



MEETING SYNOPSIS

November 7, 2019

The following is a summary of the third meeting of the Elevate Advisory Council Cultural Arts and Tourism Subcommittee. The meeting attendance sheet is attached to this summary. The agenda and other meeting materials can be found on the Elevate Tuscaloosa website under Advisory Council > Meetings.

The subcommittee met at City Hall to interview firms that responded to the Request for Statements of Proposal for a Conference/Convention Center and/or Sports Tourism and Event Space Feasibility Study and Market Study Analysis.

Overview of the Interview Process

Glenda Webb (City of Tuscaloosa) informed members of the interview process. Eleven firms submitted proposals; ten were responsive and one was not since it was not submitted by the deadline of noon on November 1. On November 4, the ten proposals were reviewed by a team that consisted of city staff, Don Staley, and Heather Dill (Cultural Arts and Tourism subcommittee members). The review team scored the ten responsive firms and chose four finalists. The four interviews took place in the Daugherty Room via virtual meeting software that provided the ability to see and hear the interview candidates.

Interviews

The following firms were selected to be interviewed:

- Conventions, Sports & Leisure International
- Hunden Strategic Partners
- Victus Advisors
- Johnson Consulting

For consistency, each interview lasted 20 minutes and contained the same seven questions. Glenda Webb led the interviews and asked the following questions:

1. List your top 3 Elevate Tuscaloosa projects, other than the conference center and athletic and events center.
2. If you recommend building a facility or facilities, the location will be critical. What is your methodology for site selection?
3. What are the challenges you see in the Tuscaloosa market related to sports programming and facilities?
4. Provide an example of a time when you advised a client that it would **not** be feasible to build a facility they were considering.
5. What will be your primary means of gathering data during the study process?

6. How will you handle stakeholder engagement? Discuss your methodology, in terms of number in-person trips, sectors targeted, etc.
7. How will you keep us informed during the study process?

Discussion and Selection

After the final interview, subcommittee members and city staff discussed firms' responses. Brendan Moore (City of Tuscaloosa) advised subcommittee members to keep in mind that the firm chosen would be a group of individuals that they would be working with over an extended period of time. The following were comments of support and concern discussed by subcommittee members:

Support

- Johnson Consulting was the only firm that knew of Elevate Tuscaloosa and related projects.
- Hunden Strategic Partners' awareness of seasonality and its impact on existing hotels.
- Johnson Consulting's experience with university communities.
- The availability of both Victus Advisors and Johnson Consulting and their willingness to keep members informed throughout the process.
- Victus Advisors' excitement and enthusiasm and willingness to have weekly update meetings. The subcommittee also appreciated that they explicitly stated they do not manage venues of this type; therefore, they would have no vested interest if they ultimately recommend building a facility.
- Johnson Consulting's method of communication by contacting a "lead member" daily, as needed, and more formally every week or two.
- Johnson Consulting's knowledge of specific companies in the sports and tourism industry (Destinations International and Smith Travel Research)
- Johnson Consulting's alliance with subconsultants who are familiar with Elevate Tuscaloosa and the Tuscaloosa market and are geographically close to Tuscaloosa.

Concern

- Hunden Strategic Partners' lack of specificity on stakeholder engagement.
- Poor internet connection during Johnson Consulting's interview made one of several individuals in the interview difficult to understand.
- Each firm had a similar site selection methodology; therefore, question 2 did not cause any particular firm to stand out.

After deliberation, a motion was made to recommend Johnson Consulting to the City Council for formal approval, contingent upon reference checks to be conducted by city staff. Subcommittee members unanimously voted in favor of the motion.

Next Steps

Once reference checks are completed by city staff, the subcommittee's recommendation will be presented to City Council.

The next Elevate Cultural Arts and Tourism subcommittee meeting will take place February 6, 2020 in the Daugherty Room at City Hall.