

PRESS RELEASE

DEPARTMENT: City Manager

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City Close to Finalizing Consultant Team to Develop New Portsmouth Master Plan

On Thursday, December 12th Portsmouth officials, including Planning Board members and key City staff, interviewed two teams of consultants to consider which one was best qualified to prepare the City's new master plan. Based on the consultants' proposals and the interview process, the City selected Taintor & Associates, Inc. of Newburyport, MA as their first choice, and City staff will initiate contract negotiations with that firm this week. The firm's principal, Rick Taintor, has more than twenty-five years of planning and community development experience, including ten years in municipal government. His firm recently completed work on the Newburyport, MA Master Plan.

Taintor and Associates teamed with a number of subconsultants in order to provide additional professional expertise in particular areas. Wilbur Smith Associates, a firm that has carried out a number of transportation planning projects for the City, will focus on roadways, parking, public transportation, and bike/pedestrian ways. Appledore Engineering, located at the Pease Tradeport, will be responsible for the natural resource and recreational components. Bruce C. Mayberry, a planning consultant located in southern Maine, brings extensive economic development, housing and fiscal impact expertise to the project. And, given the high level of importance the City has placed on public input in developing the master plan, the team also includes Optimal Solutions, a firm specializing in designing and coordinating local public participation efforts.

The master plan consultant selection process began in September when twelve consultant teams expressed interest in updating the Portsmouth Master Plan in response to a Request for Qualifications issued by the City. After reviewing the information submitted by the twelve consultant teams, four firms were asked by the City to submit full proposals. Ultimately, two of those firms – Taintor and Associates and The Cecil Group of Boston -- made formal presentations to the City last week.

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Work on the Master Plan is scheduled to begin in early January, with development of the new Master Plan expected to be a two-year process. The master planning process will include many opportunities for residents, businesses, local organizations, and other key stakeholders to provide input. This will occur, in part, through the Portsmouth Listens study circles, a collaborative effort of the Chamber of Commerce, the neighborhood associations, the City, and its residents. Portsmouth Listens will bring together small groups of people in facilitated work sessions to discuss critical public policy issues as they relate to the City's master plan for the future.

The Portsmouth Listens study circles will represent just one avenue for residents, businesses and other stakeholders to participate in the development of the City Master Plan. The Planning Board, with statutory responsibility for developing the Master Plan, will also provide many other opportunities for public input through hearings, neighborhood meetings and Planning Board work sessions.

Portsmouth's Master Plan will be a key document used by many local boards, as well as citizens, in making sound decisions about future development, transportation infrastructure needs, environmental protection, and community facilities. The current Master Plan was developed in the early 1990s.