



TOWN OF DOUGLAS

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May 29, 2018

To: Chief Kent Vinson, Jeanne Lovett
CC: BOS, Procurement File
Re: Written Findings in Support of RFP Process for Ambulance Purchase

As you know, Chapter 30B requires that purchases exceeding \$50,000 in value must be conducted using a competitive process, including advertisement and the review of sealed bids or proposals. Since the purchase of a new ambulance far exceeds the threshold value, we will follow a competitive process for this item.

Chapter 30B allows for two forms of competitive process. The first is based almost entirely on price, and is known as the “invitation for bids (IFB)” approach. The second path allows for consideration of quality competition in addition to price comparison, and is known as the “request for proposals (RFP)” method.

Generally, the Town is best served by using the IFB process for purchases of goods and services. Provided that our written purchase description identifies key aspects of the item or service to be bought and lists them as minimum qualities, there will be price competition and the Town will be cost effective in getting what it needs to operate.

Using the RFP process is more complicated. In order to conduct an RFP, a Town must have a Chief Procurement Officer designated, and that individual must submit written findings to show that the Town will be best served by allowing for comparisons of products or services when rival firms are competing with offers that vary in terms of technology, turnaround time, quality and length of warranty and service agreements, and the like.

As the Town’s Chief Procurement Officer, I have previously determined that the purchase of cardiac monitor / defibrillators required use of the RFP process, and I make many of the same, and more, findings regarding the procurement of a new ambulance and its associated equipment. Therefore, I am directing that the ambulance purchase follow the RFP purchase process for these reasons:

- Ambulances consist of a “box” installed onto a chassis. Box manufacturers and chassis makers may work together but are not necessarily exclusive in their relationships.
- The capabilities and reputations of box and chassis manufacturers vary considerably. There are aspects of both components that may be proprietary and highly desirable, but neither important enough to steer the entire procurement process nor valid excuse for “single source procurement.”
- The dealers who are able to serve as equipment vendors in this space often have the ability to configure vehicles to respond to an RFP that is flexible enough to give them room to make their best offer to the Town.
- Equipment vendors understand the price competition dynamic and the market can be captured by affordable, but not necessarily durable, vehicles if price is the only consideration.
- Douglas may not procure another brand new ambulance for several years. Given that we currently operate two vehicles that are beyond their typical useful life as front line response ambulances, we must choose well to save money over the entire life of the vehicle in this case.
- The Town meeting approved budget for this item allows for competing configurations to be considered.

Therefore, the RFP process will include a set of comparative criteria which will be scored before price bid envelopes will be opened. The winner of this process will be the responsible and responsive vendor who offers the ambulance that provides the greatest value – the most capability and durability, etc. – at a price that falls within the allowed budget for the purchase. Units will at a minimum be reviewed, and possibly field tested, by a team assembled by the Chief of Department.

Finally, I also find that in establishing his comparative criteria, the Chief is allowed to specify that our existing equipment must be compatible with the new ambulance. This issue is most likely to arise with respect to the power-assist lift mechanism and the stretchers that the lift will accept. Therefore, the Chief may note the brand used by Douglas FD, but will also include RFP language to the effect that any equivalent, compatible equipment will also be considered.

ATTACHMENT B to REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS