

THE FIRST WORD

September, 2006

Owasso Editorial Encourages Bidding; ACEC OKLAHOMA Responds

In an August 17th editorial, *The Owasso Reporter* chastised the Owasso City Council for awarding two engineering contracts without taking competitive bids.

ACEC OKLAHOMA responded with a Letter to the Editor commending the Council for their action and for supporting the principals of QBS by selecting the engineer on qualifications and technical expertise, not low price.

Below is the Editorial and ACEC OKLAHOMA's response:

Owasso Reporter Editorial *Competitive Bid System Should Be Consistent*

On a night when a new Audit Committee was established by the Owasso City Council, a blind spot was revealed.

Councilors approved a contract for a design project and extended another with Meshek and Associates without taking competitive bids.

When the extension was recommended, the vote was 2-1 to approve. Mayor Stephen Cataudella and vice mayor Brent Colgan voted in favor. Councilor Susan Kimball cast the lone no vote.

Councilors D.J. Gall and Wayne Guevara were absent.

Kimball asked if bids were sought for both the proposals, which they weren't.

The engineering firm has built a strong relationship with Owasso's Public Works Department. It is the "go-to guy" when it comes to drainage modeling for any residential or commercial development. Overall, they do a great job and have helped the city save thousands, maybe millions of dollars due to their sophisticated drainage design modeling process.

The two contracts, one for \$45,000 and the other for

\$60,000, doesn't seem like a lot of money when looking at the millions of dollars the city spends each year.

The issue is competitive bidding. In some cases the city seeks bids and some cases it does not.

According to state statutes Title 60 and 61, any contract for public construction, labor or equipment costing more than \$25,000 must be competitive bid.

According to City Attorney Julie Lombardi, the city's own ordinances require it to have competitive bids for goods and services costing more than \$25,000.

However, the city is exempt from soliciting bids when it comes to professional services like legal, medical, accounting and design services in this case.

While legally the city did comply when it awarded Meshek and Associates with the two projects, both were more than \$25,000, it should seriously consider being consistent with state law. Even though state law allows the exemption, Owasso residents could benefit from competitive bidding on all good, construction and design services. Councilors are urged to make the process consistent whether state law requires it or not.

See ACEC OKLAHOMA's Response on Page 2

ACEC OKLAHOMA Responds

(Cont from Page 1)

August 18, 2006

Editor
The Owasso Reporter

Dear Sirs:

Regarding "Competitive Bid System Should Be Consistent (Our Views, August 17), the Owasso City Council should be commended for procuring professional engineering services in a manner consistent with both Federal and State law, and for assuring the taxpayers of Owasso that they are receiving the highest QUALITY professional services.

In 1972, Congress passed the Brooks Act (P.L.92-582) requiring federal agencies to use Qualifications-Based Selection (QBS) for architectural and engineering services; a process to select the best firm to provide services by evaluating professional qualifications and technical expertise related to the specific project at a negotiated "fair and reasonable" fee for that service. Oklahoma followed suit in 1974, enacting the State Consultants Act (O.S. §61, 60-65) for all state projects. Since that time, many Oklahoma cities and towns have adopted similar ordinances. Today QBS is the preferred procurement process for A/E services, endorsed by many national organizations including the America Public Works Association, American Water Works Association, and the American Bar Association.

Design professionals do not sell a commodity that can be quantified into a single "low-bid." Rather, they use their expertise and knowledge to provide a highly skilled and distinctive service to design the most economical and cost-effective systems for the owner. Your editorial even acknowledged that the firm selected has *"...helped the city save thousands, maybe even millions of dollars due to their sophisticated draining design modeling process."*

Had a "low-bid" process been used, do you believe that the City, and more importantly, the Taxpayers, would have received that same level of service? We would submit that instead of a "sophisticated" process, the City and Taxpayers would have received an "easy" design from less experienced personnel who evaluated fewer alternative processes.

Over the life of a project, generally a 30-40 year life cycle, design-related services account for approximately one-half of one percent of the total design, construction and maintenance costs. Yet, the original design of a project plays a major role in determining the other 99.5% of the project's life-cycle costs. Which is more cost effective: A project that is well thought out, well designed, and lasts for 40 years but cost a few thousand dollars more to design up-front, or, a project that was "easy" to design, saved some up-front engineering costs, but only lasts 20 years?

Look at it from a more personal level. If you needed open-heart surgery, would you want the most experienced, technically capable surgeon who charged a fair fee for their service, or simply the cheapest open-heart surgeon you could find?

We think the answer is clear, and that the Owasso City Council has made the wisest choice for the Taxpayers of Owasso.

Sincerely,

AMERICAN COUNCIL OF ENGINEERING COMPANIES OF
OKLAHOMA
James F. Sullins, CAE
President & CEO

ACEC OKLAHOMA PAC Needs Your Support!!!!

With the election season in full swing, ACEC OKLAHOMA Chairman of the Board Jim Stewart has issued a special challenge to all member firm principals to contribute to ACEC OKLAHOMA PAC. ACEC OKLAHOMA PAC was formed to give the consulting engineering community a voice in the election process through the support of candidates who will support our profession as well as be open to ACEC OKLAHOMA's position on issues of importance to the profession.

If ACEC OKLAHOMA is going to continue to be successful in protecting the interests of the consulting engineering community, your support and contributions to ACEC OKLAHOMA PAC is critical! Chairman Stewart has challenging ACEC OKLAHOMA members to match he and his partner's contributions of \$250.00 each. If you can't match the \$250.00 contribution, send what you can. Most importantly.....send something!!!!

ACEC OKLAHOMA needs a strong, well-funded PAC, which can only be strong and well funded with your support. Send your contribution to ACEC OKLAHOMA PAC today!!!!

ACEC OKLAHOMA PAC thanks these member firm principals who have responded to Chairman Stewart's challenge:

Gary Finn, Terracon
Phil Brown, Brown Engineering
Jennifer Fair, PSA Consulting Engineers
Bill McVey, PSA Consulting Engineers
Michael Fair, PSA Consulting Engineers
Jim Stewart, PSA Consulting Engineers
Tom Hendrick, Wallace Engineering
Steve Ford, Zahl-Ford
Bob Williams, Poe & Associates
Jim Benson, Poe & Associates

Add your name to this list! Send your contribution today!

Still Time to Register for PSMJ Project Managers Bootcamp

PSMJ, in association with ACEC OKLAHOMA, will host PSMJ's critically acclaimed **PROJECT MANAGERS BOOTCAMP**, Thursday-Friday, October 26-27 at the Courtyard by Marriott in downtown Oklahoma City.

A special ACEC OKLAHOMA Registration Form is available on the ACEC OKLAHOMA website (www.acecok.org) for your use. By using the ACEC OKLAHOMA Registration Form, you will receive free of charge PSMJ's Project Management Checklist, which will provide you and your firm 47 innovative ways to increase efficiencies and financial returns, from addressing quality control and growing client relationships to generating positive cash flow and attaining winning negotiation skills. This is a \$47.00 value FREE OF CHARGE to anyone using the ACEC OKLAHOMA Registration Form.

Two years ago, PSMJ and ACEC OKLAHOMA conducted the PROJECT MANAGERS BOOTCAMP, with over 50 Oklahoma engineers and architects attending. It was the highest rated program ever hosted by ACEC OKLAHOMA.

PSMJ literally wrote the book on project management methodology in the A/E/C industry. When you attend this Bootcamp, you master the skills necessary to develop a baseline project planning method in your firm. You'll learn how to ensure client comfort and profitability on every project through real-world lessons from the world's leading A/E/C project management experts.

PSMJ seminars are the best because each and every class is tailored to participants' specific needs. In each session, our instructors work with you to identify your specific needs and address crucial issues facing each and every attendee. PSMJ uses this unique GUARANTEED approach because with nearly 30 years of experience, we KNOW what the issues are and have compiled a 300-page workbook to address virtually any subject that arises. And, if it is not covered in our workbook, our instructors follow up with you to get you the information you need.

Registration for the PROJECT MANAGERS BOOTCAMP is \$995.00 per person if you pre-register by September 26th. After that date, registration is \$1,095.00 per person. Also, discounts for three or more attendees from the same firm are available.

Also, all attendees will earn 12 Professional Development Hours (PDHs).

Space may be limited, so don't delay in registering. For more information, call ACEC OKLAHOMA at (405) 525-7696.

The Human Connection: Bring Your Presentations to Life!

SMPS Oklahoma, along with AIA Central Oklahoma, AIA Eastern Oklahoma, ACEC Oklahoma, and AGC of Oklahoma, would like to offer this dynamic workshop to all of their members.

In this hands-on workshop, we help you relax, be yourself and communicate your message with clarity and confidence. Through teaching, discussion, participation in theater exercises and individual coaching, you will learn to:

- Connect with your audience
- Identify and drop nervous habits
- Prepare and practice your material
- Make technical material come to life
- Use graphics and props wisely

The seminar will be lead by Carol Doscher, the President, Trainer and Coach of Graceworks, Inc. Doscher marketed design and construction services for seven years. She has published numerous articles on presentation skills, and has put those skills to use having performed on and off-Broadway as well as worldwide with her church choir.

"Great presenters dare to open up and share themselves with their audience. It takes desire, courage and, most of all, grace to be yourself. Our clients are living proof that the Human Connection works!"

Registration fee is \$70 for ACEC OKLAHOMA members if registered by September 20th. After that date, registration fee is \$85.

For registration information, contact ACEC OKLAHOMA at (405) 525-7696.

Welcome New Member

ACEC OKLAHOMA is excited to welcome our newest member firm.

Structures America Innovative Engineering, PLC, is located at 11902 N. Pennsylvania in Oklahoma City.

Syam Mannava is the principal of the one-person firm offering Structural Design and Consulting Services.

We welcome Syam and Structures American Innovative Engineering, and look forward to having them as active members of ACEC OKLAHOMA.

Oklahoma Transportation Center Receives National Designation

Luminaries from political, academic and transportation-related spheres on both the state and national levels crowded the State Capitol Thursday as U.S. Sen. Jim Inhofe presented Gov. Brad Henry a plaque from the U.S. Department of Transportation. The plaque was to commemorate Congress' recent designation of the Oklahoma Transportation Center as a National University Transportation Center (UTC).

The OTC is a consortium of three of Oklahoma's universities: the University of Oklahoma, Oklahoma State University and Langston University. The Center was founded in 2001 for transportation-related research and technological development. With its recent congressional designation as a UTC, the center and its participating universities have access to millions of dollars in federal research grants "to produce world-class curriculums, workforce development strategies and transportation research and technology," said Neal McCaleb, executive director of the center.

The center is one of 60 transportation centers across the nation, McCaleb said, but one of only 10 that are designated by Congress as UTCs. "The federal government will provide \$16 million over the next five years to be matched by local resources from state and private investors, so we hope to spend \$32 million over the next five years," said McCaleb.

"This is exactly the kind of partnership between private industry, government and institutions of higher learning that is necessary to make Oklahoma the research capital of the plains," said Henry.

McCaleb credited Henry's efforts to obtain state appropriations for university research through his Economic Development Generating Excellence (EDGE) plan with contributing to the opportunity afforded by the development. "With the governor's leadership and the legislature's work to expand research capabilities through the EDGE initiative, Oklahoma's universities have unprecedented opportunities to lead in technology innovation," said McCaleb.

He also credited Henry's rival in November's gubernatorial election, U.S. Rep. Ernest Istook, among others, for their efforts to obtain the necessary federal funding. "Without the leadership and tireless efforts of Senator Inhofe, Representative Istook and the entire congressional delegation to secure the national university program in Oklahoma, we would not be here today," he said. "Representative Istook...has been instrumental in funding efforts for the Oklahoma Transportation Center."

Istook, who served on the House Appropriations Committee, said, "After years of obtaining appropriations for this work,

it's great to have it firmly established as a university transportation center and be eligible for ongoing funding. This is good news for Oklahoma and our researchers."

Many of Oklahoma's congressional delegation who were on hand for Thursday's proceedings credited Oklahoma Transportation Director Gary Ridley for his lobbying efforts. "Thank God for Gary Ridley," said U.S. Rep. Tom Cole. "I spend a great deal of time talking about Oklahoma's challenges with aging infrastructure but the problem is truly a national one, as well," said Ridley. "For our state universities to participate in developing technologies that allow us to extend the life of aging infrastructures around the world is truly exciting."

McCaleb gave examples of some of the projects under development by Oklahoma's UTC. One is development of a freight movement model allowing for prediction of economic impacts of increased or decreased freight movement throughout the state, as well as predicting the impact of major disturbances, such as the Interstate-40 bridge collapse at Webbers Falls and road closures resulting from wildfires.

Another is a software package that acquires accident information and other pertinent data from the state Department of Transportation's mainframe computer, analyzes it interactively and recommends solutions to traffic problems.

ACEC's 2006-2007 Industry Trends Survey Now Available

The *2006-2007 ACEC Design & Construction Industry Trends Survey*—a comprehensive statistical analysis of current engineering firm operations, including projections on the future marketplace, has just been released.

The nationwide survey of engineering firms features critical demographic, financial and strategic industry data, all categorized by firm size, region, market sector, and discipline. Important summaries of vital economic, social and political drivers for various industry markets are included as well.

Survey results present a wide range of business trends and industry forecasts, providing a vital basis for sound management decisions.

To order, call ACEC at (202) 347-7474, or, visit the ACEC website at www.acec.org and click on "Bookstore".