

## **Municipal Council media release of 16 June 2020**

### **New Surbaum primary school building with Steiner AG as design-and-build contractor**

**Given the negative headlines in recent weeks about the Laufen school building, the municipality of Reinach (the client that commissioned the planned new-build Surbaum scheme) and Steiner AG (the company mandated to build the project) feel it is important to clarify the situation and the nature of the collaboration.**

The underlying situations in Laufen and Reinach are different: while, in Laufen, Steiner AG was engaged by the cantonal authorities to act as general contractor for its secondary school building, its role in Reinach is that of "total" or "design-and-build" contractor, appointed on the basis of a "full-service" competition. The distinction is that, with a "total contract" (TC), all services, from design through to production, are provided by a single source ("design and build"). For the client, the TC contractor is regarded as a single company that provides it (the municipality of Reinach) with a single point of contact for all project issues. With a TC contract, the various service providers for architecture, engineering, sanitary and other building services etc. join forces and conclude mutual contracts on their own initiative. "Even in the course of the competition, it became evident that the collaborating companies harmonise well, work conscientiously and are all pulling in the same direction," says Béatrix von Sury, Reinach's responsible Municipal Councillor. "You can tell that some of them have already worked together on other projects," she adds.

#### **Laufen and Reinach school projects are fundamentally different**

By contrast, the Laufen project – on which separate lead designer and general contractor mandates were awarded – has suffered from all the attendant interface problems, e.g. in managing design delays or defective works. With a TC contract, however, any coordination problems arising between design and production must be solved by the TC contractor itself. The client has no mediation or management responsibilities in respect of the TC contract partners.

Moreover, in Laufen, the GC was not involved in the project development process from the outset. On the TC contract in Reinach, on the other hand, the designers and full-service provider independently opted to collaborate. Accordingly, Steiner AG was involved in the design process from the start and coordinated these services throughout the competition phase. All critical issues regarding materiality, structural design, fire safety, acoustics, building services and the associated costs were discussed by the TC contractor and its team at an early design stage and coherent solutions jointly adopted. As Steiner AG's Stephan Keller (responsible for Surbaum competition) puts it: "As total contractor, we bear full responsibility for meeting the time and cost targets. This relieves the client of any coordinating duties in this regard. We are convinced that the Surbaum project can be readily fleshed out, put out to tender and built on the basis of the existing design concept and within the specified time and cost frame."

**Transparent communication paramount for successful implementation**

In the course of their consultations, Steiner AG and the municipality of Reinach have committed to maintaining mutual transparency and a constant dialogue. On the strength of this understanding, the municipality of Reinach is confident that the new Surbaum primary school building will be successfully delivered.

Steiner AG and the municipality of Reinach are aware that a project like the Surbaum scheme may be equally susceptible to problems during the construction process. The two contract parties have thus agreed to promptly address and discuss all unexpected events with the aim of achieving satisfactory solutions that neither cause delays nor incur unforeseen costs. For this reason, due provision was already made in the contract for various escalation levels with appropriate contact persons. This is intended to establish, from the very start, a clear-cut procedure for dealing with conflicts and automatically preventing a situation such as that in Laufen from arising.

As a further part of the transparent approach, the municipality of Reinach will be entitled to attend all contractor meetings and contract negotiations. The contractors invited to submit a tender will be jointly selected. Clear and mandatory payment deadlines for the subcontractors have been jointly defined.

**Joint external communications**

The contract partners also reached agreement on their approach to public communications. In addition to a joint PR event, they plan to stage an information event for the interested contractors.

Reinach Municipal Councillor Béatrix von Sury and Mr Alexander Schadt (Head of TC/GC Region East at Steiner AG) look forward to collaborating on the new Surbaum primary school building project and are confident of its success.

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The entire design and construction team is united under a single roof.