

**REPORT FROM EVALUATION COMMITTEE
CITY OF FRESNO REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS FOR
WEEKLY LANDSCAPE MAINTENANCE SERVICES - WEST
RFP NO. 12400220**

(Committee Meetings held on 09-25-23, 10-25-23, 11-13-23, and 11-15-23)

COMMITTEE MEMBERS:

- Rafael Hanjiev, Procurement Specialist/Facilitator, City of Fresno, General Services Department - Purchasing
- Vince Patlan, Public Works Manager, City of Fresno, DPW - Landscape Maintenance
- Michael Flores, Landscape Superintendent, City of Fresno, DPW - Landscape Maintenance
- Mike Carbajal, PARCS Operations Manager, City of Fresno, PARCS
- Sarah Lambeth, Senior Management Analyst, City of Fresno, Capital Projects Department (formerly FAX)
- Mark Rivas, Senior Management Analyst, City of Fresno, DPW - Streets, Landscape and Graffiti Divisions

BACKGROUND

The weekly landscape maintenance services contract currently in place expired on March 10, 2023. It was extended through the end of this calendar year to afford the Landscape Maintenance Division ample time to prepare, request proposals, and evaluate a satisfactory solution to replace the current contract. Early in the RFP preparation process, the Division made the decision to replace the single contract with three separate smaller contracts. The primary reason was to ensure contractor accountability. Unlike the previous contract, which was a single contract segmented by quadrants, multiple independent smaller contracts gives the City additional flexibility around managing the overall quality of service being provided. In a situation where a specific contractor is providing substandard service, the City would now have the ability to easily terminate and rebid only that contract (representing a geographic area of the City) without affecting other area contracts being serviced by other contractors.

As part of this strategy, the City posted two separate and independent RFPs to provide the City with weekly landscape maintenance services for two distinct "Areas" of the City. This committee report refers to RFP No. 12400220, which represents the Area west of Freeway 41. A separate committee report will be submitted for RFP No. 12400071, representing the Area east of Freeway 41. Both contracts are exclusively for services related to CFDs and City parks. A third RFP to service Citywide non-park facilities will be contracted separately. Because these two initial RFPs received proposals from the same group of contractors, a single Evaluation Committee was deemed to be suitable to evaluate both RFPs simultaneously.

This RFP was advertised in both the Business Journal and on Planet Bids on July 22, 2023.

Proposals were submitted by the following five contractors according to the Request for Proposals August 22, 2023, deadline. Final cost proposals submitted by all five candidates are included below:

Contractor	Final Cost Proposal
Brightview Landscape Services	\$ 402,136.35
Briner & Son Landscape Management	\$ 1,051,596.00
California Turf and Landscaping	\$ 498,108.00
EMTS, Inc.	\$ 436,691.08
New Image Landscape Company	\$ 1,348,100.00

There were subsequent questionnaires and a best and final cost proposal requested by the top three candidates on October 27, 2023. The final requested information was received on November 3, 2023.

COMMITTEE NOTES

The goal of the committee was to evaluate the proposals and make a determination as to what would be the best value for the City of Fresno. The committee members evaluated the proposers on 1) Cost as shown on the proposal form, 2) Ability to meet the stated service requirements, 3) Past Performance and Experience based on references, 4) Conformance to the terms and conditions of the RFP, 5) Financial Stability based on information provided on the Statement of Qualifications, and 6) Other related information.

The committee met four times over the course of two months to evaluate proposals submitted by five separate contractors. The evaluation process included detailed reviews of all five proposals, lengthy discussions regarding the current level of service, additional requests for information, best and final offer requests, and a vetting process, which included detailed reference checks. As part of the evaluation process, the committee ultimately narrowed the field down to three finalists, which were not only deemed to possess the resources capable of servicing the City's needs, but to also have submitted cost proposals within the Division's budget parameters.

At the end of the long comprehensive process, the committee was unanimous in their decision to recommend Briner & Son Landscape Management for the following reasons:

- **Past Performance** – Two of the three finalists, Brightview Landscape Services and Elite Maintenance & Tree Service (EMTS), are currently servicing the City as part of the existing contract. Neither were selected for the new contract. The sole reason for this was performance history.

Two members of the committee have longstanding working relationships with both contractors. The feedback from these members was that while both companies have good people in their employ, neither are sufficiently staffed in the areas of irrigation, weed abatement, or account management. This has resulted in unhealthy landscapes, prolonged response times, and poor communication.

Under the current contract, City staff is regularly tasked with dedicating a portion of their day to inspecting sites already serviced by the contractor for corrections or incomplete work. Staff must then coordinate with the contractor to have the issues resolved. Often times, this process is repeated multiple times leading to missing service cycles. Response time is critical for the longevity of these landscapes, whether it be an unresolved irrigation issue resulting in loss of

plant material, or an ineffective weed abatement program, which allows weeds to thrive and take over ground cover or turf.

Also affected is the City's Enhancement crew, whose primary tasks include renewing landscapes that have reached the end of their natural life cycle. As contractor routes get missed or fail to be properly serviced, the Enhancement crew is having to be pulled from scheduled projects to go back and replace recently planted yet neglected landscapes that have died from lack of care. This is time and effort that could be better spent on other City beautification projects.

The Committee's position is that the current level of service is unsatisfactory, is not sustainable, and has resulted in landscapes that now need to be refurbished. Replacing failed landscapes is costly and preventable with proper maintenance. Because both of the prior contractors (Brightview Landscape Services and EMTS) are proposing essentially the same level of resources for this RFP as they did the prior contract, the Committee is concerned that the City will continue to receive an unsatisfactory level of service.

- **Ability** – As part of the evaluation process, the Committee asked the three finalists specifically how many individuals by position would be dedicated to the contract. Briner & Son responded with not only a larger overall crew compared to Brightview and EMTS, but double the number of Spray and Irrigation Techs, which are crucial components to the overall weekly service crews. The limited number of field personnel as well as the lack of communication between the field crews and the Account Managers has been one of the main reasons the overall level of service of the current contract has suffered.

- **Financial Stability** – All three finalists provided proof of solid company financial positions. However, while not part of the official evaluation criteria, it did not go unnoticed by the Committee that Briner & Son was the only one of the three finalists to be headquartered in the City of Fresno.

- **Other (References)** –

- Briner & Son was the only contractor to have all three references respond to our requests for information. All three were positive and referenced local properties.
- Brightview: Of the three references provided by Brightview, only two references responded. Neither was local. One of the references made it a point to distinguish between Brightview branches as to the level of service they receive. He referred to this in 3 of the 5 questions asked.
- EMTS: Of the three references provided by EMTS, only one reference responded. It was positive and was also local, however the Committee had concerns as to why none of the other references would respond.

- **Limited Risk** – Unlike the current contract which was executed in 2015 with a five-year initial term with three optional one-year extensions, this contract is for a one-year initial term with seven optional one-year extensions. This gives the City the ability to conduct a new RFP in a year's time if the Department consensus is that the level of service is not commensurate with the cost.

CONTRACTOR PROPOSAL SUMMARIES

Brightview Landscape Services (Total Original Proposal Amount: \$544,374.68, Last, Best & Final Proposal Amount: \$402,136.35) – Brightview was one of three finalists evaluated for recommendation. Brightview has been servicing the City in this capacity for the previous eight

years. As such, there is a significant track record in place to assess quality of service. The Committee learned during the evaluation process that the level of service being provided by Brightview has not been sufficient. The Landscape Maintenance Division has worked tirelessly with Brightview to improve the situation. However, because the resources allocated by Brightview have been insufficient, the quality of work has continued to suffer, resulting in dried-out and poorly maintained landscapes and leading to ongoing resident complaints. The Committee specifically asked all three finalists to identify the number of positions allocated to this contract. The conclusion reached by the Committee was that the numbers provided by Brightview would mean a continuation of the issues staff are seeing today.

Briner & Son Landscape Management (Total Original Proposal Amount: \$1,132,936.00, Last, Best & Final Proposal Amount: \$1,051,596.00) – Briner & Son was also one of three finalists evaluated for recommendation. Unlike the other two finalists, Briner & Son is not currently under contract with the City. Also, unlike the other two finalists, Briner & Son, when asked the question regarding resources, submitted an amount that the Committee felt was sufficient for adequately servicing the City contract. Briner has a sterling reputation in both the industry and the area. This was confirmed in the reference feedback portion of the evaluation. Not only was Briner the only firm to have all three of their references respond, but all three were local, and all three were 100% positive. The Briner & Son cost proposal does represent a bit of a premium, but it is the conclusion of the Committee that the price represents the actual number of resources to properly service the contract.

California Turf and Landscaping (Total Proposal Amount: \$498,108.20) – California Turf and Landscaping specializes in landscape design and installation as well as the type of landscape maintenance services related to this RFP. While the company submitted a proposal with attractive pricing, however after additional follow-up with the contractor, it became clear to the Committee that not only do they not currently possess the necessary personnel and equipment to fulfil contract requirements, but the time and effort it would take to acquire these resources was an unknown that posed a significant risk for the City. The Committee was not convinced the firm had the type of experience and expertise it would take to properly service a project of this size.

EMTS, Inc. (Total Original Proposal Amount: \$436,691.08, Last, Best & Final Proposal Amount: \$436,691.08) – EMTS was also one of three finalists evaluated for recommendation. Like Brightview, EMTS has also been servicing a portion of the existing contract for the previous eight years. Also, similar to Brightview, EMTS has been subject to some of the same challenges due to the limited number of resources which are invested by the company toward this specific contract. Dried out and inadequately maintained landscapes are far too common occurrence. EMTS was also specifically asked to identify the number of positions which will be allocated to this contract. The conclusion reached by the Committee was that the numbers provided by EMTS would mean a continuation of the issues staff are experiencing today.

New Image Landscape Company (Total Proposal Amount: \$1,348,100.00) – New Image provided a solid proposal package. However, the total cost proposal was outside of the funding parameters of the Division, so the company was not included in additional rounds of evaluation.

SUMMARY RECOMMENDATION

The Committee carefully and thoroughly considered all aspects of the submitted proposals, including the fact that the previous contract predated prevailing wage requirements, and that the award of this contract be made with the confidence that proper labor codes and resolutions will be adhered to. Appropriate consideration was also given to both cost and the ability to provide

an acceptable level of service. Ultimately, the Committee determined that the Briner & Son Landscape Management proposal represented the most sensible choice and best value for the City.