

Minnesota

## *Campaign Finance and Public Disclosure Board*



**Date:** February 4, 2016

**To:** Legislative policy

**From:** Gary Goldsmith, Executive Director

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Minnesota Laws 2015, Chapter 77, Article 1, Section 7, a part of the 2015 omnibus state government operations bill, provides as follows:

**Campaign Finance and Public Disclosure Board Web Site Redevelopment Project.** \$150,000 in fiscal year 2016 is appropriated to the Campaign Finance and Public Disclosure Board to complete redevelopment of its Web site. This appropriation is available until June 30, 2017. By January 15, 2016, the director of the Campaign Finance and Public Disclosure Board shall report to the chairs and ranking minority members of the senate State Departments and Veterans Affairs Budget Division and the house of representatives State Government Finance Committee on the status of the Web site redevelopment project. The report shall include a budget detailing total dollars to be spent, completion date of the project, and dollars expended to date.

This rider resulted from the fact that the legislator agreed to cancel \$150,000 in unexpended fiscal 2015 funds and to appropriate the same amount in 2016 with the restriction that the appropriation be used for the Board's ongoing website redevelopment project. This document is the report mandated by the above law.

### **Status of website redevelopment project**

A considerable amount of foundational work was done in fiscal years 2014 and 2015. During these years, the Board updated its network and hardware systems to support the new site. It also migrated its database systems to Microsoft SQL Server, an enterprise-strength system. Although development negotiations were initiated with MN.IT services, it became apparent that MN.IT could not be the prime developer because the MN.IT web hosting environment does not support interactive data searches and because MN.IT did not have development staff available to develop applications that could not be hosted in their environment.

On July 27, 2015, the Board issued a comprehensive request for proposals for website development services. After evaluating the responses to the request the Board selected Avallo, a website development company based in Maple Grove, as the primary vendor. Development started at the beginning of September, 2015.

The Board has used April 1, 2016, as a working deadline for substantial completion of the main phase project. However, the project requires constant and significant agency staff resources, which are sometimes at a premium. As a result, the agency has recently recognized that the April 1 deadline is quite optimistic, although it has not yet been changed.

The developer selected for the project is small, but brings highly skilled staff. The pairing of a small agency with a small developer is ideal because neither tends to get far ahead of the other. On the other hand, the size of the agency and developer compared to the scope of the project means it will take longer overall. Nevertheless, the Board has made it clear to staff that the top priority is a successful redevelopment of the site.

As of the date of this report, development is proceeding at a brisk pace, with the developer, agency management, and agency IT staff all devoting significant portions of their time to it. Development is concentrating on interactive features of the site, including data search, viewing reports, knowledge base, site search, and others. Static pages will be filled in closer to the end of the development process. I anticipate future phases of the project to add features that the present schedule and budget do not support.

**Project budget. The budget document for this project is attached as Exhibit A.**

Funds for this project are limited because of two facts. First, the agency did not request a specific appropriation for this project. Rather, in the 2013 session, the agency requested a base funding increase which it explained to the legislature would be used to maintain and augment existing staff and for significant information technology projects. Among the projects I indicated we would undertake was website redevelopment. I testified in 2013 that the Board would have about \$150,000 per year during FY 2014 and 2015 to support these projects. I also testified that any amount available for IT projects in future years would decrease each year because of likely increases staff salaries and benefits.

The agency used about \$150,000 in Fiscal 14 and 15 to update hardware and software infrastructure to support a new website. Because it was unable to begin actual development of the site as quickly as anticipated, the legislature cancelled \$150,000 from the agency's 2015 budget and appropriated the same amount in 2016 with the restriction that the appropriation be used for website redevelopment.

As anticipated, staff salaries and benefits have continued to rise by about 3% per year, significantly limiting the Board's ability to reserve funds for any major IT project. Nevertheless, the Board has been able to budget \$113,587 of new FY 16 money toward its website project.

The budget is very tight and close agency management is required to ensure substantial completion of the project with the available funds. As the attached spreadsheet indicates, the total available budget, including the \$150,000 of FY 15 money and \$22,400 of FY 15 money that was invested in a MN.IT / MnGeo mapping project for the web, is only \$285,987.

Because of the limited budget, the scope of the project is being managed so that key features will be developed first with a planned phase 2 that could be initiated in FY 17. As the current fiscal year proceeds, the Board will continue to conserve funds from its general operations and make such funds available for the website project. One approach to conservation of funds now being employed is the deferral of filling a 60% programs staff position.

It will be difficult, but I believe that we will be able to complete a substantially redeveloped website within the limits of available funding. This will require constant management of the project by agency executives and much work by other agency staff. The Board, its staff, and its developers are fully committed to the success of this project and are working together to produce a site that can be a model for campaign finance and related disclosure and regulatory sites.

**Website Redevelopment Budget - Exhibit A to report to Legislature**

<b>Account</b>			<b>Budget</b>	<b>Encumbered</b>	<b>Expended</b>	<b>Committed / Unexpended</b>	<b>Uncommitted</b>
<b>MnGeo</b>	Odyssey Fund (FY 15 \$)	Contract with MnGEO	22,400	22,400	4,213	18,187	
<b>G9J1WEB</b>	FY 15 reappropriation		150,000				
		Integration Architects		25,000	23,824	1,176	
		Avallo		125,000	113,490	11,510	
<b>MnGeo / WEB totals</b>			<b>172,400</b>	<b>172,400</b>	<b>141,527</b>	<b>30,873</b>	
<b>G9J1CFB</b>		Integration Architects	15,800	15,800	0	15,800	
		Avallo	60,000	60,000	0	60,000	
		unencumbered - available	37,787	0	0	0	37,787
<b>G9J1CFB Totals</b>			<b>113,587</b>	<b>75,800</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>75,800</b>	<b>37,787</b>
<b>Grand total</b>			<b>285,987</b>	<b>248,200</b>	<b>141,527</b>	<b>106,673</b>	<b>37,787</b>