

## Do Your Homework Before Starting the Bid Process

**The Board has asked the Community Manager to obtain competitive bids for painting a wooden fence on the association property. Sounds easy enough, right?**

Often, the directive given to the Community Manager is more about competitive pricing versus fully understanding the scope of the project. It's time to do some homework -- dial in on the specifics of what you want to accomplish.



Let's consider an example of the questions that need to be asked to ensure the vendor knows how to properly bid the project:

- There is obvious wood rot on the fence - is the bid to include replacing these areas? If so, are you staying with like and same materials or do you want to use a plastic alternative?
- There are decayed posts that will eventually fail in the near future. Should these be replaced? How many need to be replaced?

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- What type of paint will be used? Color? How many coats? Should the fence be power washed first? Will the contractor need access to a homeowner spigot or is there a common area water source available in that area of the property?
- Planting materials are obstructing the fence line -- should you consider removing these before repairing and painting? Would removing the planting materials allow for easier access to make repairs and simplify upkeep in the future?
- Considering the degree of wood rot, should the Board consider removing the fence line completely and replacing it with plastic to minimize the need for preventative maintenance in the future?

This is just an example of the consideration that should be given when obtaining bids on various projects. With these types of questions answered and decisions made, clear specifications can be communicated and the vendors can proceed to create bids based on a common scope of work.

When the bids have been submitted, it may be tempting to select a vendor based on the lowest price. However, it's never quite that easy even when you have done your homework. The Board also needs to consider other values that are harder to quantify – reputation, experience, and the likelihood that the

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association will receive a quality job in the expected timeframe. In addition, the Board should rely on the knowledge of the Community Manager who has experience with the vendors and the bid process.

Follow the same process for any project or bid – roofing, paving, landscaping or gates/security. With a clearly defined scope you will receive “apples to apples” bids for comparison. In the long run, doing the proper research goes a long way toward getting the job done right.

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