

City of Portsmouth  
Portsmouth, New Hampshire  
Water/Sewer Division

## **REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS**

The City of Portsmouth, NH is seeking proposals to provide a Utility and Miscellaneous Billing Software System. Sealed Proposals plainly marked “RFP #25-17 Finance Billing System” on the outside of the mailing envelope, addressed to the City of Portsmouth Purchasing Department, 1 Junkins Avenue, Portsmouth, New Hampshire 03801 will be accepted until 2:00 p.m., December 8, 2016.

The City of Portsmouth is seeking to implement a utility and miscellaneous billing software system which will accurately and efficiently accommodate all current City billing processes and procedures. The proposed solution should ideally integrate with the current financial software (Pentamation eFinancePlus), the online payment center (Invoice Cloud), a 3<sup>rd</sup> party cash management software (available upon request) as well as the meter reading software (Zenner). The City seeks a vendor with a well-tested software package and demonstrated ability to deliver upgrades, provide training and deliver support. Previous experience with government municipalities is required.

All proposals submitted must be valid for at least ninety (90) days from the proposal due date in order to be considered.

Proposal specifications may be obtained from the City’s web site at <http://www.cityofportsmouth.com/finance/purchasing.htm> or by contacting the Purchasing Coordinator at the above address, or by calling the Purchasing Coordinator at 603-610-7227. Addenda to this proposal, if any, including written answers to questions, will be posted on the City of Portsmouth website under the project heading.

The City of Portsmouth reserves the right to reject any or all proposals, to waive technical or legal deficiencies, and to accept any proposal that it may deem to be in the best interest of the City and to negotiate the terms and conditions of any proposal leading to execution of a contract.

The City retains the right to request selected vendors to demonstrate their product. These product demonstrations will be held on City premises.

Questions may be directed to Judy Renaud, Accountant, in writing at [jrenaud@cityofportsmouth.com](mailto:jrenaud@cityofportsmouth.com). Questions will be accepted until 4:30 p.m., December 1, 2016.

# **INTRODUCTION**

## **Purpose**

The City of Portsmouth is requesting proposals to provide a utility and miscellaneous billing software system for the City's water and sewer utilities. This system shall accurately and efficiently accommodate all current City billing processes and procedures. The City seeks a vendor with a well-tested software package and demonstrated ability to deliver upgrades, provide training and deliver support. Previous experience with government municipalities is required.

The scope of products and services required include: utility billing application software to support the City's utility billing functions; ability to perform miscellaneous billing functions; configuration of data; installation and implementation of the software; testing and training; and ongoing maintenance and support as needed.

## **Background**

The City of Portsmouth, settled in 1623, is a seaport community located on the Piscataqua River with a resident population of 21,463.

The Water Division provides water distribution to 5 Communities and portions of 3 others. Daily usage is between 3.5 to 6.5 million gallons a day and it operates and maintains 190 miles of system piping.

The Sewer Division operates and maintains two Wastewater Treatment facilities, 20 pumping stations, and 115 miles of system piping.

Water and sewer invoices (combined on one invoice) are currently issued monthly to approximately 8,300 accounts using the eCommunityPlus Pentamation System software.

The Water and Sewer Billing Department under the administration of The Finance Department performs the monthly billing for the water and sewer accounts. It has 2 full-time employees responsible for the utility billing functions. There are approximately 8,300 residential, commercial and industrial accounts including irrigation systems. The meters are read electronically on a daily basis through the meter reading software Zenner. Water and sewer are currently billed in units (748 gallons per unit) and the rates are multi-tiered based on usage with an inclining block rate.

**Current Water/Sewer Rate Tiers for FY17 are as follows:**

	<u>Water Rates</u>	<u>Sewer Rates</u>
<u>Water/Sewer</u> First Tier Rate (10 units or less per month)	\$4.15	\$12.24
<u>Water/Sewer</u> Second Tier Rate (units over 10 per month)	\$5.00	\$13.47
<u>Irrigation Meter Rate</u> (3 Tiers Effective July 1, 2016)		
First Tier Rate (10 units or less per month)	\$5.00	
Second Tier Rate (units over 10 and up to 20 per month)	\$9.70	
Third Tier Rate (units over 20 per month)	\$12.05	

**Current Systems in Use**

- Pentamation eFinancePlus version 8.3 (Financials) will be upgrading in 2017 to version 9.2
- Pentamation eCommunityPlus version 4.3 (Utility Billing)
- Stone Hill Municipal Solution Software version 1.1 (Cash Management Software)
- Invoice Cloud (Web Based Online Payment Solution)
- Zenner Stealth Reader version 1.2.3.04 (Meter Reading System)

**Scope of Services**

The City is issuing a request for proposals (RFP), to provide a utility billing software for its water and sewer utilities as well as the ability to bill for other miscellaneous activities as needed. The proposed solution shall accommodate all of the City’s billing processes and procedures and it must integrate with the City’s current financial and meter reading systems.

The City is seeking a qualified and experienced vendor to provide the following:

- Software to support the utility billing and miscellaneous billing functions (such as separate billing for job services performed in water/sewer; police detail, etc.)
- Installation of the software package
- Conversion from the existing system to the new software package
- Rate table conversion
- Training for the new software package
- Annual maintenance contract to maintain the system, correct deficiencies, and provide accessible operational assistance as needed.

## A. Requirements

The vendor will be expected to provide comprehensive services to address the work specifications outlined in this RFP. The requirements listed below may not be all inclusive of the work needed to accomplish the respective tasks. It is expected that the vendors will have sufficient qualifications and experience to provide complete services without having each individual task identified herein. The work involved under the terms of the contract with the successful bidder shall be full and complete execution of a utility billing system including the items noted below, and as described further throughout the RFP.

- (1) The City requires a utility and miscellaneous billing software application that will meet the current core functions and the future needs of the City. The software application should ideally have the ability to integrate with the financial, online payment/cash management, and meter reading systems already in place.
  - a. Billing (Utility) – Software must be able to support multiple service codes and a multiple tiered rate structure. Must be able to handle penalty and late fee capabilities and tracking. System should have flexibility and be able to accurately invoice items such as compound meters, irrigation meters, rollover meter readings, and multiple service charges. System must have the ability to store historical data such as invoices and account histories and be able to reprint these as necessary.
  - b. Billing (Miscellaneous) - Software must have the capability of issuing non-utility miscellaneous invoices as needed. Miscellaneous billings include items such as police details, water/sewer job services; annual corporate agreement invoices; hydrant rentals, etc.
  - c. Collections – Ability to interface with the current cash management system and web-based payment center and receive all types of payments (credit card, check and cash). Reports such as AR Aging’s and payment histories must be able to be provided at a certain point in time and be able to be recreated as needed (not a balance forward system only). Aging Reports specifying 30, 60, 90 and 120 days are a requirement.
  - d. Interface to City Financial System (Pentamotion eFinancePlus) – Information must be able to be transferred efficiently, accurately, and on a daily basis to the City’s Financial System.
  - e. Interface to Automated Meter Reading System (Zenner) – Readings must be efficiently and accurately transferred to the customers’ accounts for billing from the Zenner Meter Reading System.
  - f. Delinquents and Shut Offs - Ability to track and process delinquent notices and shut offs.
  - g. Adjustments to Meter Readings, Billing and Payments – System must have the ability to make adjustments to customer’s meter readings, billings, and payments as needed. Must have the ability to issue corrected bills once adjustments are made.
  - h. Reporting Tools – Ability to create custom reports in addition to the systems canned reports and download data to excel. Ability to provide daily, monthly and annual reports that both summarizes by service categories and provides information such as top 10, top 25, 50 and 100 users in system. Ability to create graphics displaying both current and historic consumption data by customer and customer account category.

- Ability to report on high/low consumptions with adjusting percentages that compare to previous months/years as well as being able to track no consumptions at any location.
- i. Measurement Flexibility. Ability to convert to more than one unit of measurement i.e. gallons, cubic feet, or units on the bill and adhoc reports.
  - j. Notes. Ability to add notes to the customers' accounts so that questions and conversations about their account can be monitored.
  - k. User tracking. Ability to track changes made by system users to customer accounts, service codes, readings etc.
  - l. Rate table consolidation at conversion.
  - m. Web-based accessibility for customers – Ability for customers to view their usage and account history via web-based system or other electronic means such as mobile devices.
  - n. Analytics for error checking and auditing on a monthly or bi-monthly basis. Ability to audit for errors as well as notifying of errors during meter swaps i.e. with meter readings, meter size, meter heads, blank fields, etc.
  - o. Historical Data. Ability to retain historical billing data.
- (2) The vendor must work with the City's IT Department and the Project Manager as well as lead the installation for the new software and the conversion for the current utility billing data to the new software database.
  - (3) A validated account transfer audit must be prepared for each customer account and meter showing that proper meter coding has been transferred to the new database.
  - (4) The City also requires the vendor to train all key personnel and to extend technical support as long as the City contracts with the vendor.
  - (5) It is anticipated that submitting vendors have successfully installed, commissioned, and supported their product at a minimum of five utilities in the past five years. References for these utilities must be provided and they must be current customers of vendor.

## **Exhibit A**

The City Requests that the vendor answer the following questions and remit with the proposal as Exhibit A. If the vendor does not answer all of the questions in this section the proposal will not be considered.

### (1) System Requirements

Currently have an in-house solution but the City is willing to consider a cloud based solution.

- a. If system needs an in-house solution, what are the server requirements?
- b. If it is a cloud based solution, what are the back-up procedures required and how will this integrate with our current systems?

(2) Software Capabilities

- a. Do you have tools that allow remote support without user initiation to support systems for outside the office and is there an audit trail of support technician access to devices?
- b. Do your systems allow the City to track costs in real time with the line item details of each support incident?

(3) Technical Expertise

- a. Specify the number of years your firm has been in the utility billing services business.
- b. Specify the number of employees within the company
- c. Specify the number of employees dedicated to configuration, implementation, and maintenance of the software.
- d. Specify the number of employees in customer support.
- e. Specify technical support hours of operation and how mission critical support issues are handled after hours.
- f. Specify the total number of current clients using your firm's services and of that number the total number of local government clients.
- g. If your proposal is short listed, is your company willing to provide a complete (all) list of your firms clients and may we contact them?
- h. If your firm is selected for the project, what is your estimated timeframe for implementation of your system?

## **Proposal Requirements**

Qualified vendors interested in submitting for this RFP should submit the following information:

- (1) Provide an original, signed cover letter stating your interest to work on this project.
- (2) Qualifications of the vendor and staff proposed, as well as key team members identified to work on this project. This can include resumes of staff as well as any recommendation letters received for past projects.
- (3) Answers to the questions set forth in Exhibit A.
- (4) Provide a list of at least five (5) complete references with full contact information, municipal governments required. The City will contact one or more of your references as part of the selection process.
- (5) Discuss how your organization will analyze and prepare to implement a utility billing system for the City and a target date.
- (6) Include other information that vendor may deem helpful to the City's evaluation of the product.

- (7) In a separate sealed envelope clearly marked on the outside “PRICE PROPOSAL RFP #25-17 Finance Billing System” provide a summary of your costs to perform the Scope of Services outlined above and to include a separate line item pertaining to ongoing support costs.
- (8) Each vendor shall remit 4 copies of its proposal. Proposals shall be submitted to the City of Portsmouth Purchasing Department, 1 Junkins Avenue, Portsmouth NH 03801 no later than December 8, 2016 at 2:00 pm. Proposals shall be identified prominently as follows: “RFP #25-17 Finance Billing System”.

## **Financial Obligation**

The City of Portsmouth anticipates appropriating funds for the purchase and maintenance of a Utility and Miscellaneous Billing System. All funds made available for the project shall be at the sole discretion of the City of Portsmouth and subject to annual appropriations. The Consultants are expected to stay within a project budget and adjust their work products accordingly.

## **Project Schedule**

<u>EVENT</u>	<u>DATE</u>	<u>TIME</u>
Issuance of RFP	November 14, 2016	
RFP Proposals Due	December 8, 2016	2:00 pm
Interviews with Short Listed Vendor	Week of January 9, 2017	
Begin Integration/Project	February 2017	

## **Process**

A committee will review the proposals. Proposals will be evaluated based on the following criteria:

- Functionality of the software to meet the Water/Sewer Division’s needs.
- Integration with existing required softwares.
- Implementation, support and training services.
- Demonstrated stable, consistent product operation.
- Qualifications of the vendor and staff.
- References

The City reserves the right to obtain clarification of any point in a vendor's proposal or obtain additional information necessary to properly evaluate a proposal. Failure of a vendor to respond to such a request for additional information or clarification may result in rejection of the vendor's proposal.

Vendors who submit qualifying proposals may be asked to interview and demonstrate their product.

The vendor must have an established reputation for reliability and quality performance implementing and supporting the proposed software. If a vendor is selected to demonstrate its product, it should be prepared to provide a history of the company, identify past and pending litigation.

The solvency of vendor is a concern of the City. If requested, vendor must submit an audited financial statement from a nationally recognized accounting firm from the most recent fiscal year. The City is prepared to maintain the confidentiality of the financial statement to the extent permitted by law if requested by the vendor and the statement is clearly marked confidential. Financial statements designated confidential will be returned at the completion of the selection process. Failure to submit such a statement may result in the rejection of a proposal.

The City will attempt to negotiate a contract with the highest ranked vendor. If a satisfactory contract cannot be reached, the City may proceed to the next ranked vendor or exercise any of its reserved rights.

## **Reservation of Rights**

The City reserves the right to undertake such investigation as it deems necessary to evaluate the qualifications of the vendor and to evaluate the proposal submitted. Vendors may be requested to execute releases for information. Failure to provide a release upon request will result on disqualification.

The City of Portsmouth reserves the right to reject any or all proposals, to waive technical or legal deficiencies and to accept any proposal that it may deem to be in the best interest of the City and to negotiate the terms and conditions of any proposal leading to execution of a contract.

## **Miscellaneous Instructions and Information**

Addenda to this proposal, if any, including written answers to questions, will be posted on the City of Portsmouth website at <http://www.cityofportsmouth.com/finance/purchasing.htm> under the project heading. Addenda and updates will NOT be sent directly to firms. Vendors submitting a proposal should check the website daily for addenda and updates after the release date. Firms should print out, sign and return addenda with the proposal. Failure to do so may result in disqualification.



Questions may be directed to Judy Renaud, Accountant, in writing at [jerenaud@cityofportsmouth.com](mailto:jerenaud@cityofportsmouth.com). Questions will be accepted until 4:30 p.m., December 1, 2016.

Proposals submitted will be maintained confidentially only until the City reaches a contract with a vendor or the City cancels/rejects all proposals. Thereafter, proposals are available for public inspection. In the event that a vendor desires to submit information confidentially, the vendor must seek the City's prior agreement to such submission. The City discourages the submission of confidential information. With the exception of certain financial records and highly technical/trade secret materials, such agreement is generally not forthcoming.