

A community planning process is supposed to be that – a process for the community to come together to build a united vision for their shared future. But we heard that instead, the Planning Department was going to hire a PR firm to sell the draft 2040 Comp Plan to the Council Members who were not on board. To do this, they were going to manipulate public opinion about the plan by hiring a PR firm.

When heard this, we were incredulous. It was hard to think that the City would subvert the will of a community like this. So, to find out if this was true, Tim Keane filed a Freedom of Information Act with the City to ask if there were any contracts with any PR firms related to the 2040 Plan. We had heard rumors of the names but didn't know for sure, so he did include a specific name but the FOIA was written broadly enough to include any PR firm related to the 2040 Plan.

He was told by Heather Worthington that there was no contract. Here is the email:

From: Worthington, Heather M <heather.worthington@minneapolismn.gov<mailto:heather.worthington@minneapolismn.gov>>
Date: Wednesday, Aug 01, 2018, 8:59 PM
To: Zygowicz, Kaina J. [redacted] Carl, Casey J. <Casey.Carl@minneapolismn.gov<mailto:Casey.Carl@minneapolismn.gov>>
Cc: Keane, Timothy J. [redacted]
Subject: RE: MGDPA Request

I do not have any data pertaining to any "public relations consulting services concerning the Minneapolis 2040 Plan". I do not have any data pertaining to "public relations firms relating to the Minneapolis 2040 Plan. CPED has not hired any firm that goes by the name of "Gotham Government Relations and Communications of New York".

Thank you,

HW

This was a lie.

We then heard there was going to be a meeting to talk about communications strategy for the 2040 Plan. The biggest thing was the workplan for Goff Public, a P.R. firm. Goff's term sheet for its work was item 4.

Agenda

Comp Plan Steering Committee Agenda
Thursday August 23, 2018
City Hall 333
4:00pm - 5:00pm

1. Welcome and introductions
2. Process recommendation

CPC COW work sessions and markup: 8/16 to 10/18
CPC Public Hearing and action: 10/29
City Council Public Hearing at special Committee of The Whole: Week of 11/12
City Council COW action: 12/5
City Council adoption: 12/7

3. Review of communications plan for final draft

The attached document is intended to:

- Reframe the narrative and restate the goals around the work (the frame we never had)
- Forecast and frame the final draft rollout (themes, revisions, executive summary, etc...)
- Define roles and responsibilities of the Steering Committee, City Council and Planning Commission
- Clearly communicate the process for final adoption

4. Term Sheet (handout at meeting)

Who is Goff Public? A P.R. firm run by Chris Georgacas that bills itself as the top public relations and advocacy firm in Minnesota. It is run by Chris Georgacas, former chair of the Minnesota Republican Party.

Goff Public | Minnesota's Top Public Relations and Advocacy Firm

<https://goffpublic.com/>

Partner with an award-winning PR firm in the Twin Cities. Goff Public's experienced team specializes in media relations, government lobbying, and much more.

Our Team

The Goff Public team brings unsurpassed experience to our ...

About Us

For over 50 years, Goff Public has been a top PR firm in the Twin ...

Contact

In a crisis? Make Goff Public your first call! Learn more about our ...

[More results from goffpublic.com »](#)

Chris Duffy

Chris Duffy, Vice President, Public Relations. Email: [Duffy ...](#)

Clients

From top universities to leading philanthropic causes, our PR ...

Jennifer Hellman

As Goff Public's lead media trainer and spokesperson coach ...

Goff Public - Home | Facebook

<https://www.facebook.com> > Places > Saint Paul, Minnesota > Lobbyist

★★★★★ Rating: 4.7 - 6 votes

Goff Public, Saint Paul, MN. 489 likes · 1 talking about this · 16 were here. Founded in 1966, Goff Public is an independent communications agency, based...

The term sheet that Goff presented at the meeting is below.



444 Cedar Street | Suite 910 | Saint Paul, MN 55101 | 651 · 292 · 8062

City of Minneapolis 2040 Comprehensive Plan Communications strategy for release of draft 2 DRAFT: August 15, 2018

Goals

- Reframe the narrative surrounding the comprehensive plan and the context of current and future growth in Minneapolis
- Demonstrate that city staff have seriously considered public comments
- Highlight key policy changes that have been made as a result of public comments
- Outline the upcoming process to adopt the 2040 Comprehensive Plan

Tactics

- Meet with Council Members to discuss their own feedback to the plan as well as feedback they have received from constituents
- Create marketing materials for Council Members
 - Messaging and FAQ
 - Social media content calendar with suggested posts
 - Content for Council Member electronic newsletters
- Identify third-party validators who can publicly support key elements of the plan (e.g., land use, density, affordable housing) and develop shared messaging
 - Consider media pitches, op-eds, letters to the editor, newsletter stories, social media
- Have embargoed conversations with reporters in advance of the release of draft 2
 - Provide background on decisions made in the first draft, address misconceptions/misinformation shared during the public comment period, share high-level feedback received (point reporters to the full comments online), highlight changes being proposed in draft 2
 - Ideally hold these briefings within a week of releasing draft 2
- Brief Council Members on the changes in draft 2
 - Ideally hold these briefings as close together as possible and as close to the release date as possible
- Release draft 2 (messaging will focus on high-level changes to the plan made as a result of public feedback and the process going forward to adopt the plan)
 - Press release, social media, website updates
 - News conference with supportive Council Members and third-party validators
- Continued communications regarding draft 2
 - Public meetings/open houses to explain the plan
 - Communications from third-party validators
 - Limit electronic communications

Timeline

- Identify third-party validators (August-September)
- Embargoed conversations with reporters (days or a week before Council Member briefings)
- Council Member briefings (as close to the release date as possible)
- Release draft 2 (end of September)
- Continued communications regarding draft 2 (October-December)

Messages (as of August 15, 2018)

- City staff have reviewed more than 10,000 comments received during the comment period.
- They have read each comment, taken them all seriously, and will be considering ways to incorporate changes into the plan to reflect this robust public feedback.
- Feedback and comments included:
 - A wide spectrum of ideas on land use, density, affordable housing, and community growth
 - The need to create synergies between educational/professional training programs and the City's goals (e.g., green building, preservation)
 - The need to provide more support to small businesses, especially in vulnerable areas, to avoid displacement
 - The need for multi-generational housing that allows residents with strong ties to a neighborhood to stay in that neighborhood throughout their life
 - The importance of supporting residents who want to improve the public realm in their neighborhoods
 - The importance of strengthening inter-jurisdictional relationships, such as those between City and the County, school district, Metro Transit and nonprofit sectors, to do the work outlined in the comprehensive plan
- A new version of the draft plan will be released in late September, at which point it will go to the Planning Commission for their consideration and then to the City Council. The public will continue to be engaged throughout the process.

There were a number of very disturbing things about the work Goff proposed to do:

- “Reframe the narrative” away from what the public was saying it wanted and towards the vision that the small number of proponents had. To do this, they were going to mount a campaign to sell the plan to residents and Council Members who were not yet on-board. News outlets. Social media. Articles. Media pitches. Op-eds. This goes completely against the idea of community engagement and community control of the direction of the City. Instead of planning together, the Planning Department and its advocate on the City Council were going to sell the public using taxpayer money.
- “Hold meetings with Council Members as close to the release date as possible” to basically cut most Council Members out of input into the second draft of the plan.
- “Have embargoed conversations with reporters days or a week before meeting with Council Members.” This meant that the press knew about the contents of the second draft before most of the Council Members. This means Council Members would not be able to request changes. It also meant that the press knew about the plan weeks before the public did. I remember getting a call from the press on the day that the plan was released. The guy knew the plan intimately, asking me about a number of points. I had to say that I hadn’t had time to read the several hundred-page document in the couple hours since it had been released. Unsurprisingly, the story was positive because none of us knew what the negatives were at that point.
- Astroturf by identifying “third party validators” who would be recruited to produce media to support the plan. It was not clear what “third party validators” would receive in return or if they would be paid. We know, for example, that on the Goff invoices, they list that they had contacted the “Center for Economic Inclusion,” a non-profit that advocates for inclusion of people of color in the economy. We also know that the director wrote a letter to MinnPost supporting the plan, a letter that also showed her picture. This article was passed around by proponents to show that people of color were supporting the plan, despite overwhelming opposition from communities of color. You can see the article here: <https://www.minnpost.com/community-voices/2018/11/minneapolis-2040-plan-will-help-create-an-economy-that-works-for-everyone/>

- Produce messaging that city staff will be “considering ways to incorporate changes into the plan to reflect this robust feedback.” This was just blatantly false. Other than changing from fourplexes to triplexes because developers told planners that fourplexes triggered the ADA and would require elevators, virtually nothing changed from the first draft to the second draft. And nothing would change from the second draft, regardless of how much opposition came from the public.

Most disturbing, however, is that Goff was hired to persuade Council Members. That the Planning Department, with the blessing of Lisa Bender, hired a P.R. firm to lead public policy instead of having the City Council lead policy. For Council Members who opposed Bender and the Planning Department, they would have Goff direct P.R. at them in order to persuade them. (And it worked.)

We knew then that there was a contract, so I told Mr. Keane that I would FOIA it myself. But instead of asking Planning if a contract existed, I would have the FOIA staff ask the Finance staff. The Finance Staff did send me a copy of the contract. This is the front page of the contract.

Minneapolis
City of Lakes

City of Minneapolis
Standard Contract Form
(For Professional Services Contracts up to \$100,000 – Target Market)

City Contract Number (Assigned by the City Contract Management Office): **C-43963**

City Department responsible for the Contract: **CPED**

I. CONTRACT

THIS CONTRACT is made between the City of Minneapolis, a Minnesota municipal corporation and a home rule charter city, referred to as the “City” and **Goff Public, Inc.**, referred to as the “Consultant,” for **strategic communications** services to be provided under the terms of this agreement (the “Contract”).

II. SCOPE OF SERVICES

The Consultant agrees to perform the following services for the City:

The communications consultant will provide strategic guidance and development of communications materials for further engagement with stakeholders related to the 2040 Comprehensive Plan.

The consultant will work with a team of in-house communications staff, planners, and executive team to produce and disseminate informational material in various formats, including print, social media, visual (photography and videography), editorial, and news releases.

Media strategy and proactive media outreach will include:

- Strategic guidance on communications and community relations
- Content for social media, emails, and other digital communications

Jan 19, 2017

**CITY OF MINNEAPOLIS
FINANCE DEPT. COPY**

• Print collateral materials for a wide variety of audiences

III. COMPENSATION

The Consultant shall be compensated as follows:

Hourly rate: \$195.00
Invoices to be paid net 30 days

The total compensation under this Contract for services (including reimbursable expenses) shall not exceed **\$80,000.00**. The Consultant shall submit itemized invoices for services rendered. The City shall have no obligation to pay any invoices received more than 120 days after the Termination Date indicated in Section IV of this Contract.

Expense Reimbursement

"Eligible reimbursable expenses" shall be paid upon submission of itemized invoice to the Contract Manager identified in Section XVI of this Contract. The City shall only pay for eligible reimbursable expenses. All travel must be conducted in accordance with the City's *Travel Reimbursement Conditions for Consultants*, (<http://citytalks/wcm1/groups/public/@/finance/documents/webcontent/wcms1p-096175.pdf>)

Note: The sum total for Compensation and eligible reimbursable expenses under this *Standard Contract Form* shall not exceed One Hundred Thousand (\$100,000) dollars.

IV. EFFECTIVE DATE AND TERMINATION DATE

This Contract shall be in full force and effect from **July 13, 2018** through **December 31, 2019** unless otherwise extended by the City or terminated earlier under Section XV, Cancellation, Default and Remedies. The duration of this Contract including any amendments shall not exceed five years.

V. SUBSTITUTIONS AND ASSIGNMENTS

Services by the Consultant will be performed by the following person(s):

Sara Thatcher
Pierre Willette
Ashley Aram

The contract went into force July 13th and was for \$80,000. This means the contract was in force before Mr. Keane filed his FOIA. It also means that Heather Worthington and David Frank were working to put this contract into place much earlier than July, as it takes weeks to put together a contract and get it approved within the City. It should also be noted that the contract is below the threshold for it having to go to the City Council. So, most City Council members would have had no idea that this was even going on. They had no idea a P.R. firm had been hired to lobby them.

XVI. NOTICES

Any notice or demand, authorized or required under this Contract shall be in writing and shall be sent by U.S. mail (receipt of which shall be deemed to have occurred five days after the notice or demand was delivered to the U.S. Postal Service) to the other party as follows:

To the Consultant (*include complete mailing address here*):
Sara Thatcher, Account Director
444 Cedar Street
Suite 910
Saint Paul, MN 55101

Is it possible that Ms. Worthington didn't know about the contract? David Frank, the head of CPED signed off on it. But she was listed as the Contract Manager. This means that she is the point person that the contractor works with in executing the contract. She was overseeing the work of the consulting team and approving their expenditures. And this contract was executed before Mr. Keane's FOIA.

Jan 19, 2017

To the City (*include complete mailing address here*):

David Frank, Department Head
Director
CPED
105 Fifth Avenue South, #200
Minneapolis, MN 55401

Heather Worthington, Contract Manager
Director, Long Range Planning
CPED
105 Fifth Avenue South, #200
Minneapolis, MN 55401

XVII. INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY

Her name is on the invoices and she had been approving payments prior to Mr. Keane's FIOA request. Here is an invoice where you see that Heather was the contract manager and that \$10,000 of the \$80,000 had already been spent by 7/31/18. That means that the contract started, and she was already overseeing work before Mr. Keane filed his request about whether there was a P.R. firm that had been hired to promote the 2040 Plan.

XE18221023013

Invoice

Goff Public
 444 Cedar Street
 Suite 910
 St. Paul, MN 55101
 Phone # 651-292-8062
 Fax # 651-292-8091

Date	Invoice #
7/31/2018	15319

Bill To
City of Minneapolis Heather Worthington 105 Fifth Ave. S., #200 Minneapolis, MN 55401

P.O. No.	Account #	Terms	Due Date
C-43963		Net 30 Days	8/30/2018
Description			Amount
Public relations services - comprehensive plan			10,383.75
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strategy meeting with Heather and Paul • Strategy meeting with city communications staff • Full-day workshop to review public comments • Reviewing comprehensive plan and media coverage • Attending Southwest Journal interview • Coordination with city communications staff • Drafting Councilmember newsletter • Media strategy regarding public comments 			
Subtotal			\$10,383.75
Payments/Credits			\$0.00
Balance Due			\$10,383.75

XE18277010017

Invoice

Goff Public
 444 Cedar Street
 Suite 910
 St. Paul, MN 55101
 Phone # 651-292-8062
 Fax # 651-292-8091

Date	Invoice #
9/30/2018	15383

Bill To
City of Minneapolis Heather Worthington 105 Fifth Ave. S., #200 Minneapolis, MN 55401

P.O. No.	Account #	Terms	Due Date
C-43963		Net 30 Days	10/30/2018
Description			Amount
Public relations services - comprehensive plan (72.25 hours)			14,088.75
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strategy calls and meetings with client • Reviewing coverage • Writing and facilitating feedback on final draft communications materials (press release, executive summary, Council Member briefing materials, community email) • Pitching, scheduling and staffing reporter interviews • Developing briefing materials for reporter interviews • Call with Center for Economic Inclusion • Council Member Bender meeting 			

Earlier I mentioned that Goff proposed astroturfing in their term sheet. One of the problems of the Plan was that it purported to be addressing racial equity while doing pretty much nothing for communities of color. To help address this, Goff recruited the Center for Economic Inclusion to write in support of the 2040 Plan. You can see that they worked with the Center, according to their invoice. I don't know how widespread this practice was as I only have gotten the first four months of invoices from Goff.

You can see the resulting article here: <https://www.minnpost.com/community-voices/2018/11/minneapolis-2040-plan-will-help-create-an-economy-that-works-for-everyone/>

There is no question that there was a contract for P.R. for the 2040 Plan and that Heather Worthington lied to hide it. The documents are clear.

I went to the Urban Land Institute's most recent breakfast and listened to Janne Flisrand who led the Neighbors for More Neighbors group. She talked about how getting the 2040 Plan passed was simply a grass-roots effort from people enthusiastic about this plan. But that is far from the truth. The truth is that Minneapolis residents overwhelmingly rejected the first version of the plan. Instead of re-writing it to meet what people envisioned for their city, the Planning Department hired a P.R. firm to sell the plan. Heather Worthington hid this fact by lying when requested to answer whether a P.R. firm had been hired even though the contract was already signed, and the P.R. firm was already on the ground running.

You have to admit, it worked. In the end, they got 12 of the Council Members to approve the plan even though there was overwhelming opposition. Goff earned every penny they were paid. To the victor goes the spoils, right?

Planning is supposed to be about a community dreaming together. About taking the ideas of those that live here and weaving them together into a shared vision. But the Minneapolis 2040 Plan was not this. Instead, we had a small number of people create a plan that most people didn't want. Instead of changing the plan to reflect what the community wanted, it hired a P.R. firm to sell this unwanted plan. And they were successful.

But that does not make it right. People should be outraged. We deserve a better government than this.