

A G E N D A I T E M

BUSINESS OF THE CITY COUNCIL
City of Des Moines, WA

SUBJECT: Update on the City Strategic Planning and Facilitation Services

FOR AGENDA OF: June 26, 2025

DEPT. OF ORIGIN: City Manager

ATTACHMENTS:

DATE SUBMITTED: June 12, 2025

- 1. None

CLEARANCES:

- City Clerk _____
- Communications _____
- Community Development _____
- Courts _____
- Emergency Management _____
- Finance _____
- Human Resources _____
- Legal _____
- Marina _____
- Police _____
- Parks, Recreation & Senior Services _____
- Public Works _____

APPROVED BY CITY MANAGER

FOR SUBMITTAL: *Katherine Coffey*

City Manager Report

During the City Manager's Report at the June 12, 2025 meeting, the City Manager will update the City Council on the Strategic Plan and Facilitation process. Staff recommends that the consulting firm Raftelis lead public engagement, facilitate the Council goal-setting, and develop the City's Strategic Plan.

Background

At the March 6, 2025, Study Session, the City Council was presented with a proposal from the City Manager to engage in a Strategic Plan. The Council expressed unanimous support for initiating this process. During the Council discussion, they articulated the following goals for the Strategic Plan:

- Define and document shared goals and priorities for the City over the next five years.
- Establish measurable milestones to track progress toward those goals.
- Align with the City's vision, mission, and values while outlining specific policy objectives.
- Identify key issues and set realistic, actionable steps to address them.
- Support informed decision-making and prioritize resource allocation.

- Ensure meaningful public engagement throughout the process.
- Strengthen community trust via the strategic planning process.

On March 21, 2025, the City issued a Request for Qualifications (RFQ) for Strategic Planning and Facilitation services. On April 21, 2025, the City received six responses from qualified firms. A committee of senior staff reviewed these responses and evaluated them based on the criteria established in the RFQ. The criteria included capacity to perform, demonstrated experience with City Councils and municipal government, experience with communities facing financial challenges, and approach to community engagement.

Additionally, the City Manager sought input from the City Council on what the Council felt was most important for staff to consider when evaluating the responses. Council feedback included:

- Preference for firms that have experience developing plans that are executed (rather than “sitting on the shelf”).
- Mixed feedback regarding the importance of Washington state experience: Some Councilmembers felt experience in western Washington was critical, while others believed a fresh perspective would be valuable.
- A strong track record in utilizing various community engagement and communication methods, including digital and bilingual approaches, to maximize public engagement in the process.
- Preference for a firm that can guide the Council and staff through the strategic thinking process, with a desire for strategic thinking to be embedded in how the City and Council operate and make decisions.

Based on this input, along with Staff evaluation using the criteria mentioned above, three firms were interviewed. Following the interviews and contacting client references, Staff recommends that the firm Raftelis provide the strategic planning and facilitation services.

Discussion

Raftelis is a multi-disciplinary firm that focuses on municipalities and utilities, having worked with over 1,200 local governments and utilities. The firm has conducted strategic planning and management consulting work with nineteen cities in Washington. For example, Raftelis developed the Strategic Plan for Mercer Island, a local government facing similar budgetary and financial sustainability challenges due to limited growth and primarily residential land use.

The specific team assigned to the City of Des Moines for this project consists of the individuals who prepared the RFQ response and participated in the interviews. Reference checks were conducted, and the staff received universally positive reviews for their work. The project lead from Raftelis has nearly thirty years of experience as a local government management consultant and practitioner, focusing on West Coast communities.

The Council’s initial discussion regarding the strategic planning process also emphasized the City’s financial health and sustainability. In April, the City Council approved a contract with FCS Group for a Long-Range Financial Plan and Development Impact Analysis. That work has commenced, and we anticipate the findings from that effort will be completed by the end of 2025. We will ensure that this information is finalized and presented in time for the Council to consider when developing the strategic priorities and initiatives for this effort.

Staff will begin developing a comprehensive scope of work for the Strategic Plan and negotiate a fee for the service. Staff will bring back the proposed scope of work and cost for Council consideration.