

**Town of Watertown
School Building Committee
Three Elementary School Projects
Wednesday, January 5, 2022
via ZOOM 6:00p.m. – 7:00p.m.**

MINUTES

Committee Members Present: Mark Sideris (chair), John Portz (vice-chair), Deanne Galdston, Heidi Perkins, Lindsay Mosca, James Kane, Leo Patterson, Paul Anastasi, Tom Tracy, and Vincent Piccirilli

Committee Members Absent: Kelly Kurlbaum and Steve Magoon

Others Present: Daren Sawyer (Ai3 Architects); Vivian Varbedian, Tom Finnegan and Alana Forbes (OPM, Hill International); Christy Murphy (Compass Project Management)

1. **Call to Order:** Chairman Mark Sideris called the meeting to order at 6:07 p.m. John Portz took a roll call of Committee Members present.

2. **Elementary Schools Project Updates & Approvals:**

Discussion & Action on Lowell Elementary School General Contractor Bid

Vivian Varbedian presented and reported on the General Contractor bid results w/Alternate for Lowell Elementary school project.

Alternate 1 includes the furnishing and installation of complete Photovoltaic (PV) System with estimated production of 196.2 kWh. It is furnished under section 26 00 00 (Electrical Subcontractor) includes labor, materials, equipment, transportation, appurtenances, and related services. Also includes, arrays, mounting hardware, terminal boxes, inverters, disconnects, circuit breakers and panel boards/switchgear. The City of Watertown has executed an extension to all the General Contractors to appropriate the funds necessary to reach an agreement and to make a recommendation for award.

Chairman Sideris stated that the letter will be established by the City Attorney and the City Purchasing Agent.

The (4) bids submitted are shown as follows:

General Contractor	Base Bid	Alternate 1: PV for Building	Total Bid w/Alternates
CTA Construction Managers, LLC	\$37,350,000.00	\$624,750.00	\$37,974,750.00
Brait Builders Corporation	\$37,854,000.00	\$595,000.00	\$38,449,000.00
Agostini Construction	\$38,858,700.00	\$606,900.00	\$39,465,600.00
J&J Contractors, Inc	\$39,107,000.00	\$740,000.00	\$39,847,000.00

3. Elementary School Questions / Comments

Question 1 – John Portz asked what the process at this point or the next step. Also, is more discussion about the particular bidder or does it go to the low bidder.

Response – Chairman Sideris explained that when the school's budget was done, all the money wasn't borrowed at the same time. To enter a contract, there needs to be money to do it. There isn't money so information needs to be prepared from the city side to prepare for another loan order, so time is needed to get figures together. Due to some COVID issues, more time is required for the Project Management team to do the due diligence. Under state law, the bid needs to be awarded within (30) days thus the extension that is being asked for to all the bidders which is how is done under Massachusetts General Law. The bids were open on December 14th, the clock started on December 15th and more time is needed than the (30) days hence why the extension needed. A copy will be given to the School Building Committee as soon as it goes out tomorrow. Chairman Sideris also stated that the Project Manager will do their due diligence and make a recommendation to the SBC to award the bid under Massachusetts General Law. Typically, the low bidder, if there are the lowest responsible bidder would be the one that gets the job. We must make sure that all the provided documents are checked not only from them but everyone.

Question 2 – Elodia Thomas wanted to know as a citizen who sees these projects climbing in dollars, is there any experience with the (3) other bidders. As far as what she can ascertain from what has been going on, Brait Builders has done a really great job for the town. She realizes that she doesn't know the process about lowest bidders but is there any history about if these people worked in our town before, how they did, if they did a good, or average job. She believes it is important because everything will change as we deal with supply chain and everything else. Track record is important and being a taxpayer with no kids, but she is Dutch that pays attention to the numbers and quality of the work.

Response – Chairman Sideris stated that he is not an attorney and won't speak for the city attorney or act like he is an attorney. Massachusetts General Law does not allow you to pick and choose who is on the list, if they done a good job for you or worked for you. CTA Construction has done work for the town. They worked on the Public Works facility. We cannot use the issue of if they done a good job or not. A Pre-Qualification Sub-Committee met and reviewed all the documents that were provided by people that were interested in bidding before they bid. They were scored separately and averaged out. These people all made the

Question 3 - Elodia Thomas asked if we are comparing apples to apples to every single bid because personally it is crazy you should be able to note that somebody did a good job. For a \$500,000 differential with #2 (General Contractor) and #1 (General Contractor) being practical, understood you can't break the law but was everything detailed the same way you needed it in the bids because it is too critical and so much money is plowed into the schools. People in the town are a little frustrated with what is going on because there are bad streets and no sidewalks etc.

Response - Vivian Varbedian stated that all (4) contractors bid the same documents. The same documents as well as any supporting information and specification were supplied to all (4) of the qualified contractors. All looked at the same drawings in making their submission as well as the file Sub-Bidders. The procurement laws must be followed. There is a (2) step process. The first step was getting the General Contractors pre-qualified to be allowed to bid the project. The list of General Contractors was all pre-qualified and invited to submit a bid. There were (4) very good General Contractors submit pricing. Since the town has history with Brait Builders completing Cunniff Elementary school and will be finishing Hosmer Elementary school. The other (3) bidders can't be discredited because they have multiple projects throughout the Massachusetts Commonwealth and have done various Elementary schools as well. Chairman Sideris specified that the OPM is going through the process of making sure all the documents are up to what is requested or what is in the specification. It is not just about the low bid. Other areas are also being reviewed.

Comment A - Nick Crimaldi, Watertown resident and taxpayer since 2014. It is his understanding that the Watertown School Building Committee must decide to award the General Construction contract for the Lowell Elementary project to the lowest responsible bidder. To Elodia's point, it is his understanding that they are failing evaluations on previous construction projects that CTA Construction Managers have worked on like Dedham Town Hall and the Revere Sargent James Elementary School. The School Building Committee represents our town and taxpayers in the decision seems simple; please do not risk Watertown taxpayers hard earned money on a construction company who has failed other towns and taxpayers in building their public projects.

4. End of Elementary School Project Business Meeting

Chairman Sideris ended the Elementary School Project Business meeting at 6:22pm.