
TOTAL (exclusive of HST)	\$185,150
TOTAL (inclusive of non-refundable HST)	\$188,409

Through integration with existing systems for e-services delivery, staff has been able to negotiate a reduced price for the website implementation. Expanded e-services will benefit residents, businesses, visitors and staff. Additional upgrades are required to the Town's CSDC AMANDA platform in order to efficiently implement these e-services.

Staff recommends that the following capital project amounts in Table A that were approved as part of the 2019 budget be used to offset the cost of the website project.

Table A

Description	Amount
Customer Service Strategy	\$100,000
Town of Halton Hills Website	\$35,000
Tourism Website	\$34,700
Operationalize Project Management Practices	\$18,709
TOTAL	\$188,409

The website project was funded in part from reallocated funds from the Customer Service Strategy, recognizing that the initiative delivers on meeting residents' expectations for a modern and expanded portfolio of online services. A more fulsome Customer Service Strategy is still planned and will be part of the 2020 budget deliberations. In addition, funds from the Project Management Practices Project were re-directed to the website project, as this work was accomplished internally.

Municipal Service Modernization Grant funding (\$24,000) is being used to cover the cost of Perry Group Consulting, who assisted with the vendor selection process and will continue to provide support during the implementation of the website.

There will also be an operating budget impact resulting from this project.

The first year of hosting fees and software maintenance fees are included in the project cost above. In subsequent years, an increase of \$13,250 for website hosting/maintenance/support and \$7,000 for the AMANDA web services module maintenance are required to be added to the annual base budget commencing in 2021, for a total amount of \$20,250 annually. Staff will be including this request to increase the operating budget for 2021 to Budget Committee.

CONSULTATION:

The Commissioner of Corporate Services, Manager of Information Services and Manager of Corporate Communications were consulted in the development of this report.

The Manager of Purchasing facilitated the development of the RFP, consultant evaluation and selection process, and is in agreement with the recommendations of this report.

A consultant from Perry Group, Ltd., the original authors of the Corporate Technology Strategic Plan assisted in the development of the Request for Proposals and the evaluation of the responses.

Staff representatives were consulted as to their department workflows and the potential impacts of implementing e-services.

PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT:

Public consultation was not required for this report.

SUSTAINABILITY IMPLICATIONS:

The Town is committed to implementing our Community Sustainability Strategy, Imagine Halton Hills. Doing so will lead to a higher quality of life.

The recommendation outlined in this report advances the Strategy's implementation.

This report supports the Economic Prosperity and Social Well-being pillar(s) of Sustainability and in summary the alignment of this report with the Community Sustainability Strategy is Excellent.

COMMUNICATIONS:

A staff committee will be formed to support the development of the website and the suggested e-services. All current processes will be reviewed and best practices will be incorporated. Upon implementation of the new sites, staff responsible for website content will be trained on the new Content Management System and ongoing support will be provided by the vendor.

CONCLUSION:

A renewed Town of Halton Hills website (haltonhills.ca) and a renewed Halton Hills Tourism website (visithaltonhills.ca) will provide online municipal services directly to residents, businesses and visitors. Staff recommend the award of the Website Replacement Project Request for Proposal #P-062-19 to eSolutions Group Ltd. Technologies in the amount of \$143,150 (excluding HST) for the renewal of the Town of Halton Hills website and the Halton Hills Tourism website, including first year hosting and maintenance costs, and \$13,250 per year for website hosting, support and maintenance for an additional two (2) years with option to renew annually. Staff also recommends the purchase of the CSDC AMANDA website module for \$42,000 (excluding HST) including first-year maintenance and support, and \$7,000 per year maintenance after that. Staff recommends that the Mayor and Clerk be authorized to execute the necessary contract and ancillary documents with eSolutions Group Ltd. and CSDC.

Reviewed and Approved by,



Simone Gourlay, Manager of Purchasing



Murray Colquhoun, Manager of Information Services



Jane Diamanti, Commissioner of Corporate Services



Brent Marshall, Chief Administrative Officer