

CITY OF PORTSMOUTH, NH

Public Art Review Committee

August 9, 2024

Memorandum

To: Honorable Mayor and City Council, City Manager Conard

From: Public Art Review Committee (PARC)

Subject: Percent for Art Commission for Peirce Island

PARC recommends that the City Council vote to empower the City Manager to enter into a contract for \$140,000 with DiBari Associates of Miami, Florida to design, construct, and install its proposed public artwork on Peirce Island. The resources available for funding the artwork are from the percent-for-art proceeds from the Peirce Island Wastewater Treatment plant (capped by Council action at \$150,000). PARC will share visual representations of the proposed artwork at the August 19 City Council meeting.

DiBari Associates was selected by PARC after an open competition in response to a solicitation (see details below). PARC was impressed with the responses to the solicitation in terms of the quality and innovativeness of the bidders' proposals which were wide-ranging in concept, themes, designs, and materials. Winning features of the DiBari proposal included:

- its organic response to/respect for the natural environment of Peirce Island;
- likely appeal to children and adults and potential for interaction;
- pleasing aesthetics based on the Fibonacci sequence and spiral leaf form;
- ease of maintenance and durability of the design to be located in a harsh environment;
- professionalism and depth of technical experience of the team;
- the team's extensive track record of unique, place-based artworks; and
- responsiveness to adapting to the site.

With a stone dust path connecting to the artwork from existing paths and following the curve of the 20+ foot spiral leaf form, the location will be accessible to wheelchair users. At this point in time and in keeping with the natural environment of Peirce Island, no lighting is planned; however, if desired, solar lighting could be added along the base of the spiral.

Background

This memo describes the process of selecting DiBari Associates for the Peirce Island percent-for-art commission.

RFP process. In March 2024, PARC developed an RFP for the Peirce Island percent for art commission which was informed by input from three public information sessions which provided ideas for relevant themes. PARC identified a particular location on Peirce Island that is easily accessible from the parking lot near the pool and close to the playground, visible from many

locations, and relatively flat and open. PARC established a limit of \$140,000 for the commission, allowing \$10,000 to be left in the Public Art trust for future maintenance.

With the assistance of the City's procurement office, the RFP was widely distributed to a list of local, state, national and international artists and arts organizations. PARC allowed for a Q&A process, making responses available on the City's website to all bidders. Proposals were due on May 24, 2024. The City's procurement office received 22 responses from artists/arts groups:

- 7 were local Seacoast artists (1 withdrew before final review)
- 3 were from other parts of New England
- 10 were from states outside New England (including CA, CO, DC, FL, NM, NV, NY, TX)
- 2 were international artists

Review/selection process. The PARC committee served as the review committee with the addition of three members: Leah Woods, UNH associate professor of art and art history; Corin Hallowell, City's Parks and Greenery Foreman; and Anika Kerls, Portsmouth High School recent graduate. Committee member Beth Hartnett and City Council liaison Kate Cook were recused from voting. Reviewers individually rated proposals during the week of May 28 using [PARC criteria](#) as advertised in the RFP. The review committee met on May 30 to compile ratings and determine semi-finalists by consensus. Four semi-finalists were selected:

1. DiBari Associates, Miami, FL
2. Anasia Franco Studios, Barcelona, Spain
3. Seth Palmiter, Rockport, ME
4. Masary Studios, Boston, MA

Between June 13-17, PARC reviewers held interviews via Zoom with each team to ask questions that had emerged during the reviews.

PARC reviewers met on June 20 to make a final selection; the vote to select DiBari Associates was unanimous.