



MEMORANDUM

To: Mayor and Members of the City Council

From: Rich Olson, City Manager
Angela Cole, Assistant City Manager

Date: February 8, 2019

Re: Consideration – Authorize Request for Rural Center REDI Community Improvement Grant Funds for a Historic Survey Update for the Elizabeth City Historic District Heading and Subject Heading

BACKGROUND:

Over the past several years, Elizabeth City has seen a revived interest in historic preservation, particularly within the downtown district. To a significant extent, renovation projects depended on historic preservation tax credits to make them financially feasible. In order to get these tax credits, the structures had to be included in the Inventory of Historic Resources of the Elizabeth City Historic District, which is listed in the National Register of Historic Places. The inventory was taken in 1976 and 1977, and the rules are that, except for exceptional cases, buildings need to be at least 50 years old to be included in the inventory. Based on that rule, any buildings built or significantly altered after 1926 were not allowed to be included in the inventory, and are not eligible for federal and state tax credits. If the inventory is updated now, the cutoff date would be changed from 1927 to 1959 or 1960. There are several significant buildings built or remodeled after 1927 in our downtown that could benefit from the tax credits and create jobs and businesses in Elizabeth City.

In order to update the inventory, the City would need to hire a consultant to conduct the survey and submit it for approval by the State Historic Preservation Office, followed by the National Park Service. The survey would confirm the items previously on the inventory, remove ones that no longer qualify or have been demolished, and add new ones that now qualify. These changes could potentially alter the boundaries of the

Elizabeth City National Register District. There are currently about 185 buildings in the inventory for this District; at least a dozen have been demolished, and there may be as many as a dozen more that will be added. The work by the consultant is estimated to cost between \$15,000 and \$25,000. At staff's recommendation, the City Council considered and approved support of this project during the November 26, 2018 Regular Meeting; the Council requested up to \$25,000 from the Tourism Development Authority (TDA) from its unrestricted fund balance. TDA approved the City's funding request.

ANALYSIS:

The request for qualifications (RFQ) for the update of Elizabeth City's Historic District survey closed on January 30, 2019. The City received one application from Mary Ruffin Hanbury of Hanbury Preservation Consulting. Ms. Hanbury's application was reviewed and scored by a designated committee, consisting of City staff. The score of the application was based on evaluation criteria listed in the RFQ. This criterion consisted of quality of proposal, consultant qualifications and experience, availability and capacity of consultant and a list of references from past projects. Ms. Hanbury's knowledge of the North Carolina Preservation Office (NC HPO) and National Park Service (NPS) standards will be key elements for the City as we begin the process of a successful National Register nomination. The Council is being asked to consider accepting the Hanbury Preservation Consulting proposal in a companion agenda item. In order to complete an inventory of the entire district and bordering historic properties, the City may incur costs over and above the \$25,000 received from TDA. As with any project or initiative, staff continues to identify grant funds that will support our economic and capital improvement projects.

The Rural Center helps communities articulate clear visions, invest in building their assets, and create cultures of collaborative problem solving. The Rural Center serves as one of North Carolina's leading advocate for its many rural communities. The Rural Center undertakes a number of efforts to ensure that rural communities are equipped with skilled, committed, and informed leaders. The Center's flagship leadership program, the Rural Economic Development Institute (REDI), has trained nearly 1,200 rural leaders. REDI offers participants collaborative leadership skills and rural development strategies to help our homegrown leaders make meaningful impact in their communities. In addition, graduates of the program become part of a larger alumni network of leaders. They also have the opportunity to participate in advanced training, continuing education, and an exclusive grant-funding network. In early January, the Rural Center announced the REDI Community Improvement Grant, whereby the Center would be awarding mini-grants of up to \$5,000 each to REDI alumni whose organizations' projects directly address one of the four building blocks of economic development: business development, workforce development, physical infrastructure, and social/civic infrastructure. Assistant City Manager Angela Cole completed the REDI program in May 2017. The historic district

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inventory project satisfies many of the Center's economic development building blocks. In order to qualify for funding, applicants must provide the requisite match. There is a 1:1 cash match for the REDI grant, which will be covered by TDA funding.

FINANCIAL:

The Finance Committee discussed this matter during their February 7, 2019 meeting. Upon motion made by Councilwoman Young, seconded by Councilwoman Hummer, the Committee unanimously recommended approval by the City Council.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION:

By motion, authorize staff to apply for the Rural Economic Development Institute (REDI) Alumni Grant funding in the amount of \$5,000; and that the City appropriate funding to cover the 1:1 match in the amount of \$5,000 in support of the Elizabeth City Historic District Inventory of Historic Properties project.



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Subj: REDI Grant Information

During the February 7, 2019 Finance Committee meeting, the request for consideration to approve the selection of the historical consultant was followed by a companion item, which requested authorization for staff to apply for a REDI grant. In November 2018, the Council authorized staff to secure the services of a historical consultant via funds of **up to \$25,000** from TDA; any additional portion would require funding through a different source. The lone response to the RFP issued by the City, Hanbury Preservation Consulting, originally bid \$27,750 for services; however, staff managed to negotiate that price down to \$25,000. Additionally, due to the tight deadline for making application for grant consideration, staff had to submit without knowing the finalized bid amount.

Although not explicitly stated in the memo, the REDI grant was initially sought to cover the \$2,750 difference between the \$25,000 funded by TDA and the \$27,750 bid price. In spite of this, staff would still like to apply for the REDI grant; if awarded \$5,000, staff will only use \$20,000 of TDA funds, thereby reserving more of our unrestricted TDA fund balance.