



Bear Creek Township

373 Division Road

Petoskey, Michigan 49770

Phone: 231-254-5558 Fax: 347-0736

E-mail: assessing@bearcreektownshipmi.gov

Request for Proposal: Website Redesign, Development, and Support

Published: July 2nd 2026

Proposal Due Date: July 24th 2026 3:00 P.M.

Point of Contact: Garrett Muir, Supervisor

Phone: 231-254-5558

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Section 1. Overview

A. Background

Bear Creek Township is a general law township located in Emmet County, Michigan. The Township serves residents, property owners, business, and visitors in the Petoskey area, and provides a wide range of public services, including elections, assessing, parks and recreation, ordinances, permits, and other general township administration.

The Township's website is an important public tool. It must provide clear, reliable, and easy to access township information for all. The Township is seeking a website that is modern, mobile friendly, secure, easy to navigate, easy for staff to update, and capable of supporting the Township's current and future needs.

B. Project Overview

Bear Creek Township is requesting proposals from qualified website development firms. These firms must have experience working with local governments to redesign, develop, launch, and support websites.

The selected firm will be expected to provide a website that improves public access to township information, simplifies staff management, supports required public notices and records, and presents township services in a clear and professional manner. The website must be responsive, searchable, secure, accessible, and designed around the practical needs of local government users.

The new website must allow nontechnical township staff to update routine content without knowledge of HTML or advanced technical skills. This includes, but is not limited to, posting agendas, minutes, public notices, forms, ordinances, calendars, news items, department information, parks and recreation content, tax and assessing information, images, flyers, and other documents.

The Township is also interested in a website platform that can support future growth and integrations, including online submittable forms, email alerts for subscribers, Gov Pay Now payment processing, Documents on Demand (DoD) document management, and other features that may improve public access and staff efficiency.

C. Accessibility Priority

Website accessibility will also be a requirement of this project. The selected firm must design, build, test, and launch the website with WCAG 2.1 Level AA accessibility in mind from the beginning of the project. Proposals must



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describe the firm's accessibility approach, the standards used, the testing process, and any manual review performed in addition to automated testing.

Proposals must include the names, roles, and credentials of the accessibility specialists who will be working on this project. Proposals that rely only on automated accessibility testing or AI-based accessibility review will not be considered sufficient.

Section 2. Project Goals

Bear Creek Township's primary goal is to create a modern, accessible, secure, and user-friendly website that serves as a reliable public information hub for residents, property owners, businesses, visitors, applicants, board and committee members, and township staff.

The new website should make it easier for the public to find township information without needing to call, email, or visit the Township Hall. Information should be organized in a clear and logical manner, with common items such as meeting agendas, minutes, public notices, forms, ordinances, tax and assessing information, permits, parks and recreation information, contact information, calendars, and online payment links easy to locate.

The website should also make routine updates easier for township staff. Township staff should be able to add, edit, remove, schedule, and organize website content without needing advanced technical knowledge or assistance from the website developer for basic day to day changes.

The Township is seeking a website that will support the following goals:

- i. Improve public access to township records, notices, forms, services, meeting information, and general township information.
- ii. Provide a clean, professional, and mobile-friendly design that works well on phones, tablets, laptops, and desktop computers of all sizes.
- iii. Create a logical navigation structure that allows users to find information based on how residents and applicants actually search for township services.
- iv. Allow the current DoD to easily integrate into webpages with quick links and more detailed searches.
- v. Improve accessibility for users with disabilities and meet WCAG 2.1 Level AA standards.
- vi. Provide a reliable system for posting and organizing agendas, minutes, notices, and recordings, in both calendar and list format, utilizing DoD quick links for documentation storage.
- vii. Support clear department pages for the Township Board, Assessor, Building, Planning and Zoning, Parks and Recreation, Elections, Sewer, Fire and other township functions.
- viii. Allow for easy future growth, including adding additional online forms, email notifications, payment links or integrations, and other features that may improve public service or staff efficiency as they arise.
- ix. Provide technical support and long term maintenance as needed to ensure the website continues to run smoothly following the completion of the project.



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Section 3. Scope of Work

A. Website Design

The selected firm shall design and develop a new website for Bear Creek Township that is professional, modern, accessible, mobile-friendly, and easy for the public to use.

The design should reflect the character of Bear Creek Township as a local government serving residents, property owners, businesses, visitors, and applicants. The site should be clean and functional, with an emphasis on clarity, ease of use, and access to public information rather than unnecessary visual effects.

The website shall be designed using responsive design standards so that it functions properly on desktop computers, laptops, tablets, and mobile phones.

The design shall include consistent use of fonts, colors, headings, buttons, menus, page layouts, and other visual elements throughout the site.

The selected firm shall work with the Township to develop an approved homepage layout, interior page layout, navigation structure, and general visual style before full site development begins.

The Township may provide photographs, logos, documents, and other content for use on the website. The selected firm should identify what materials are needed from the Township early in the project.

B. Navigation and User Experience

The website shall be organized in a logical and user-friendly manner. The navigation should be based on how residents, property owners, businesses, visitors, applicants, and other public users commonly search for township information. The website should use plain language where possible, clear page titles, consistent menus, and logical categories to reduce confusion for the public. The website shall include a search function that allows users to search the website. Document specific searching shall be maintained through DoD.

At a minimum, the website should make the following information easy to locate:

- Township Board information.
- Meeting agendas and minutes.
- Public notices.
- Ordinances.
- Forms and applications.
- Assessing and tax information.
- Building, planning, zoning, and permit information.
- Election information.
- Parks and recreation information.
- Online payment links and integrations.
- Contact information.
- Calendars and event lists.
- Employment or bid opportunities.
- Frequently requested services and documents.



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C. Content Management

The website shall include a content management system that allows designated Township staff to make routine updates without needing knowledge of HTML or other programming languages.

Township staff should be able to add, edit, remove, schedule, and organize content, including pages, forms, documents, news items, calendar items, photos, and department information with ease. The selected firm shall provide adequate training so Township staff can manage routine changes and website updates after launch.

The content management system should allow different staff members to have different permission levels when appropriate.

The system should have a logical structure for organizing meetings and events.

The system should allow content to be scheduled for publication and expiration when appropriate.

D. Website Functionality

The new Bear Creek Township website shall include, at a minimum, the following functionality:

- i. A searchable website structure that allows users to search the website for information.
- ii. A meeting information section where the Township can post agendas, packets, minutes, notices, and related board or committee materials on both a calendar and a logical list system.
- iii. A calendar system that allows the Township to post public meetings, deadlines, events, hearings, elections, parks and recreation events, and other important dates.
- iv. Department or service pages for township functions, including the Township Board, Assessor, Building Department, Planning and Zoning, Elections, Parks and Recreation, Fire, Sewer and other areas as needed.
- v. The ability to post public notices in a clear and prominent location.
- vi. The ability to link to or integrate with existing Township services, including BS&A Online for permits, GovPay, and Documents on Demand.
- vii. Analytics or reporting tools that allow Township staff to understand website traffic, commonly visited pages, search terms, and other useful information.
- viii. The ability to schedule content for future publication and expiration.
- ix. A change log, revision history, or similar tracking system for website content updates.

In addition to the above, the Township is seeking some additional features that should either be explicitly listed as included in your proposal or defined in how it would be billed if the Township were to pursue the option.

- i. Creation of submittable forms (not editable PDFs) for items such as RFP bids, employment applications, sewer applications, parcel split / combine applications, etc... to be delegated to the appropriate employee.
- ii. An alert or notification feature, utilizing email and/or text notifications to residents who choose to subscribe.



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E. Accessibility Requirements

Website accessibility is a required part of this project. The selected firm shall design, develop, test, and launch the website in a manner that supports access under the WCAG 2.1 AA accessibility standards.

The proposal shall describe the firm's accessibility process, including how accessibility is addressed during design, development, content migration, testing, staff training, and post-launch support.

The proposal shall identify any automated accessibility testing tools used by the firm. The proposal shall also describe the manual accessibility testing process used by the firm. Proposals that rely only on AI-based testing and / or hot fix widgets will not be considered sufficient.

The proposal shall include the names, roles, and credentials of any accessibility specialists who will be working on this project.

The selected firm shall provide training or written guidance to Township staff on how to maintain accessible website content after launch, including best practices for headings, links, images, documents, forms, and posted notices.

The firm is not responsible for ensuring compliance of documents within DoD storage but is responsible for all other items to be updated as needed that will be available publicly on the website.

F. Hosting, Security, Backup, and Maintenance

The proposal shall clearly identify an outline of how the website will be hosted, remain secure, store backups, and allow for back end maintenance.

The proposal shall clearly identify all costs, including any first-year costs, annual renewal costs, storage limits, bandwidth limits, SSL certificate costs, security costs, backup costs, and any other required fees.

The website shall be protected by an SSL certificate for all pages and domains associated with the website.

The selected firm shall provide routine software updates, security patches, plugin updates, platform updates, and other technical maintenance needed to keep the website secure and functional. However, the firm will not be responsible for content management after turning over the site.

The selected firm shall describe its website security practices, including firewall protection, malware monitoring, intrusion protection, administrative login security, spam protection, and response procedures in the event of a security issue.

The proposal shall describe the firm's backup process, including the frequency of backups, backup retention period, backup storage location, restoration process, and expected restoration time in the event of website failure, data loss, or security compromise.

The proposal shall identify whether backups are stored separately from the primary hosting environment.

The proposal shall identify any guaranteed uptime, service level agreement, monitoring service, or notification process used if the website becomes unavailable.

The proposal shall describe how website ownership, administrator access, hosting access, domain control, files, content, and public records will be handled if the Township later changes vendors.



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G. Ongoing Support

The Township expects the selected firm to provide ongoing support after the website is launched.

The proposal shall clearly describe what ongoing support is included in the base annual cost and what services are billed separately.

At a minimum, the proposal shall identify:

- Available support hours.
- Emergency support availability.
- Methods for requesting support, such as phone, email, support portal, or chat.
- Expected response times.
- Whether support is provided directly by the firm or through a third-party provider.
- Hourly rates for work outside the included support plan.
- Any monthly or annual support limits.

The Township intends to perform all content management internally, but may request assistance with technical support, troubleshooting, training, larger content updates, accessibility issues, new features, or other website-related needs.

H. Training

The selected firm shall provide training to designated Township staff before the website is launched.

Training shall cover, at minimum:

- Adding and editing pages.
- Posting agendas, minutes, public notices, ordinances, forms, and other documents to calendars and event lists.
- Maintaining accessible content.
- Managing links, images, headings, and documents.
- Using staff permissions and administrative accounts.
- Reviewing analytics or reports.
- Basic troubleshooting.
- Creating submittable forms; if applicable.
- Submitting support requests.

The proposal shall identify the number of training hours included, whether training will be in person or virtual, whether training will be recorded, and whether written training materials or help guides will be provided.



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Section 4. Project Timeline and Deliverables

The selected firm shall provide a clear project timeline as part of its proposal. The timeline should identify major phases, deliverables, review points, Township responsibilities, and the anticipated amount of time needed to complete the project.

The Township understands that the final timeline may depend on the selected firm's schedule, the scope of content migration, staff availability, and the number of revisions needed. However, proposals should include a realistic estimated timeline from project approval through final launch.

At a minimum, the project should include the following phases:

- Project kickoff meeting.
- Review of existing website, content, documents, and Township needs.
- Development of proposed website structure and navigation.
- Homepage and interior page design concepts.
- Township review and approval of design direction.
- Website development.
- Content migration and organization.
- Accessibility review and testing.
- Staff training.
- Township testing and review.
- Public review with open house for comments.
- Final revisions.
- Website launch.
- Post-launch support period.

The selected firm shall identify what information, documents, photos, access, staff time, or decisions will be needed from the Township during each phase.

The selected firm shall provide regular progress updates to the Township throughout the project. The proposal shall identify the expected frequency and method of project communication, including meetings, email updates, project management software, or other communication methods.

The selected firm shall provide a beta or test version of the website for Township review before final launch. The Township shall have the opportunity to review the website for design, navigation, content accuracy, accessibility, functionality, and general usability before the website is made public.

The final website shall not be launched until authorized by the Township.



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The proposal shall include a post-launch support period, during which the selected firm will correct errors, address technical issues, assist with staff questions, and resolve launch-related concerns. The proposal shall clearly state the length of the post-launch support period and what services are included.

Deliverables include:

- Project timeline.
- Website structure or sitemap.
- Homepage design.
- Interior page design.
- Functional test website.
- Migrated content and documents.
- Calendar and Event listing design.
- Notification system; if applicable.
- Submittable electronic form system; if applicable.
- Accessibility testing summary.
- Staff training.
- Administrative access for Township staff.
- Documentation or user guide.
- Final launched website.
- Post-launch support.

Section 5: Proposal Submittal Requirements

Proposals should be organized in the order listed below and should include clear responses to each item. Bear Creek Township may request additional information or clarification from any firm after proposals are submitted. A considering applicant may reach out to Township Supervisor, Garrett Muir, at any time prior to the submission deadline to address any questions that may arise from this RFP.

A. Cover Letter

The proposal shall include a cover letter signed by an authorized representative of the firm. The cover letter should include a brief statement confirming the firm's understanding of the project, the firm's interest in working with Bear Creek Township, and the name, title, phone number, and email address of the firm's primary contact person.

B. Company Profile

The proposal shall include a company profile that identifies the firm's history, primary office location, number of employees, ownership structure, areas of expertise, and experience working with local governments.

The proposal should identify how long the firm has provided website design, development, hosting, accessibility, and support services.



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C. Project Team

The proposal shall identify the members of the project team who will be assigned to Bear Creek Township's website project. For each project team member, the proposal shall include their name, title, role on the project, relevant experience, and qualifications. The proposal shall specifically include the names, roles, and credentials of the accessibility specialists who will be working on this project.

D. Municipal Experience and References

The proposal shall include a minimum of three municipal references. For each reference, the proposal shall include:

- Website URL.
- Contact person and title.
- Phone number.
- Municipality or public agency name.
- Email address.
- Brief description of the relevant services provided.

At least one reference should be for a municipality or public agency with needs similar to Bear Creek Township.

E. Project Approach

The proposal shall describe the firm's approach to completing the project, including timeline expectations, project management, communication, design review, content migration, accessibility review, staff training, testing, launch, and post-launch support.

The proposal shall identify what role Bear Creek Township staff will be expected to play during each phase of the project.

F. Features and Functionality

The proposal shall describe how the firm's proposed website solution will meet the requirements listed in this RFP.

If the firm cannot provide any requested feature or function, the proposal shall clearly identify the limitation and provide any recommended alternative.

G. Accessibility Approach

The proposal shall describe the firm's approach to website accessibility, including the standards used, the testing process, the use of automated testing tools, the use of manual review, and how accessibility issues are corrected before launch.

Proposals that rely only on automated accessibility scans, AI-based testing, or hot fix widgets will not be considered sufficient.



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H. Hosting, Security, Maintenance, and Support

The proposal shall describe the firm's hosting, security, backup, disaster recovery, software maintenance, technical support, and ongoing service options.

The proposal shall clearly identify what is included in the annual cost and what services would be billed separately.

I. Training

The proposal shall describe the training plan included for Township staff, including the number of training hours, whether training is in person or virtual, whether training will be recorded, and whether written training materials will be provided.

J. Pricing

The proposal shall include a clear pricing summary that separates one-time project costs from ongoing annual costs.

At a minimum, pricing should identify:

- Website design and development cost.
- Content migration cost.
- Training cost.
- Hosting cost.
- Security and backup cost.
- Ongoing maintenance and support cost.
- Optional features or enhancements; both those requested in this RFP, as well as those the firm believes the township may benefit from.
- Hourly rates for services not included in the base proposal.
- Annual costs for years following project completion.

K. Exceptions

The proposal shall identify any exceptions, exclusions, assumptions, limitations, or deviations from the requirements of this RFP.

Any exception should reference the applicable section of the RFP and explain the firm's proposed alternative.

L. Submission

Proposals must be submitted in a sealed envelope and received no later than 3pm on July 24th, 2026. Envelopes should be addressed to Bear Creek Township Supervisor and can either be mailed to our office at 373 N Division Road, Petoskey, MI 49770 or turned in by hand. Late proposals will not be accepted. Proposals will be opened immediately following the deadline for submission and will be discussed at the following regularly scheduled township board meeting for possible acceptance. Proposals must remain valid for a minimum of 90 days after the submission deadline.



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Section 6: Evaluation Criteria

Bear Creek Township will review proposals to determine which firm provides the best overall value to the Township. The Township reserves the right to select the proposal that best meets the Township's needs, goals, and long-term interests.

Proposals evaluation may include, but not be limited to, the following criteria:

- i. Experience working with municipalities and other local government clients.
- ii. Understanding of Bear Creek Township's project goals and public service needs.
- iii. Quality, clarity, and usability of the proposed website solution.
- iv. Strength of the proposed content management system and ease of use for Township staff.
- v. Ability to meet website accessibility requirements, including manual accessibility review and qualified accessibility personnel.
- vi. Experience, qualifications, and credentials of the proposed project team.
- vii. Quality of municipal references and example websites.
- viii. Ability to provide reliable hosting, security, backup, maintenance, and technical support.
- ix. Clarity and practicality of the implementation plan and project timeline.
- x. Quality of staff training and post-launch support.
- xi. Ability to support future website improvements, integrations, and added functionality.
- xii. Total project cost, ongoing annual cost, and overall long-term value.
- xiii. Any exceptions, exclusions, limitations, or assumptions included in the proposal.

Bear Creek Township reserves the right to request clarification from any firm, interview one or more firms, request demonstrations, negotiate contract terms, reject any or all proposals, waive informalities or irregularities, and select the proposal that the Township determines to be in its best interest.

Examples of websites that are of interest to the Township include:

[City of Petoskey](#)
[Emmet County](#)