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MEMORANDUM

TO: Athol Board of Selectmen
 FR: Shaun A. Suhoski, Town Manager
 RE: Recommended Award of RFP for Ellen Bigelow / Riverbend Reuse
 DT: November 5, 2019

On October 28 the Ellen Bigelow/Riverbend RFP review team met to review the proposal received from NewVue Communities and Icon Architecture to develop affordable and intra-generational housing at the former school campus. With six of seven members present the reviewers gave the NewVue / Icon proposal a composite score of 4.2 out of 5.0 maximum points, or, a rating of “advantageous” to “highly advantageous”. The full compiled rating sheet is included in the packet separately but summarized below:

		Rating Matrix							
		Ellen Bigelow / Riverbend RFP Review							
Criterion No.	Item	Rater 1	Rater 2	Rater 3	Rater 4	Rater 5	Rater 6	Rater 7	Total
1	Program and Design	5	3	5	5	5	5		4.7
2	Developer Capability	5	5	5	5	5	5		5.0
3	Business Deal / On-site Job Creation	3	3	3	3	3	3		3.0
4	Implementation Plan / Timeline	3	3	5	3	3	5		3.4
Interview	Interview / Responsiveness	5	5	5	5	5	5		5.0
COMPOSITE SCORE									4.2

Team members from NewVue and Icon will be present at the Board meeting tonight to offer their overview of the project and to answer questions. Subject to the Board’s satisfaction with the team presentation and in accordance with the review team’s recommendation above I would request that the Board of Selectmen: **vote to accept the proposal of NewVue Communities and Icon Architecture submitted September 12, 2019 and to further direct the Town Manager to work the proponents to formulate and submit a proposed development agreement and timeline to the Board of Selectmen.**

Background

In 2016, the Town issued a Request for Proposals (RFP) to attract interest in the development community to productively repurpose the former Ellen Bigelow and Riverbend schools and campus. Due to many factors – including potential major changes to the historic tax credit program at the federal level –

Town did not receive a formal proposal despite interest by several non-profit developers; one of which was NewVue Communities.

Over the ensuing years the Town did remain in contact with NewVue and in fact supported that agency's submission of this site to a noted design competition sponsored annually by the Citizens Housing and Planning Association and the Federal Home Loan Bank of Boston. In the end the graduate students from MIT, Harvard, Tufts and elsewhere frequently visited Athol and held community meetings while developing a vision and pro forma budget for the site. They ended up placing second in the completion, but, their work provided a basis from which to issue the 2019 RFP.



The RFP generated interest and mandatory site visit attendance by three non-profit entities. Ultimately, the only formal proposal came from NewVue / Icon (the team also had a civil engineer present at the site visit). Copies of the New Vue / Icon proposal were distributed to the members of the team for advanced review prior to the in-person interview conducted on October 28. The review team included:

- Selectman Stephen Raymond
- Selectmen Bill Chiasson
- Town Manager Shaun Suhoski
- Director of Planning and Development Eric Smith
- Planning Board designee Sarah Schouler
- Athol-Orange Housing Authority Exec. Director Christi Martin

This project would address a dire need for housing affordable to a range of incomes, provide jobs via on-site management and property tax revenue upon completion.