

BOARD AGENDA ITEM
February 13, 2024

SUBJECT:

Request for Proposals - Website Design and Hosting Services

BACKGROUND INFORMATION:

The District sought competitive sealed proposals for website design and hosting services as well as its mass communications system.

Blackboard Inc. has been a longtime vendor for Aiken County Public Schools in providing procured services for our District and school websites and mass communications system (robocalls, texts, emails, etc.). In 2018, the board approved/renewed Blackboard as the vendor for these services with an option for five additional annual renewals. The contract was renewed each of those years with Blackboard Inc.

In September 2022, Blackboard Inc. was purchased by educational technology competitor Finalsite. Among the changes that this buy-out necessitated, our existing District website and schools' websites had a deadline for transitioning to the new platform by December 2025. Blackboard was extended for an additional year (2023-2024) to allow for a formal Request for Proposals (RFP) process to commence and allow any vendors able to meet the district's needs for these services an opportunity to bid.

The awarded vendor is required to support transition of all webpages, maintain website accessibility standards, train and provide ongoing support to all content creators, and assist in preparing for a successful launch by July 1, 2024.

ADMINISTRATIVE CONSIDERATION:

A request for proposals was issued November 28, 2023, and closed on January 4, 2024 for website hosting and design services and a mass communications system. Three proposals were received by closing and included Apptegy, AppZoro, and Final Site. The proposals were subsequently evaluated by a panel consisting of Merry Glenne Piccolino (Director of Communications), Ashley Bodine (Communications Coordinator), Shawn Chandler (Technology Network Coordinator), Eric Jeffcoat (Assistant Superintendent for Elementary Schools), Brittany Boyle (Finance Budget Specialist), Michelle King (Media Specialist), and Ashlee O'Neal (Instructional Technology Specialist). Evaluation criteria included overall qualifications and experience, demonstrated understanding of the Scope

of Work and ability to meet specifications outlined, past record and performance with respect to providing similar services, ability to conform to accessibility standards, and price. Reference checks with other school districts provided glowing reviews and proposed pricing was deemed competitive, fair, and reasonable. If approved, costs include \$29,000 for initial setup and implementation and annual installments of \$156,800 in 2024-25, \$160,103 in 2025-26, \$160,083 in 2026-27, \$161,774 in 2027-28, and \$163,498 in 2028-29.

RECOMMENDATION:

Accept the panel's recommendation to contract with Apptegy for website hosting and design services and mass communications.

PREPARED BY:

Merry Glenne Piccolino