



June 30, 2017

RE: REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS FOR DEMONSTRATION FARM

Introduction

The City of Cotati (City) invites proposals from operators interested in leasing a 4.37-acre City-owned farm near downtown Cotati for low intensity recreation, education, and agricultural operations. The farm (“Property”) is adjacent to Cotati City Hall, and is close to the historic downtown plaza (**Exhibit A**).

Background: The Veronda-Falletti Ranch

Historically, the Property was a chicken ranch and also hosted an assortment of livestock. In recent years, the Property has primarily been used for sheep grazing, and is currently running sheep from Split Rail Farms of Penngrove. The Property includes a farm house, an adjacent water tower, a barn, and a structure formerly used to house chickens. The Property is served by City utilities, including water and electricity. The farmhouse is also served by telephone, cable and City sewer. The Property is primarily grazing land, with a small orchard at the front of the property.

In 2008, the City and the Sonoma County Agricultural and Open Space District (Open Space District) purchased the property through the Open Space District matching grant program. The matching grant obligations are memorialized in the matching grant agreement (**Exhibit B**). As a condition of the matching grant program, the Property was preserved forever using a conservation easement (**Exhibit C**), which restricted the use of the Property to uses compatible with low intensity public recreation, education, and agriculture. More specifically, Exhibits B and C to the conservation easement detail the allowed uses and prohibited uses, respectively.

In 2013, the City provided the Open Space District with a work plan (**Exhibit D**) which describes in more detail the anticipated improvements and uses for the Property. In 2016, the City completed a perimeter pathway along East School Street and El Rancho Drive, as well as all new perimeter fencing, a picnic area and related amenities at the corner of East School Street and El Rancho Drive.

In the 2017-2018 fiscal year, the City has budgeted to undertake structural and safety improvements to the farm house and water tower buildings to stabilize and preserve them. The barn and chicken house, as is typical of old farm structures, require structural and foundation improvements to be useable by the public. The farm house has a small parking area, but the property and structures do not currently meet the access or occupancy standards for the general public under the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and other building regulations. Structures or areas of the Property proposed for public access will need to be upgraded to meet the standards of the ADA, as well as some level of building code-related improvements, depending on the proposed end use. A condition assessment of the Property was conducted in 2015, which is included in **Exhibit E**.

Vision for the Veronda-Falletti Ranch

The City would like to see the Property develop year around agriculture and livestock operations, with a focus on public access, youth education and an active demonstration of sustainable agricultural practices. Areas of potential interest to the community including hosting City recreation events, managing an area for a community garden (to relocate the existing community garden at East Cotati and La Salle), backyard food production, ornamental gardening and landscaping, small-scale animal keeping, and youth education or mentoring in agriculture. Other potential educational opportunities could include topics such as sustainable wood production or oak woodland habitat restoration. Finally, in previous forums, it has been suggested that the Cotati Historical Society could play a role in education; either through establishing a museum in the farm house, or potentially establishing exhibits on-site or in the on-site structures.

The City is seeking an operator that can independently develop, program and manage the property with oversight by the City. The preferred operator will not require operational subsidies from the City or City funding for on-site improvements.

Minimum Qualifications

The successful operator must have a minimum of 5 years' experience managing a farming operation, preferably with an educational component, and a financial plan to demonstrate the ability to carry out the planned operations.

Submittal of Proposals

A draft lease agreement with standard terms and conditions will be provided to participants attending the Property tour July 19, 2017, and is incorporated to this RFP as **Exhibit F**. Please review the entire draft agreement carefully before submitting a proposal. If any significant omissions or ambiguities in the draft agreement come to the City's attention while the draft is under review by interested parties, the City will make a uniform written response to all parties that submit a letter of interest.

All interested parties must attend a mandatory Property tour on Wednesday July 19, 2017, starting at 1 p.m. at Cotati City Hall (located at 201 West Sierra Avenue, Cotati). This will be the opportunity to ask questions and see the Property first hand. Final proposals will be due by 5:00 PM, Tuesday, August 15, 2017. Final Proposals shall include the following:

1. A conceptual operations plan, site layout, site programming and timetable.
2. A statement of similar work previously performed in sustainable agriculture and education, including at least three references with name of organization, contact person, and telephone number.
3. A statement of qualifications and a list of personnel to be assigned to the work, including a resume for each, listing education, experience, and expertise in this type of work.
4. A list of all proposed partnerships, including written intention to commit from the partner organizations.
5. Any proposed exceptions to the lease agreement. Please make comments as specific as possible. If no exceptions are included in the proposal, the terms will be considered acceptable.

In a separate confidential envelope, the Proposal shall include the following:

- A. Verifiable financial information that shall demonstrate the financial ability to successfully undertake the planned operations; and
- B. Any requested City improvements or operational subsidies.

Please be aware that the City is subject to complying with the California Public Records Act and cannot guarantee confidentiality, but will seek to maintain confidentiality up to the time of any selection.

Four copies of the full proposal should be mailed or hand delivered to the attention of the City Manager, City of Cotati, 201 West Sierra Avenue, Cotati, California 94931.

Selection Procedure

Proposals that do not include all of the information requested cannot be adequately evaluated and will be disqualified. Selection will be based on (in no order):

1. Responsiveness to the requirements; and
2. Viability of programming based on consistency with conservation easement and matching grant program allowable uses; and
3. Qualifications and financial ability to successfully undertake the planned operations and site programming; and
4. Quality and inventiveness of proposed work plan and site programming; and
5. Time required to complete desired plan; and
6. Partnerships with educational institutions or other organizations to leverage additional resources and improve the quality and diversity of site programming; and
7. Net lease revenue value to the City after any operational subsidies or requested site improvements by the City; and
8. Requested City improvements, and timing of the improvements, if any.

It is expected that proposal ranking will occur in partnership with staff from the Open Space District. A list of finalists will provide a presentation to the City Council for a finalist selection. Final terms of the agreement will then be negotiated with the party selected by the City Council.

The City retains the right to modify the terms or selection criteria of the RFP. In addition, the City may choose a finalist, or may reject all proposals.

Contacts

If you have any questions, please contact the City Manager at 707-665-3622.

Sincerely,



Damien O'Bid
City Manager

Encs.