

ITEM #: 14
DATE: 12-19-23
DEPT: LIB

COUNCIL ACTION FORM

SUBJECT: CONTRACT FOR PROPOSED PLAY STRUCTURE IN THE CHILDREN'S AREA OF THE AMES PUBLIC LIBRARY

BACKGROUND:

A goal of the Youth Services department at Ames Public Library is to build a welcoming and safe space for children and families to gather and explore creative play together. Through imaginative play, children learn critical thinking skills, build expressive and receptive language, increase social skills and learn how to manage their emotions.

When the Library was renovated in 2014, the architects designed a structure to help define the space. However, this structure has proven to be challenging in many ways. The design and construction of the feature invites children to climb and swing from the bars, which is unsafe and not appropriate play for a busy indoor area. The structure also has steel cross beams which are low enough for most adults to hit their heads while entering the space if they are not careful.

Library staff met with interior designers from Iowa State to research developmentally appropriate structures and opportunities to include creative play features while also providing an inclusive and welcoming space for all ages and abilities. The proposed structure will be a welcome update to Library's youth space providing a safe area that allows for imaginative and cooperative play for children and families.

On September 25, 2023, a Request for Proposals (RFP) was issued to 46 vendors asking for proposals for a new or custom-built play structure for the Children's area. The proposals were to be evaluated based on the following criteria:

1. Suitability for Toddler and Preschool Age Children
2. Construction Material Durability and Quality
3. Versatility of the Play Structure
4. Ability to Assist in Critical thinking and Social/Emotional Development
5. Aesthetic Quality of the Play Structure
6. Overall Cost

On October 17, 2023, staff received one proposal from Library Furniture International. Based on the review of the proposal, the evaluation team deemed the proposal acceptable. Among positive feedback of the proposed play structure, the evaluation team highlighted an open design, which aids accessibility and creates a clear line of sight into and through the structure, and its versatility with multiple swappable learning panels that create different play scenarios. The proposal also includes delivery and installation of the play structure in the Youth area of the Library.

The cost breakdown is shown below:

Company	Cost of Play Structure	Freight and Installation	Total Cost
Library Furniture International Wheeling, IL	\$58,824	\$10,837	\$69,661

Funding for this structure will be provided by the resources donated to the Ames Public Library Friends Foundation. APLFF works with Library staff to identify opportunities to support the Library’s goals. When Youth Services staff began looking at replacing the current structure, APLFF prioritized fundraising around the goal of updating the Youth Services space and has acquired the full amount to cover the cost.

ALTERNATIVES:

1. Approve the award of a contract with Library Furniture International of Wheeling, IL in the amount of \$69,661 to furnish and install the proposed play structure in the Children’s area of the Ames Public Library, subject to the Library Board approval on December 21, 2023.
2. Do not approve the award of the contract.

CITY MANAGER'S RECOMMENDED ACTION:

Ames Public Library strives to build a community space that is welcoming for all. By updating the Youth Services space with a more interactive and safe play structure, the Library is creating an area that encourages children and families to gather, engage in learning, and develop essential social and emotional skills through fun, creative play.

The Library Director intends to recommend to the Library Board on December 21, 2023, the award of the play structure bid to Library Furniture International in the amount of \$69,661. In order not to delay a final decision by the City Council until January, it is being recommended that the Council approve this award of subject to approval by the Library Board on December 21, 2023. The Board of Trustees is aware of the need and supportive of the new enhancement. Therefore, it is the recommendation of the City Manager the City Council adopt Alternative No. 1 as described above.