

Grand River Conservation Authority

Report number: GM-10-24-97

Date: October 25, 2024

To: Members of the Grand River Conservation Authority

Subject: Membership, Ticketing, and Equipment Rentals System – Request for Proposals

Recommendation:

THAT the Grand River Conservation Authority enter into an agreement for a Membership and Ticketing System Solution with ParkPass Inc. based in Toronto, Ontario for a term of three years with an option to extend the agreement up to three additional one-year terms;

AND THAT a total budget of \$215,000 excluding HST be approved.

Summary:

The GRCA investigated systems that could process membership card sales and ticket sales. The current membership card sales system uses an in-house developed solution. A ticketing system is currently being used on a limited basis using in-house developed applications. Staff are recommending purchasing a system with increased functionality that would also facilitate less involvement by GRCA Information systems staff.

Report:

The Grand River Conservation Authority's Elora Gorge Conservation Area Tubing and Elora Quarry Conservation Area recreational activities currently require the purchase of an advanced entry ticket sold exclusively online. For the past several years these tickets have been sold through a Grand River Conservation Area (GRCA) branded Shopify store with inventory managed through the MyPOS Point-Of-Sale (POS) system. The GRCA's Memberships are currently sold both online and at Conservation Areas using a separate GRCA-branded Shopify store and through the Clover POS system. While these in-house solutions have been streamlined for the sale of tickets and Memberships and work well, they are disparate and require ongoing development and staffing resources to keep the system operational. In addition, there are limitations to allow for the expansion of additional ticketing options such as for canoe rentals, or advanced entry tickets at other Conservation Area locations, including automated gate entry access.

For Memberships, a new card and sticker is required each year, with no option for auto-renewal and reuse of the same physical card or the ability to use a digital Membership pass on a smartphone. This results in excessive staff time manually fulfilling orders, issuing and auditing stickers (which are considered financial instruments), and high courier costs incurred to get the Membership card to the customer in a timely manner.

With recent staff changes, there is a gap in the specialized in-house skills needed to further develop and maintain the current Membership and Ticketing systems in place. The onboarding or training of staff to maintain and manage the existing systems, or further develop and expand upon them, is not economically practical or feasible when compared to outsourcing these systems to an outside vendor. It has become clear that, while the current in-house tools have served the GRCA well, they have reached their limitation in meeting customer expectations, improving the customer experience, and managing capacity levels in the Conservation Areas during the busy summer season. This approach to outsource the Membership and Ticketing

solution is consistent with the approach taken to facilitate campsite reservations using another third-party vendor.

In 2023, work was done internally to identify the current and future requirements of a Membership and Ticketing system, and a Request for Pre-Qualification (RFPQ) for a Membership and Ticketing System Solution was posted to Biddingo on February 8, 2024. From the RFPQ Responses, four (4) candidates were identified to meet GRCA's requirements based on their submission, including a mandatory requirement to integrate with GRCA's Clover Payment System ecosystem. These four candidates were subsequently invited to respond to the Membership and Ticketing System Solution Request for Proposals (RFP) which was posted to Biddingo on July 30, 2024. All four candidates submitted Responses to this RFP prior to the closing date of August 24, 2024.

The RFPs were evaluated using the following criteria and related weighting:

- Vendor qualifications and ability to meet functional requirements – 25%
- Relevant company experience and reputation (including past GRCA experience with the proponent) – 10%
- References – 10%
- Quality and Completeness of RFP Submission – 5%
- Cost (weighted as a percentage of lowest fee proposal) – 50%

ParkPass scored the highest in the evaluation. Staff recommend that GRCA enter into an agreement with ParkPass to provide a membership and ticketing system. The contract will include the base license fee for the Membership, Ticketing, and Equipment Rental modules, fees for configuration and setup of the solution, relevant hardware integrations, training, custom reporting, and integration with a third-party online waiver solution.

Financial Implications:

The costs associated with the Membership and Ticketing solution have been included in the current Conservation Area Operations budget for 2025. Fees will be reevaluated in subsequent years to possibly establish a separate service fee per transaction, not unlike the reservation fee with the campsite reservation system which is used in part to pay the third-party vendor for their services.

Other Department Considerations:

Staff from Conservation Area Operations, Information Technology, and Corporate Services participated in the RFP process.

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