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KC lines up help to push through plans to revitalize impoverished areas

By Deann Smith

Kansas City has turned to a longtime city consultant, a local school board member and others to help push through plans to revitalize impoverished areas.

Among those chosen through the city's Planning and Development Department:

Lenexa-based Shockey Consulting Services, whose president is Sheila Shockey, was tapped to receive up to \$75,000 to assist the New Tools Task Force. Shockey previously facilitated the task force that crafted a new economic development policy for the city and has worked on efforts related to the city's massive sewer overhaul.

"She did a bang-up job," Mayor Mark Funkhouser said about Shockey's efforts with the economic development task force.

The New Tools efforts are a continuation of the economic development work, Shockey said. "It was a good fit for our company," she said. Shockey has begun work with the task force, but because her contract has not been finalized, city officials refused Friday to disclose the names of the other firms that applied for the contract.

The minority subcontractors on the efforts are Enrique Chaurand, a top adviser to former Kansas City School District superintendent Anthony Amato, and Jason Parson, who operates a public relations firm. Parson ran for the Missouri House last year and it became an issue that he violated a protection order, but he has since been found not guilty, his attorney said.

Funkhouser also said four "terrific" individuals had been hired by the city to serve as community organizers for the project.

The four are to receive \$3,000 a month plus benefits for six months from the city. But Funkhouser wants to make the jobs permanent in the upcoming budget. The organizers' work is important and needs to be ongoing, he said, and there will be plenty of initiatives for them to tackle.

The task force had hoped to hire a bilingual organizer, but members said they did not find one. The organizers are Kansas City Board of Education member Cokethea Hill, who worked on President Barack Obama's campaign; Melanie Allen, a paid field organizer for the Obama campaign in Missouri; Michael M. Enriquez, who volunteered for Obama and has experience in organizing while a college student; and Glenda Russell, formerly a community organizer for Swope Community Builders.