



MINUTES
LAWTON YOUTH SPORTS TRUST AUTHORITY
SPECIAL MEETING
LAWTON CITY HALL- 212 SW 9th Street, Lawton, Oklahoma
3rd FLOOR CONFERENCE ROOM
FRIDAY, JULY 22, 2022– 11:00AM

Chairman Henry called the meeting to order at 11:00 a.m. in the 3rd Floor Conference Room of City Hall. Notice of meeting and agenda were posted on the City Hall notice board as required by law.

I. ROLL CALL

PRESENT:

Steve Coleman
Brian Henry
Albert Johnson, Jr.
Hossein Moini
Carey Monroe
Clint Powell
Krista Ratliff
Randy Warren

ABSENT:

Sean Fortenbaugh

ALSO PRESENT:

Allan Hampton, Ward 5 Councilmember
Kim McConnell, Lawton Constitution
Eric Swanson, Southwest Ledger
Eric Sherum, Oklahoma Sports Network
Logan Dye, Lawton Youth Sports
Cassandra Willrich, Lawton Youth Sports
John Ratliff, City Attorney
Caitlin Gatlin, Communications & Marketing Director
Dewayne Burk, Deputy City Manager
Christine James, Parks & Rec Director
Donalynn Blazek-Scherler, Sr. Deputy City Clerk.

I. BUSINESS ITEMS:

- A. Discuss the proposals received to provide youth sports management services, and based upon the results of the ranking criteria, authorize the entering into negotiations with Eastern Sports Management for a contract.

Chairman Henry stated the information on this item will come from the Programs Committee. The committee consists of four board members- Moini, Ratliff, Johnson Jr, and Monroe, and three community members- Makenzie Ridenhour, Mike Cowan, and Frank Myers.

Moini thanked the committee members for their time and investment. He stated this process started in mid-March with an RFI. It then moved to an RFP, and eight proposals were received. Out of the eight, six were selected to give an oral presentation. Three finalists were reviewed further in the scope of experience and cost. Eastern Sports was selected as the final candidate. He stated today we are asking the board to vote on going into contract negotiations with Eastern Sports. This will be brought back to approve the final contract.

Moini stated the committee members called references, and Eastern Sports had all positive responses. He stated they do this work all over the country and have been in the business since 2005.

Moini also stated that the City of Lawton Parks & Rec Department has graciously agreed to run Fall sports while LYSA works through contract negotiations. The goal is to have contract negotiations completed in August, have a signed contract in September, and for Eastern Sports to take over starting with basketball.

Coleman asked what made Eastern Sports Management best meet the overall criteria. He stated that the success Eastern Sports has had in Tulsa seems significant but asked if there were any other factors that stood out.

Ratliff stated past performance was a key component. Eastern Sports Management not only has past-experience in building new facilities, but they are also experienced in municipality partnerships, which is a key component for us. They have shown success in that area. They also show success in other areas we were looking for such as sponsorships, grants, and looking at different funding sources. Those were probably the two key components that we looked at.

Johnson Jr. stated Coleman had mentioned Tulsa. Tulsa Titan Sports was not one of Eastern Management's listed references, but the programs committee was aware of the connection, so he reached out to the general manager. He stated their program is a little different than ours because they are privately funded and privately built, but they started this process trying to do everything themselves. Johnson Jr. stated the general manager he spoke with was a local that Eastern Sports Management recruited in. One of the first things they did was a culture change because there wasn't a big influx of people wanting to participate. Eastern Sports came in and tried to show what youth sports was all about.

Johnson Jr. stated Councilmember Johnson had asked about local citizens taking part. One of the things the Programs Committee appreciated about Eastern Sports is that they don't bring in a corporate team; they try to work locally. Johnson Jr. stated Eastern Sports was told during their interview that there were local people who have run sports programs here that are interested in helping. Eastern Sports responded that they would like to engage and get to know those individuals.

Johnson Jr. stated the response the Programs Committee received from Titan Sports and their overall qualifications made Eastern Sports Management a really good fit for this.

Moini stated we don't want to get ahead of ourselves, but Eastern Sports has also been involved in building new facilities. We all know that somewhere along the way, we are going to build the facility, and Eastern Sports Management will be an asset.

Monroe stated she really appreciated the infrastructure they have in place as a company. They have processes in place that we can take advantage of, and they have software that we can use. Monroe stated as a logistics person and event planner, she understands that when processes are already in place, you can be really efficient and ensure a good experience. When references were called, they had a really hard time finding anything negative to say.

Monroe stated that Eastern Sports Management started by privately funding a facility, and they learned all the lessons the hard way. From there, they began to expand and find places like Tulsa or like us. She stated their past performance did it for her. They also really care about youth sports, and that means a lot. Monroe stated their infrastructure, history, and the way they have grown will work well with Lawton. This community cares about youth sports and having a company that also cares as opposed to a corporate edifice is important. Monroe stated Eastern Sports also said they want to work with the existing organization in the community to help improve and grow those programs.

Chairman Henry asked the Programs Committee to give a high-level overview of how Eastern Sports moved through the different stages of the RFP.

Ratliff stated the RFI was the first stage, and no one was eliminated from that. She stated it was an opportunity for the committee to find out about qualifications, history, and background from applicants. It was also an opportunity for applicants to find out what the committee was looking for. Anyone that submitted for the RFI, or even if they didn't, they could submit for the RFP.

Ratliff stated next, the RFP was released. During this time, the committee was looking at organizational structure and past performance, but not the budget yet. She stated they looked at if the applicant had experience managing a total sports system (not just an individual sport), if they had a business plan, and if they had been successful in other markets doing something similar.

Ratliff stated once they were through the RFP, they invited some applicants back for oral presentations. During orals, the committee looked at if they had experience in multiple markets, if they had experience working with municipalities, and if they had experience working with different funding sources. Once that was complete, the committee started looking at budgets.

Coleman asked what the committee envisions by Eastern Sports Management “assuming full control”. Are they thinking they will bring in their infrastructure in December and be ready in the Spring?

Moini stated depending on how long it takes us to negotiate the contract, we’re hoping to sign them in September, and they will start getting ready in December. Also, they will only be taking over the programs side of things at first, and the Parks and Rec Department will still do the maintenance piece of this. That will be part of negotiations as we go through it. Hopefully by next budget year, July 1st, they will completely take over youth sports.

Chairman Henry stated we had previously talked about natural breaks and timelines. The longest break would have been between baseball/softball and Fall sports, around the end of the fiscal year. That was a little ambitious. The next natural break is between the end of football and volleyball and the start of basketball, which typically starts in January. He stated the good news about that is basketball is played inside, so there is nothing to mow. Eastern Sports would be starting with signups, possibly a little earlier than usual.

Moini stated additionally, we have kept LPS in the loop on everything. We need them to be a part of the package because of facilities. They have been extremely positive and helpful.

Coleman clarified that the vision is for the City to handle Fall sports for this year. Then at the beginning of September, Eastern will start ramping up to do basketball signups, and the changeover would happen at the beginning of the year. From there, Eastern will start ramping up for what he describes as “Phase 2”, which is the maintenance and facilities coordination.

Moini stated and one-hundred percent sports by July 1, 2023.

Monroe stated their primary duties coming in September will be a lot of marketing, finding referees and coaches, setting schedules, and other staff work that comes before the season starts. It will be everything except the mowing, striping, sweeping, etc.

Coleman asked if the grant writing outfit is localized in a main office.

Ratliff stated there isn’t a grant writing branch at Eastern. It’s more of a partnership where they have experience in reaching out to different organizations, and we will have a grant writer locally that does it.

Monroe stated Eastern will also do a market study, both internally with the City to talk about what we’re already doing, and they will have a company go out into the community to find out what is wanted. She stated they will give us a data stack that can be used to help us write grants, and Eastern said they will assist with that since they have experience and know what grantors want to see.

Chairman Henry asked if the Authority needs to pursue a 501(c)(3) status, if that is allowable for an authority, because there would be opportunities given to a 501(c)(3) that Eastern is not allowed. For example, Dick's Sporting goods will work directly with a 501(c)(3) or a municipality, but not with a for profit company. That is something we may need to explore.

Moini stated all these things are simplifying our job. We are just bringing someone to town who knows how to run programs. He stated I keep saying we are not going to micromanage this thing, but somewhere along the line, we will have to micromanage it to make sure it is being done correctly.

Ratliff stated we did not meet the July deadline because we wanted to do due diligence, and we wanted to be thorough in every step and every process. We wanted to make sure we were bringing the best candidate to town.

Chairman Henry stated kudos to the committee for getting this done by July 22nd. It took a lot of leg work.

Chairman Warren stated he knows this was a lot of work, and he appreciates it. He stated the citizens will eventually appreciate it, too.

Motion by Moini, Second by Warren, to authorize entering into negotiations with Eastern Sports Management for a contract to provide youth sports management services. **AYE:** Henry, Johnson, Moini, Monroe, Powell, Ratliff, Warren, Coleman **NAY:** None. ***MOTION PASSED.***

Ratliff presented a binder containing every RFP and RFI received and stated this binder is available for review at the Chamber of Commerce.

B. ADJOURN

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 11:22 pm.

Motion by Ratliff, Second by Monroe, to adjourn the meeting of July 22, 2022. **AYE:** Henry, Johnson, Moini, Monroe, Powell, Ratliff, Warren, Coleman **NAY:** None. ***Motion Passed.***