



Lower Paxton Township seeking consultant for market analyses of potential Friendship Center changes

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Aspects of Lower Paxton Township's Friendship Center soon could be put under an economic microscope.

That work could cost about \$38,000 if township supervisors move forward with one Washington, D.C.-based consulting firm, according to the company's estimate for services.

Township officials Tuesday night zeroed in on four consulting firms who had responded to the township's request for proposals concerning economic analyses of potential changes to the center.

Basically, the township wants to see how six proposed changes to the Friendship Center's facility or programs would impact the bottom line of its operating fund.

Those changes include:

- Expanding the fitness center into the social hall;
- Expanding the fitness center into the gymnasium;
- Building an addition to expand the fitness center;
- Converting the open-air patio abutting the natatorium into a splash pad;
- Modifying programs to offer only those that maximize revenues over expenses;
- Or implementing a premium membership alternative that includes the cost of certain programs.

"We're considering implementing one or more of them. And we want to know, if we do implement it, what is the potential cost benefit," George Wolfe, township manager, said. "We don't want to implement something that a market consultant says, 'It's going to cost you more to build it, than what it's going to make,' in simple terms."

The township supervisors recently have been talking about [closing the gap in the Friend Center's operating fund](#), which has a history of running a deficit.

That operating fund ended fiscal 2012 with \$1,924,678 in revenues and \$2,088,411 in expenditures — adding up to a \$163,733 deficit, according the township's key indicator report for the fourth quarter of 2012.

The deficit was \$123,289 in fiscal 2011 and \$67,710 in fiscal 2010, Wolfe had said.

Wolfe said the township had heard back from four companies regarding the market analyses, with expected costs ranging from \$15,500 to more than \$45,750.

Township staff recommended two companies within that range — The Sports Management Group of Berkeley, Calif. with an \$18,500 proposal and Brailsford & Dunlavey, Inc. of Washington, D.C. with a \$38,130 proposal. After some discussion, township supervisors asked staff to move forward with looking into the more expensive of the two.

Wolfe said there's a good chance township staff could present a proposed agreement with Brailsford & Dunlavey, Inc. to supervisors for approval at their meeting 7:30 p.m. Monday at the township offices, 425 Prince St.

Regarding the other two proposals, Wolfe said township staff ruled out an estimated \$15,500 proposal from Ballard King & Associates.

While the company did an operations audit on the facility in 2012, Wolfe said township staff didn't feel comfortable with the company's ability to do economic analyses. Plus, he said it would be "good" to have "new eyes" on the facility.

Township staff nixed the most expensive proposal at more than \$45,750 from The Sports Facilities Advisory because of the cost, Wolfe said.

Township supervisors agreed Brailsford & Dunlavey, Inc. was the more expensive of the two recommended choices. But at least a few seemed to favor the company.

Lower Paxton Township Supervisor David Blain pointed to its past project experience on the East Coast and proximity to the area as positives.

The company also did the original market analysis for the Friendship Center 15 years ago, Wolfe said.

"It's more money," Blain said. "But at the end of the day, there's too much at stake with regards to what we're doing with the Friendship Center to be nickeling-and-diming who the consultant's going to be."

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