

Memorandum

To: Mayor and Council
From: Marketing Interview Committee
Date: October 20, 2015
Re: Marketing Strategy: Explanation of Process and Recommendation

Purpose: The purpose of this item is to give Council an overview of the interview and selection process of a marketing business partner to help the town create a marketing strategy. The Interview Committee will present its recommendations at the meeting.

Background and Discussion: The Marketing Strategy Interview Committee consisted of four members: Mayor Bob Gordon, Mayor Pro Tem Bruce Leland, Jerry Touslee, and Tom Baker. As Council is aware, early on Bruce Leland became unavailable due to an injury and the process of interviewing marketing firms continued without his participation. As Council is also aware, Jerry Touslee, community member and volunteer, is a marketing professional and provided significant insight and guidance throughout this process.

In general terms, this process began over two years ago when then Councilor Gordon proposed the idea of the Town becoming the primary entity advertising New Castle to area visitors and regional residents. His thinking, in part, was due to the fact that the Chamber of Commerce was in transition and unable to fill this role. His idea at the time was known as an effort to "Expose New Castle" to the broader community of area visitors and residents. Mayor Gordon's point was that New Castle has an abundance of outdoor recreation opportunities and many good restaurants and businesses. "If people knew about these opportunities they would visit New Castle." As a follow-up to this idea, Council invited a local marketing professional, Ann Stuckey, to explain how the Town might go about "Exposing New Castle" to area residents and visitors.

Ms. Stuckey provided Council with high quality information and examples of what she had done for other clients. Ms. Stuckey's central point was that any marketing strategy must have a sophisticated website as the foundation element and first step of any marketing effort. Ann explained that visitors and residents need a website in order to find out the specifics of what New Castle has to offer in terms of outdoor recreation, lodging, dining, shopping, etc. and pointed out that collateral material - brochures or advertising - would list the website as a resource for interested parties to pursue further information.

Over the past two years, Council has made a significant investment in a high quality website, which was developed by Ms. Stuckey/AJ Design/Monument Graphics. Now that Council has the key element (website) in place, we are set to embark on our next step: creation of a marketing strategy.

Marketing Strategy Process: The Interview Committee took a three-step approach to the selection of a marketing partner.

1. Research a list of local/regional firms that may have the capacity to create a marketing strategy and invite them to interview. In keeping with Council's desire to use local firms, the Interview

Committee invited six firms, from the I-70 corridor in our region, our community, and our local valleys, to participate in a phone interview.

2. The Interview Committee conducted phone interviews of these six firms to understand their basic capabilities: firm skills, staff resources, availability, range of services, and who specifically from the firm will work on the project. At the end of those interviews the committee selected four firms to advance to the next step – in-person interviews.
3. The four firms invited to the in-person interviews gave a presentation to and addressed questions from the Interview Committee. Each session lasted approximately one-hour. All the firms gave impressive presentations. The Interview Committee ranked the firms on strategic process, quality of presentation and professionalism, availability and intangibles. Due to the length of time the Interview Committee listened to presentations, over four hours, the committee decided to convene at a future date to discuss the firms and agree on a recommendation to Council.

In our follow-up discussion, the Interview Committee established a number of findings that will be important parameters for the selected team.

- We need a focused marketing plan that identifies who is the target audience and a short list of strategies and tactics to reach that particular audience.
- We need a public relations strategy that utilizes local networks (perhaps word-of-mouth) to tell our story.
- The larger strategy is about creating “community awareness” and not creating a “destination or product” strategy.
- We want to drive people to the website, and bring new customers to our existing businesses.
- We do not want changes to our website.
- We want print materials to continue the high quality design theme of the website.
- We want to track, as much as possible, the return on investment of this marketing strategy through sales tax collections and website traffic.

The Interview Committee will address Council’s questions and explain our recommendation at the meeting.

Next Step and Request: Our next step is to authorize the Interview Committee to negotiate a scope and budget within the funds allotted in the 2015 budget. The Interview Committee also requests the Council authorize the Mayor to sign a contract with the selected firm(s), with the proviso that the cost is no more than that authorized in the 2015 budget, plus AGNC Grant funds.