

MEMORANDUM
Comfort Lake-Forest Lake Watershed District

To: Board of Managers **Date:** October 7, 2021
From: Mike Kinney
Subject: Website and Branding Request for Proposals

Background/Discussion

This topic was last discussed by the Board at the September 23rd regular board meeting where the initial draft of the website and branding request for proposals (RFP) was provided to the managers for review. There was agreement that managers would review the RFP and provide any comments, questions, or concerns to staff by Tuesday, October 5th.

As of Wednesday, October 6th staff have received comments from two managers. Their comments, along with responses from Operations & Outreach Specialist, Jessica Lindemyer, who will be coordinating this effort, are included below. Jessica has a degree in studio arts with an emphasis in graphic design, she has also worked on several websites both personally and professionally.

Two main revisions have been made to the RFP in response to the comments received.

1. The November 1st deadline has been pushed to November 19th with the timeline for review updated accordingly.
2. Two bullets have been added to the list of additional website priorities to address the topics of analytics and search engine optimization (SEO).

The purpose of this agenda item is for the Board to consider approving the revised RFP for posting.

Manager Comments

Manager Schmaltz

1. I think the current logo has potential. What can be done to overcome its current identified weaknesses? I'd like to see the 3-4 other WD logos that you or the consultant feel are good. Do any of those WDs have or use a "tag" line in their communications. Tag Line or Brand promise is a short tag line or promise the WD gives to the public? eg. "Protecting local water resources and natural habitat"

Jessica's Response: Analyzing our current logo and those of other watershed districts and similar organizations will definitely be part of the assessment and design work with the Contractor. As a reference for other WD logos I have attached the handout I provided managers with back in 2018.

2. Have we had any feedback from frequent users of our website on what they like/dislike?
Jessica's Response: Staff, managers, and consultants are by far the most frequent users of our website. The most common feedback I get from them is 1) the website is not mobile friendly (i.e. not easily navigable on phones or tablets), 2) Images and resources are outdated, and 3) the website is hard to edit and can only be edited by select individuals. I have received some feedback from the public, mostly in the form of comments from our CAC. These comments are typically about the volume of material and number of pages making it difficult to find what is needed. I've also received several requests for pop-up windows and banners on our home page that promote current events, public hearings, or office closures.

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3. Are there any WD websites you think are good examples?

Jessica's Response: There are several, and I have had lengthy conversations with the staff responsible for the websites over the past year and a half. Here are a few:

- Capitol Region WD: <https://www.capitolregionwd.org/>
- Riley Purgatory Bluff Creek WD: <https://rpbcwd.org/>
- Vadnais Lakes Area WMO: <https://www.vlawmo.org/>
- South Washington WD: <https://www.swwdmn.org/>

4. Are Nov 1 submittal date enough time for vendors? May see what they think?

Jessica's Response: The Nov 1st deadline was chosen with the assumption that the RFP would be presented and potentially approved in September, since it has been pushed out to October 14th for action it would be my recommendation that the timeline for the submittal and review of submissions also gets revised. I have provided an updated timeline for the Board's consideration.

Manager Loth

- From my standpoint, a website that is mobile friendly is most important as I would bet that over half of the visitors are likely doing so from their mobile devices, which will be addressed with the rebuild.
- While I do see the benefit of having one vendor take care of the website rebuild and the logo, I would suggest that staff consider using www.designcrowd.com or www.99designs.com for logo development.... I'd be happy to discuss my experience with crowd-sourced logos over the phone if you would like, or I can share next Thursday with the group.

Jessica's Response: Please feel free to share with the group on Thursday.

In my personal experience, and from the discussions I've had with other watershed districts, crowd-sourced designing works best when the client has 1) a good idea of what they want their logo to convey, 2) an existing brand aesthetic OR the willingness to let their new logo be the starting point for developing a brand aesthetic, and 3) are able to identify what makes a good design.

In my opinion if the District were to decide to go with a separate vendor for the logo, the website redesign should be held off until the new logo is complete so that the website can be made with the design of the logo in mind (i.e. color scheme and fonts). Given the current state of the website, a delay like this would not be ideal.

- I didn't see anything in the RFP regarding SEO or website analytics. Is this something that we will want the vendor to be responsible for, or is this something that would be done in-house? Continually updating and improving back-end search terms for SEO optimization should be considered along with regular review of website analytics so content, organization, layouts can be continually improved.

Jessica's Response: Currently all website analytics are done in-house using Google Analytics and there is really no work being done for SEO optimization. I have added both items to the revised RFP.

Attached: Revised Website and Branding RFP

Comfort Lake-Forest Lake Watershed District Request for Proposals: Logo & Website Design

Deadline for Submittal November 19, 2021

Project Overview

The Comfort Lake-Forest Lake Watershed District (CLFLWD) is inviting contractors to submit a proposal to develop a cohesive logo and website. CLFLWD seeks the development of a logo and website design that will provide an engaging user experience, deliver clear messaging to diverse stakeholders, and reflect the priorities of the watershed district. The final products should be visually interesting, with a logo that reflects the essence of the District and a website that is easy to navigate, accessible to all users (including individuals with disabilities and users of mobile devices), and efficient to maintain and update.

Organizational Background

The CLFLWD is a special-purpose unit of local government that was established by the Minnesota Board of Water and Soil Resources in 1999. CLFLWD encompasses roughly 49 square miles in northern Washington County and southern Chisago County, including the Cities of Chisago City, Forest Lake, Scandia, and Wyoming. The watershed outlets to the northwest to the Sunrise River, which flows northeast through Chisago County before discharging to the St. Croix River.

The CLFLWD's mission is to protect and improve its water resources through adaptive management approaches and education of local stakeholders.

Current Logo

The current CLFLWD logo depicts an outdated version of the District's political boundary in a blue/gray gradation in the background with the District's name added on top in a copperplate typeface. The current logo design does not lend itself well to use across multiple platforms and quickly loses readability when scaled down. Furthermore, the political boundary is not well known or identifiable by the District's stakeholders.

Current Website and Content

The current CLFLWD website (www.clflwd.org) is hosted through GoDaddy and managed via the discontinued HTML editor, Adobe Contribute. Staff are currently able to make limited updates

Board of Managers

Jackie Anderson—Vice President (President Pro Tem) Dave Bakke—Secretary Pro Tem
Steven Schmaltz—Treasurer Doug Toavs—Manager Chris Loth – Manager

and changes to the content. CLFLWD is actively looking to move away from the current web host and editor.

The current site is very “content heavy.” Much of the content on the current site is outdated and in need of revision, removal, archiving, or replacement. CLFLWD has a fair amount of internal capacity for creating and archiving webcontent.

Project Goals

CLFLWD will have a cohesive brand consisting of a logo and website that are identifiable, interesting, and representative of District’s mission and values. The logo must be distinctive, easily scalable, and lend itself well to use on both print and digital formats. The website must provide a platform for legal notices and requirements, regulatory support (and forms), information on programs and projects, increased public engagement, and improved service to District residents and stakeholders.

With the logo and website, the consultant will provide a brand style guide for future use and implementation by the District.

The following objectives must be met in relation to the website:

- Accessible to mobile technology and individuals with disabilities
- User-friendly navigation and experience
- Reflect the District’s mission, priorities, and brand style
- Incorporate on-line forms for regulatory documents
- Incorporate interactive web maps (These interactive maps have already been developed but they are not incorporated into the District’s current website)
- Include a content management system (CMS)
 - o CLFLWD is open to all CMS options as long as all needs are met.

Additional priorities for the website:

- Improved and simplified organization and appearance of the website, while maintaining a selection of the existing content/information
- CLFLWD mission, goals, priorities, and general information
- Staff and Board information
- Education and outreach – including upcoming workshops and public opportunities
- Feature projects and programs
- Increase public engagement
- Resources, forms, and permit/regulatory information
- Easy access to archived documents such as board packets, minutes, and resolutions from previous years.
- Options for continually updating and improving back end search terms for SEO optimization
- Options for regular review of website analytics so content, organization, layouts can be continually improved

Preliminary Scope of Work

The selected contractor will design and implement a new logo and website for CLFLWD with accompanying brand/style guide. The contractor will be responsible for working with CLFLWD staff to assess website needs, evaluate and make recommendations on (graphic) design and information architecture, conducting wireframing and creating mockups, developing the website, and conducting quality assurance testing.

The contractor will also provide guidance to CLFLWD staff as it relates to content writing, assembly, and organization but will not be responsible for the creation of narrative content.

Ongoing website support should be included but as a separate option/package.

Evaluation of Proposals

Proposals will be reviewed by CLFLWD Board and staff. Proposals will be evaluated based upon, but not limited to, demonstrated success on similar projects (or for similar organizations), qualifications and expertise of the staff assigned to the project, budget detail, overall cost, and references. An interview may be part of the evaluation process.

At a minimum, the selected contractor will demonstrate expertise in the following areas:

- Logo development
- Web development
- Graphic design
- Responsive web design
- Accessibility/ADA standards
- Content management systems
- Information architecture

Preference may be given to contractors that also demonstrate expertise in user research, usability testing, content strategy, and other areas related to the project.

Budget

Proposed budgets will be considered but will not be the sole criteria for selecting a contractor. Proposed budgets associated with all project activities must be clearly identified.

If additional tasks are required or recommended, a justification and associated cost should be included. As stated in the “Preliminary Scope of Work,” ongoing website support should be included but identified as a separate option/package in the bid.

Anticipated Timeline

CLFLWD would like the redesigned website to launch no later than December 1, 2022.

Key Dates:

- **November 19, 2021** – Deadline for electronic submission (see Submission Requirements)

- **November 20, 2021 – December 3, 2021** – Staff review of proposals
- **December 16, 2021** – Staff present proposals to the Board at its monthly meeting; the Board may request interviews prior to final action
- **TBD** – Possible additional Board meeting where additional discussion or action may be taken; the meeting and agenda will be announced

The CLFLWD will handle proposal documents in accordance with the Minnesota Data Practices Act, Minnesota Statutes §13.591, subdivision 3(b).

Submission Requirements

Electronic copies of proposals should be submitted to CLFLWD staff at the email addresses below by 4:30pm on **November 19, 2021**. Proposers are encouraged to include references and examples of past work as part of their submitted proposal.

Mike Kinney, District Administrator | Michael.kinney@clflwd.org

Jessica Lindemyer, Operations & Outreach Specialist | Jessica.lindemyer@clflwd.org

Comfort Lake-Forest Lake Watershed District
44 Lake St. South, Suite A
Forest Lake, MN 55025

Questions and Project Contact

Questions should be submitted in writing to Jessica Lindemyer, Operations and Outreach Specialist, at jessica.lindemyer@clflwd.org. The District's responses will be copied to all proposers that have requested to receive them.