REQUEST FOR QUALIFICATIONS FOR PROFESSIONAL DESIGN SERVICES COUNTY OF HARNETT Cape Fear Shiner Park, Phase 2

DUE AUGUST 7, 2025 BY 2:00 PM

SUBMIT TO:

HARNETT COUNTY RESOURCE CENTER AND LIBRARY
ATTN: RENEA WARREN-FORD
PROCUREMENT MANAGER
455 MCKINNY PARKWAY
LILLINGTON, NC 27546

SUBMITTALS MUST BE SENT VIA UPS, FEDEX OR HAND-DELIVERED

I. INTRODUCTION

The County of Harnett is inviting interested architectural design/consulting engineering firms, licensed in the State of North Carolina, to submit a Statement of Qualifications for schematic design and construction drawings for Cape Fear Shiner Park, Phase 2.

II. PROJECT BACKGROUND

The County of Harnett completed the development of Cape Fear Shiner Park, Phase 1, in 2020. Phase 1 included the construction of walking trails, two ballfields, two multipurpose fields, water access point, and sand volleyball court. Phase 2 will focus on approximately 5.5 acres of open space designated for park amenities such as a playground, picnic shelter, restrooms, and other passive sport courts. The park is located at 350 Alexander Drive, Lillington, NC 27546. The Site Master Plan developed in 2014 will be a guiding document for the schematic design.

The County of Harnett will use the process presented in this Request for Qualifications (RFQ) to select a qualified architectural/engineering firm to provide the architectural and engineering services required. Professional services being requested include stakeholder engagement, site analysis, schematic design, construction drawings and specifications preparation, bid preparation, and estimation of construction costs.

It is imperative to use relevant data from the existing Parks and Recreation Comprehensive Master Plan, Government Complex Park (Cape Fear Shiner Park) Master Plan, input from staff, citizens, and governing board to develop the priorities of the proposed elements as well as other elements derived through input.

III. OBJECTIVE

The County of Harnett proposes to retain a highly qualified, capable firm, to act as the architect in the planning/design of the project, for a fixed price. The County requests qualifications for architects, engineers, or combinations interested in preparing a design and construction plan that includes landscape

plans, engineered documents, and bid documents for the development of Phase 2 of Cape Fear Shiner Park.

IV. DELIVERABLES

TASK 1- SITE ANALYSIS; SCHEMATIC DESIGN AND STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT

The Consultant shall familiarize themselves with the project and develop preliminary recommendations with Harnett County Parks and Recreation and its Stakeholders.

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Subtask 1A: Site Analysis and Project Understanding

- a. The Consultant shall assess, document, and analyze the existing conditions of the project area including site access and pedestrian connections, topography, trees, potential utility connections and conflicts including existing stormwater management infrastructure, opportunities and constraints, and other site and environmental features. Initial site analysis should include the following:
 - Review existing topographic survey information for completeness and accuracy. If deemed necessary for successful execution of the project, the Consultant shall procure and coordinate additional supplemental topographic survey, to be paid for using the Supplemental Engineering Allowance.
 - Review recent improvements to park amenities and structures; noting materials used, design aesthetics, and other features to inform new design elements.
 - Review the existing and proposed pedestrian connections to the site, including existing pathways and trail surface materials, potential desire lines, and grades for ADA compliance.
 - Review existing utility infrastructure within the project area in anticipation of the need to coordinate with the appropriate public utility companies to prepare connection designs according to the applicable guidelines.
 - Review of existing stormwater infrastructure, including opportunities to incorporate Stormwater Best Management Practices (BMPs) as required.
 - Identify existing challenges with site maintenance and management faced by the County's Parks and Recreation Department.
 - Assess site access and potential impacts of construction activity.
 - All other site features and existing conditions to develop a thoughtful, well-informed design.
- b. The Consultant shall attend and facilitate one (1) on-site kick-off meeting to walk the project area with key stakeholders and discuss the project goals, get preliminary feedback on project approach, preferred methods of engagement, stakeholder concerns and needs, and other pertinent information. Harnett County Parks and Recreation shall be responsible for developing the list of Community stakeholders, will review with the Consultant for completeness, and coordinate the meeting time and date with proposed participants.
- c. The Consultant shall develop a brief memo to summarize findings based on preliminary site analysis, preliminary thoughts on opportunities and constraints, summary of stakeholder comments, a recommended project approach and preliminary project schedule.

Subtask 1B: Schematic Design Plan Development

- a. The design team will develop Schematic Design Plans that respond to site challenges while meeting project goals. The Consultant shall develop all supporting graphics, including plan renderings, conceptual elevations, preliminary details, or precedent images as required to clearly illustrate design intent and proposed improvements. Where appropriate or required, the Schematic Design Plans shall include options for stormwater management BMP's, pathway alignments, or other key design features that require additional stakeholder input.
- b. The Consultant shall present Schematic Design Plans to Harnett County Parks and Recreation. Parks and Recreation shall present them to selected County and Community Stakeholders (Harnett County Development Services, Harnett Regional Water, Town of Lillington and others as required) for feedback to ensure that the proposed designs are appropriately responding to the project goals and priorities, budget and time constraints, and other project considerations. Parks and Recreation will provide consolidated comments to the Consultant.

c. The Consultant shall incorporate feedback and revise the plans as required, updating the site plan renderings and supporting documents.

TASK 2: 30% CONSTRUCTION DOCUMENTS

Subtask 2A: Develop 30% Construction Documents

- a. The Consultant shall develop the Schematic Design Plans into 30% Construction Documents. 30% CDs shall include; Cover Sheet, Existing Conditions Plan, Preliminary Erosion and Sediment Control Plans, Preliminary Stormwater Management Plans, Site Preparation and Demolition Plans, Materials Plans, Grading Plans, Planting Plans, and other site plans as required. The Consultant shall also provide outline specifications and details.
- b. The Consultant shall prepare public utility connection designs according to the applicable guidelines. Submissions shall be prepared (and revised and resubmitted, if necessary) for securing approvals, class of service, permits, and service hook-ups.
- c. The Consultant shall develop a 30% CD Opinion of Probable Cost Estimate and Revised Project Schedule to be submitted to the County with 30% Construction Documents.

Subtask 2B: 30% Construction Document Review

- a. The Consultant shall submit the 30% Construction Drawings to Parks and Recreation for review by relevant County Stakeholders and reviewing agencies, including but not limited to Harnett County Development Services, Harnett Regional Water, and Town of Lillington. County Stakeholders shall have 30 days to review the 30% CDs and provide comments.
- b. The Consultant shall submit the 30% CDs to the Town of Lillington to initiate a Pre-Application Request, in preparation for Technical Review Committee. Please note that it can take several weeks to get a response.
- c. The Consultant shall incorporate all comments received from Parks and Recreation on behalf of County Stakeholders as necessary and as directed by Parks and Recreation for subsequent Tasks.

Subtask 2C: County Stakeholders Meeting

- a. Once feedback is received from Subtasks 2B, the Consultant shall present the proposed improvements to County Stakeholders for input and feedback.
- b. The Consultant shall provide updated plan renderings, perspective renderings, sections or diagrams, elevations and/or supporting precedent imagery as required to accurately portray the proposed improvements for review by Parks and Recreation prior to the County Stakeholders Meeting.
- c. Following an introduction by Parks and Recreation, the Consultant shall lead the presentation to present the proposed project incorporating the above renderings, perspective renderings, sections or diagrams as necessary to confirm that park improvements and amenities meet the collective needs of the Community and the County of Harnett. Parks and Recreation will gather and synthesize community input received during the presentation and will provide the results to the Consultant.

TASK 3: 60% CONSTRUCTION DOCUMENTS

Subtask 3A: 60% Construction Document Development

- a. The Consultant shall incorporate consolidated comments received from Harnett County on behalf of County Stakeholders on 30% CDs, as well as all comments received from the Technical Review and County Stakeholders Meeting, in order to advance the drawings to 60%-level Construction Documents.
- b. 60% CDs shall include Cover Sheet, Existing Conditions Plan, Erosion and Sediment Control Plans, Stormwater Management Plans, Site Preparation and Demolition Plans, Materials Plans, Layout Plans, Grading Plans, Utility Plans, Planting Plans, Preliminary Details, and 60% Technical Specifications.
- c. The Consultant shall develop a 60% CD Opinion of Probable Cost Estimate and Revised Project Schedule to be submitted to Parks and Recreation with 60% Construction Documents.

Subtask 3B: 60% Construction Document Review

a. The Consultant shall incorporate all comments received from Parks and Recreation on behalf of County and Town Stakeholders as necessary and as directed by Parks and Recreation for subsequent Tasks.

TASK 4: 90% CONSTRUCTION DOCUMENTS AND PERMIT APPROVALS

Subtask 4A: 90% Construction Document Development

- a. The Consultant shall incorporate consolidated comments received by Parks and Recreation on behalf of County Stakeholders and all comments received through the review process in order to advance the drawings to 90%-level Construction Documents.
- b. 90% CDs shall include Cover Sheet, Existing Conditions Plan, Erosion and Sediment Control Plans and Details, Stormwater Management Plans, Site Preparation and Demolition Plans, Materials Plans, Layout Plans, Grading Plans, Utility Plans and Details, Planting Plans and Details, Construction Details, and 90% Front End and Technical Specifications.
- c. The Consultant shall develop a 90% CD Opinion of Probable Cost Estimate and Revised Project Schedule to be submitted to Parks and Recreation with 90% Construction Documents.

Subtask 4B: 90% Construction Document Review

- a. The Consultant shall submit the 90% Construction Drawings to Parks and Recreation who will facilitate review by relevant County and Town Stakeholders including but not limited to Town of Lillington, Harnett County Development Services, Harnett Regional Water, and Harnett Health Department. County and Town Stakeholders shall have 30 days to review the 90% CDs and provide comments.
- b. The Consultant shall incorporate comments received from Stakeholders where necessary and as directed by Parks and Recreation for subsequent Tasks.

- c. The Consultant shall prepare and submit permit applications to relevant permitting agencies including but not limited to:
 - NC Department of Environmental Quality for (1) Erosion and Sediment Control Review and Approval and (2) NPDES Permit Application, including all required forms, plans, calculations and other documentation as required to secure a NPDES Permit for the project.
- d. The Consultant shall assume a minimum of one (1) plan revision based on plan reviewer comments.

TASK 5: 100% CONSTRUCTION DOCUMENTS

Subtask 5A: 100% Construction Document Development

- a. The Consultant shall incorporate all comments received from Parks and Recreation on behalf of County and Town Stakeholders and Reviewing/Approving/Permitting Agencies in order to advance the drawings to 100%-level Construction Documents.
- b. At a minimum, 100% CDs shall include Cover Sheet, Existing Conditions Plan, Erosion and Sediment Control Plans and Details, Stormwater Management Plans, Site Preparation and Demolition Plans, Materials Plans, Layout Plans, Grading Plans, Utility Plans and Details, Planting Plans and Details, Construction Details, and 100% Front End and Technical Specifications.
- c. The Consultant shall complete all resubmissions of previous submissions to obtain approvals from Town, County, and State agencies; they shall revise and resubmit Project Plans as necessary to Town of Lillington in order to respond to the Town personnel and receive Building and Development Approval (Zoning), Building Permit, Stormwater Permit, and all other required Approvals.

TASK 6: BIDDING AND CONSTRUCTION

The Consultant shall work with Harnett County Finance's Procurement Agent to procure Contractor Services through a Public Bid Process and manage Construction through the duration of the project.

Subtask 6A: Bidding

- a. Harnett County will advertise Public Bids for the project and upload drawings, specifications, and bidding requirements to the County Website. Bidding will follow all County and State requirements for public bid projects.
- b. Parks and Recreation and the Consultant shall co-host a Pre-Bid Meeting on-site.
- c. The Consultant shall review all bidder RFIs and provide responses, drawing or specifications edits, and any other information as required to adequately answer bidder questions during the bid period. Harnett County shall be responsible for assembling and posting all required Addenda.
- d. Construction and Work Tasks may be advertised and bid separately to maximize and effectively use County funding.
- e. Harnett County and the Consultant shall open Bids publicly, review all bids for completeness, review cost proposals, check references, and award the project to the lowest responsive and responsible bidder.

Subtask 6B: Construction Administration

a. The Consultant shall provide construction oversight for the duration of the project. Construction oversight shall include coordination and scheduling of bi-weekly construction progress meetings, submittal review, responding to RFI's, review of completed work for quality and adherence to the

- contract documents, and weekly coordination with the Contractor to ensure the project stays on schedule.
- b. The Consultant shall prepare, distribute, and maintain project management records including meeting minutes for construction progress meetings, site reports, photographs, sketch changes, change directives, and other documentation.
- c. The Consultant shall review and approve Contractor Pay Applications and shall anticipate review of draft and final (notarized) Pay Apps.

Subtask 6C: Construction Substantial Completion

- d. Once the Contractor believes they have reached Substantial Completion, the Consultant shall perform a site walk and develop a Punch List for work to be completed, repaired, or redone by the Contractor.
- e. Parks and Recreation will coordinate directly with relevant Town personnel to confirm the project meets Town standards for Substantial Completion and is ready for public use.

Subtask 6D: Final Completion and Project Close Out

- a. The Consultant shall perform a final site walk to review Punch List items and confirm all incomplete, damaged, or deficient work has been corrected and completed in satisfaction with the Contract Documents.
- b. Parks and Recreation will coordinate with County staff to assume operational responsibility for the Project Area at Final Construction Completion per Contractor Agreement.
- c. The Consultant shall coordinate with the Contractor to receive electronic copies of as-built documents, operations and maintenance manuals, warranties, and spare parts and materials (if required) to close out the project.

V. PROJECT SCHEDULE

The anticipated schedule below is provided for the convenience of the Consultant. The Consultant shall include a more detailed schedule in their Statement of Qualification based on their recommended project approach that meets, to the greatest extent possible, the deliverable dates below.

Harnett County recognizes unforeseen circumstances may arise during the project that necessitate changes to schedule. However, deliverable dates in bold cannot be changed and must be met by the date stipulated.

Task Completion Date

Deadline for Questions Friday, August 1, 2025

Deadline for Statement of Qualifications Thursday, August 7, 2025

Consultant Selected/Notice to Proceed Tuesday, September 2, 2025

TASK 1- SITE ANALYSIS, SCHEMATIC DESIGN, STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT

October 1, 2025

TASK 2 - 30% CONSTRUCTION DOCUMENTS	December 1, 2025
TASK 3-60% CONSTRUCTION DOCUMENTS	February 1, 2026
TASK 4 – 90% CONSTURCTION DOCUMENTS	April 15, 2026
TASK 5 – 100% CONSTRUCTION DOCUMENTS	June 1, 2026
SUBTASK 6A – BIDDING	July 1, 2026
$SUBTASK\ 6B-CONSTRUCTION\ ADMINISTRATION/CONSTRUCTION\ START$	
	September 1, 2026

SUBTASK 6D – FINAL COMPLETION AND PROJECT CLOSE OUT March 1, 2027

Project Completion April 1, 2027

Providing a schedule that deviates from the dates above will not be considered cause for disqualification. Harnett County is relying on the Consultant's knowledge and expertise pursuant to successful project execution and will consider alternative schedules if deemed necessary or advantageous by the Consultant.

VI. QUALIFICATIONS

Relevant Experience

- Minimum experience of five (5) years in the successful study, design, permitting, construction documentation, bidding, and construction oversight of public park and open space projects, or any other applicable project type of a similar size, scale, and scope as the proposed project outlined in this RFQ.
- Extensive knowledge of green infrastructure and stormwater management BMPs in public parks and open spaces.
- Extensive experience with Town, County, and State permitting processes, requirements, and timelines.

Knowledge of Relevant Codes

Knowledge of, and experience in, the legal and administrative requirements, procedures, and practices
related to the study, design, funding, permitting, and construction of public facilities, including all state
and local codes, ordinances, statutes, and regulations.

Professional Registration

 Possession of all necessary current licenses and registrations, either within the firm or through independent consultants, to qualify under North Carolina law to perform the services as outlined in the previous sections of this RFQ.

Suggested Consultant Team

Consultants shall assemble a team of qualified consultants to successfully execute the project. The list of consultant disciplines provided below are suggestions only, based on Harnett County's knowledge of the anticipated project scope and the associated skillsets and expertise required to satisfy the project goals.

- Landscape Architect
- Civil Engineer
- Land Surveyor

Supplemental Engineering/Design Team

Depending on stakeholder design priorities, existing site conditions, and other unknowns, additional engineering or design services may be required to offer critical design expertise. These additional services shall be paid for through the Allowance for supplemental engineering and design services. Harnett County anticipates the following disciplines could be required, to some extent, to adequately complete the scope of work.

- Geotechnical Engineer
- Structural Engineer

Resumes and statements of qualifications for supplemental service consultants are not required as part of this proposal, however, providing a list of firms the Consultant would engage to perform supplemental services is recommended. Harnett County reserves the right to reject any firm listed or proposed to be engaged with during the project.

Statement of Qualifications will be evaluated based on the collective experience and qualifications of the Consultant and their subconsultants. Submitting a project team composition that differs from the suggested list above will not be considered grounds for disqualification. Harnett is relying on the Consultant's knowledge and expertise to assemble an experienced and effective consultant team to execute the scope of work and deliver the project to a high quality.

VII. FORMAT REQUIREMENTS

Succinct Statements are advised. The following information must be included in all applications. Information should be grouped into three sections, in the order listed below:

Section 1: Project Understanding (5 Pages Maximum)

Provide a narrative describing the proposed project and any necessary or pertinent background information. Discuss the Consultant's understanding of the project and approach to the successful completion of the scope of services outlined in this RFQ and provide a proposed work schedule to accomplish all the required tasks within the desired timeline. If applicable, identify the staff roles who would be assigned to each major task, including subconsultants.

As necessary, please include any photographs, renderings, sample projects, or other visual images that will clarify your approach or provide contextual background. Provide captions as needed to demonstrate applicability to this project.

Section 2: Qualifications and Experience

This section should include the following information:

- a. Description of the Consultant, including a statement of the Consultant's qualifications for providing the scope of services. This project requires successful prior experience in stakeholder engagement, park and public open space design, universally accessible/inclusive design, construction methods and detailing, construction observation, and knowledge of local codes, ordinances, and permitting requirements.
- b. Current one-page resumes for each team member, including qualifications and experience, length of time and role with the company.
- c. Five to ten images of relevant past projects. Images should be clearly labeled. A brief narrative describing each project must include: project title, date completed, consultant role in the project, location and size, cost, and client contact information.

Submitted projects should be of similar size, scope, complexity, or share other important attributes with the proposed scope of work.

d. Qualifications/experience of each intended sub-consultant or sub-contractor.

Section 3: Firm Availability and References

This section should include the following information:

- **a.** List of current ongoing projects. Include: Project start date; expected completion date, total project cost, your ability to devote staff resources to complete this project.
- **b.** Three professional project references, with complete business address, phone numbers, and email addresses.

VIII. SELECTION PROCESS

Responsive submittals will be reviewed and screened by Parks and Recreation staff and key stakeholders in the project. Statements will be evaluated according to the criteria listed below. If deemed necessary by County staff, Consultants submitting the highest rated proposals may be invited for interviews. However, Harnett County reserves the right to award the contract without performing formal interviews.

Evaluation Criteria

All submittals will be evaluated using the following scoring criteria. The scoring system is intended to assist Harnett County in organizing and ranking the Statements received for consideration. However, Harnett County is under no obligation to select the highest-ranking proposal or any other proposal not deemed to be, in the opinion of Harnett County, the most advantageous to successfully completing the project.

1. Project Approach (40 points)

Statements will be scored based on the Consultants' ability to demonstrate an understanding of the project goals, complexities, opportunities, challenges, constraints, and schedule. Successful proposals will outline an approach that responds directly to these project factors and provides a high likelihood of project success.

2. Qualifications, Experience, and Performance History (35 points)

Statements will be scored based on the relevant experience, background, and project history. Successful proposals will demonstrate a breadth of experience in design and construction of public parks and open space projects.

3. Availability and References (15 points)

Statements will be scored based on the availability of firm to meet proposed schedule and references of the individual or team members, including subconsultants.

Award

Harnett County may decide to accept a Statement of Qualifications, or it may decide to reject all Statements. Once a proposal is accepted, contract negotiation will commence. This RFQ and the Consultant's response to it, in the form of their entire Statement, will become part of the Contract. If a real or apparent conflict should arise between this RFQ and the Consultant's proposal and other language contained in the final Contract, the language of the final Contract shall govern.

IX. GENERAL TERMS AND CONDITIONS

A. ADDENDA/CHANGES

Any additions, deletions, modifications or changes made to this RFQ shall be processed through the Harnett County Finance/Purchasing Department. Any deviation from this procedure may result in the disqualification of the firm's submittal or the cancellation of any contract resulting from this RFQ.

B. **QUESTIONS**

Questions concerning this RFQ should be directed to:

Harnett County Finance Department Attn: Renea Warren-Ford, Procurement Manager 455 McKinney Parkway (physical) Lillington, NC 27546 Telephone (910) 893-7557 E-mail: purchasing.support@harnett.org

All questions pertaining to this RFQ must be submitted <u>in writing</u> no later than August 1, 2025.

Only written questions will be considered formal. Any information given by telephone will be considered informal. Any questions that the County feels are pertinent to all proposers will be posted on the County's website as an addendum to the RFQ. E-mail messages will be treated as written questions.

C. **PROPRIETARY INFORMATION**:

Trade secrets or proprietary information submitted by a firm in connection with a procurement transaction will not be subject to the public disclosure under the North Carolina Public Records Act pursuant to NC General Statutes §66-152(3), and §132-1.2. However, the firm must invoke the protection of this section prior to or upon submission of the data or other materials, and must identify the data on other materials to be protected and state the reasons why protection is

necessary. Each individual page considered a trade secret or proprietary information must be labeled "Confidential" in the top right corner.

D. MINORITY BUSINESSES

The County of Harnett encourages all businesses, including DBE, minority, women-owned, and veteran-owned businesses to respond to all Request for Qualifications.

E. AWARD/CONTRACT TIME

The County wishes to enter into an agreement with one firm, which will be responsible for the work, associated with this RFQ.

A notice of contract award is anticipated by **September 2, 2025**. The detailed Scope of Work and schedule of deliverables shall be negotiated with the successful firm for each specified task.

The Project is expected to be completed by April 1, 2027.

F. CONTRACT DOCUMENT

The successful firms will be required to enter into a design/engineering services agreement.

G. SUBCONSULTANTS

If any subconsultants will be used for the various projects, the successful firm shall provide to the Procurement Manager with a list of names of any of the intended subconsultants, their applicable license number(s) and a description of the work to be done by each sub consultant.

The successful firm shall not substitute other subconsultants without the written consent of the County.

The successful firm shall be responsible for all services performed by a sub-engineer as though the successful firm had performed them. Responsibilities include, but are not limited to, compliance with applicable licensing regulations.

If at any time the County determines that any sub-engineer is incompetent or undesirable, the County shall notify the successful firm accordingly, and the successful firm shall take immediate steps for cancellation of the subcontract and replacement.

Nothing contained in any contract resulting from this RFQ shall create any contractual relationship between any sub-engineer and the County of Harnett.

It shall be the successful firm's responsibility to ensure that all terms required in the attached contract are incorporated into all subcontracts.

H. INSURANCE

The selected firm shall purchase and maintain in force, at his own expense, such insurance as will protect the firm and the County, to include professional liability (E&O), automobile liability and workers compensation, from claims which may arise out of or result from the firm's execution of the work, whether such execution be by himself, his employees, agents, subcontractors/engineers, or by anyone for whose acts any of them may be liable. The insurance coverage shall be subject to review and approval by the County. It is intended to fully protect the County, and the general public from any and all claims for injury and damage resulting by any actions on the part of the firm or its forces as enumerated above.

The selected firm shall furnish a copy of an original Certificate of Insurance, naming the County of Harnett as an additional insured. Should any of the policies be canceled before the expiration date, the issuing company will provide thirty (30) days written notice to the certificate holder. The firm shall furnish insurance in satisfactory limits, and on forms and of companies which are acceptable to the Harnett County Purchasing Agent and shall require and show evidence of insurance coverage on behalf of any subcontractors/engineers (if applicable), before entering any agreement to sublet any part of the work to be completed under this contract.

The County of Harnett will require at least \$1 million per occurrence and \$3 million aggregate in General Liability Coverage, and the statutory Employer Liability of \$1 million for Workers Compensation. The County may also require other insurance as it deems necessary. The Insurance provided will be with a company, which is licensed to do business in the State of North Carolina.

XII. CONTACT POLICY

After the date and time established for receipt of proposals by the County, any contact initiated by any firm with any County representatives, other than Renea Warren-Ford, Harnett County Procurement Manager, listed herein, concerning this RFQ is prohibited. Any such unauthorized contact may cause the disqualification of the firm from this qualification process.