Voting Session

Single Reading Ordinance Authorizing renewal of the contract with Userful Corporation for Computer Center, Senior Room, and Library computers, software and support.

Recommended Council Action

Approve the purchase and contract renewal.

Context with Key Issues

Under the Library, the City has operated a two-room public Computer Center with ten workstations in each room, an additional four workstations in the Senior Room and four in the Library. The Userful DiscoverStation turnkey system has thus been in operation since 2005. Throughout that time, it has undergone frequent upgrades. Staff have found it to be user-friendly, reliable, secure and adaptable to a range of public computer needs. It received Modern Library Awards in 2015, 2016 and 2017. With a minimum of maintenance, equipment replacement and intervention, the Library has been successful in operating the Center for 51 hours per week with a single staff presence at any one time. The cost in FY 18 is less than it was three years ago in FY15.

Library staff thus recommends renewal of the three-year contract with Userful Corporation, as the sole provider of a system that is unique in its cost-effectiveness, and its ability to meet our needs and those of our patrons. Attached is the City Manager's memorandum, detailing why this contract for hardware replacement, software and support, meets the criteria for Sole Source Procurement, as detailed below.

Council Priority

A Livable Community for All; Fiscally Sustainable Government

Environmental Impact of Action

Allowing one host PC or server to serve multiple workstations drastically reduces the amount of hardware necessary for each station and lowers infrastructure costs significantly. It also lowers energy costs by 60% - enough to significantly help to cover the cost of hardware within three years.

Fiscal Impact of Action

Cost of the proposed purchase will be $28,024. Funds are included in the current CIP-ERR and in other funding sources designated for the Library.

Racial Equity Impact of Action

Provides free public computing to anyone with a Takoma Park Library card, in more than 30 languages simultaneously, including Amharic, and offers support to those with visual disabilities.

Attachments and Links

    Draft Ordinance, Sole Source Procurement Memo, Letter from Userful

Approved by: Suzanne R. Ludlow, City Manager
Prepared by: Ellen Arnold Robbins, Library Director   Posted: 2018-04-17

CITY OF TAKOMA PARK, MARYLAND
ORDINANCE NO. 2018-

AUTHORIZING THE CITY MANAGER TO EXECUTE A CONTRACT
FOR COMPUTERS, SOFTWARE, AND SUPPORT
FOR THE COMPUTER LEARNING CENTER AND LIBRARY

WHEREAS,   the Fiscal Year 2018 budget includes funding for computers, software, and support for the Computer Learning Center and Library; and

WHEREAS,   since 2005, the City has operated a two-room public Computer Learning Center, with ten workstations installed in each room; and,

WHEREAS,   an additional four workstations are located in the Senior Room of the Computer Learning Center; and,

WHEREAS,   an additional four workstations are located in the Library; and,

WHEREAS,   in 2005, Userful Corporation was deemed a sole source provider of multi-station Linux turnkey computer operations; and,

WHEREAS,   the designation of Userful Corporation as a sole source provider was re-affirmed by the City Council in 2008 and 2011 and 2015,

WHEREAS,   Library staff has found the Userful DiscoverStation turnkey system to be user-friendly, reliable, secure and adaptable to a range of public computer needs; and,

WHEREAS,   the Library Director recommends that the City enter into a three-year contract with Userful Corporation for computers, software, and support for the Computer Learning Center; and,

WHEREAS,   the City Manager has determined that Userful Corporation meets the criterion of a sole source procurement.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT ORDAINED BY THE COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF TAKOMA PARK, MARYLAND THAT:

SECTION 1.   The Council has reviewed and accepted the City Manager's determination that the procurement of computers, software, and support from Userful Corporation meets the City's criterion for a sole source procurement.

SECTION 2.   The quote submitted by Userful Corporation in the amount of $28,024.00 is accepted.

SECTION 3.   This ordinance shall become effective upon adoption.

Adopted by roll-call vote this _____ day of _____, 2018 by roll-call vote as follows:

AYE:
NAY:
ABSTAIN:
ABSENT:

Memo

To: City Council

From: Suzanne Ludlow, City Manager

Date: April 17, 2018

Re: Sole Source Procurement

Section 7.08.070 (D) of the Code of the City of Takoma Park allows a contract to be awarded for a good, service, or construction item without competitive bidding if the City Manager determines that there is only one available source for the good, service, or construction item or if a specific manufacturer's produce is required to ensure compatibility.   After careful research and consideration, I believe that the Userful system recommended by the Library staff for continued use in the Computer Learning Center meets this criterion.

The basis of my determination is outlined below:

- The Userful system is the only identified system that includes hardware, applications, access management, and maintenance. Its software, hardware, and interface to the Library's patron database are all integrated, maintained and supported by a single vendor.

- The Userful system uses Linux, which is inherently more secure than Windows. The Library has never had a virus or any other security breach, in its several years experience with the Userful system. Moreover, the operating system is open-source, as are the basic applications. Some libraries use other Linux-based public computer systems, but they are not commercial products. They have been created in-house by computer staffs dedicated to the custom design, construction and running of their systems.

- Because it is based on Linux and other open source software, this system is multilingual and can support users in any of over 30 languages simultaneously. Staff could not identify any other product with 'out of the box' multi-lingual capability. It also has built in support for the visually impaired, and a number of the Library's patrons depend upon that capability.

- The Userful system is unique in combining these features, security and multilingual capability, with a cloud-based control system and environmentally friendly design. The Library runs 32 individual work stations with only eight desk computers.

- Moreover, our Koha ILS (Integrated Library system) Library has successfully integrated its systems with Userful.

www.userful.com
Toll Free: 1.866.USERFUL
Fax: +1 403.206.7010

400-3 Fan Tan Alley
Victoria, British Columbia
V8W 3G9 CANADA

To Whom it May Concern:

The intention of this letter is to explain that Userful is a sole source provider to the library industry. Our solution is a complete Linux based zero client platform for libraries and no other company offers that. Our comprehensive technology plan offers a public computing solution that includes: Hardware, remote support, software, updates, virus protection, internet filtering, and off-site cloud management utilities. The entire operating system is maintained by us, and is tested to work with our zero client and server hardware.

The hardware and software technology combination is truly unique. The software is a highly customized Linux kernel developed completely for public libraries, bundled with a cloud management portal designed to control our virtualized computing platform. The hardware we sell is a custom Hewlett Packard server configured to work with true zero clients and multi-headed video cards. This means that the clients act as a relay device, and makes use of no dedicated memory or graphics processor, unlike thin clients.

While there have been other attempts to run multiple screens from one computer, there are none that provide a complete public computing solution. The other aspects would need to be purchased independently, and maintained in-house. Any attempt to duplicate our system would require software development, for example: The ability to put your public computers out of order remotely to deal with patron abuse, or switch an internet express station into a digital signage screen in less than a minute through a web page. Userful accomplishes this by making use of open source software bundled with proprietary virtualization software. The end result is a self managed 'appliance' that offers libraries a different approach to computing.

Sincerely,

Daniel Griffin
VP Public Computing
888-546-8991