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**Allegheny County MBE Advisory Committee Meeting Minutes**  
**One Smithfield Street Building, Homestead Grays Conference Room**  
**Wednesday, March 10, 2010**  
**5:00 p.m.**

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**Advisory Committee Members in Attendance:**

Kenneth Huston – President/CEO, Huston Trust, Inc.  
Jim Johnston – Senior Business Development Specialist, Allegheny County Department of Economic Development (for Dennis Davin)  
Abass Kamara – Director of Government Affairs, Pittsburgh Penguins  
M. Gayle Moss – President, NAACP Pittsburgh Branch  
Joyce A. Query – President, i-Squared  
Toni Silva – Supplier Relations Director, UPMC  
Tim Stevens – Chairman, Black Political Empowerment Project (B-PEP)  
Faith Stipanovich – Human Resources Manager, Office of the Allegheny County Controller (for Mark Patrick Flaherty; by telephone)

**Advisory Committee Members Absent:**

Victor Diaz – CEO, Pittsburgh Metropolitan Area Hispanic Chamber of Commerce  
Amy Griser – Director, Allegheny County Department of Budget and Finance  
Timothy Johnson – Director, Allegheny County Department of Administrative Services  
Marc Little – CEO/President, Minority and Women Educational Labor Agency (MWELA)  
Iftikhar Malik – President, Shawn Malik, Inc.  
Joseph Olczak – Director, Allegheny County Department of Public Works  
Im Sook Reinhart – President, Controls Link, Inc.

**Also Present:**

Ruth Byrd-Smith – Director, Allegheny County Department of M/W/DBE  
Lisa Edmonds – Deputy Director, Allegheny County Department of M/W/DBE

**Agenda:**

- I. Call Meeting to Order**
- II. Welcome/Introductions**
- III. Approval of Minutes of Previous Meeting**
- IV. Old Business**
- V. Adjournment**

**I. Call Meeting to Order****II. Welcome/Introductions****III. Approval of Minutes of Previous Meeting**

The minutes from the December 9, 2009 meeting were reviewed and approved.

**IV. Old Business**

Ruth Byrd-Smith gave an overview of what the subcommittee planning the networking event discussed during their conference call. Joyce Query had proposed holding a trade show so M/W/DBEs can meet Purchasing Agents outside of a business setting. Ms. Byrd-Smith acknowledged that the Minority Purchasing Council has hosted this type of event in the past targeting minority businesses. WBENC hosts them as well, but they are located in Philadelphia. The County Manager had suggested to Ms. Byrd-Smith that this trade show be held on a quarterly basis. She proposed having one large trade show on the 31<sup>st</sup> Floor of the Regional Enterprise Tower and then smaller, industry-specific ones on a quarterly basis at the One Smithfield Street Building. Jim Johnston volunteered to check on the availability of the 31<sup>st</sup> Floor for the end of April or the beginning of May.

Ms. Byrd-Smith asked for suggestions for a guest speaker. Individuals proposed were Murry Gerber, Dr. Howard Slaughter and possibly someone from UPMC, but after some discussion, Peter Speaks ended up being the Committee's first choice. Ms. Byrd-Smith will approach Mr. Speaks about speaking at the trade show. One possible topic for the trade show could be stimulus money. Ms. Query suggested incorporating a "match-making" portion, where M/W/DBEs could make an appointment with the appropriate Purchasing Agent to discuss potential business. The M/W/DBE Department will be participating along with the Small Business Administration in several "match-making" workshops relating to financing in the near future, and a similar format could be employed for this trade show.

Ms. Byrd-Smith felt that for the trade show to be a success, attendees must not exceed their given time with a Purchasing Agent, and there needs to be some take-away for attendees. She thought it would be helpful if attendees would be e-mailed their time slot and Purchasing Agent in advance so they can be prepared. Further discussion revealed some events already scheduled for April and early May, so the second and third weeks of May will be targeted for the trade show. Ms. Byrd-Smith also asked that the Committee discuss more details about the trade show at the next conference call.

Ms. Query felt that it would be beneficial for attendees to meet with department directors as well. Ms. Byrd-Smith countered that most Allegheny County contracts originate in Purchasing, and Economic Development and Human Services go out to third-party providers.

Also, some County departments do not have directors but leadership unique to the department, like the Division of Computer Services has a Chief Information Officer. Moreover, large departments like Human Services have their own IT staff. A discussion ensued on building relationships with critical staff members of agencies.

Some confusion surfaced as to the scope of the trade show. Some wanted to invite prime contractors in the area to network with the M/W/DBEs while some thought it was strictly for the purpose of doing business with Allegheny County. Ms. Byrd-Smith said that if primes were to be incorporated other funding sources would have to be identified because that scope would be too large for her budget to handle. She reinforced that there are several different types of contracting within Allegheny County including with Councils of Government, which receive Community Development Block Grants from the County.

The consensus was that the best time of day for the trade show would be 4:00 p.m. to 7:00 p.m. If this is the time period scheduled, heavy hors d'oeuvres would be necessary.

Tim Stevens asked if the issues previously raised by the Advisory Committee to the County Executive's attention had ever been resolved: including one M/W/DBE into the three firms shortlisted for contracts with values below \$25,000 and raising the \$25,000 threshold. Ms. Byrd-Smith stated that currently for contracts with values between \$10,000 and \$30,000, one of the three firms that the County contacts is an MBE or WBE depending on the availability of business in the region. She suggested asking the Chief Purchasing Officer to explain the types of contracts at the next meeting. She also made reference to the fact that the County's Administrative Code determines the contracting process, so changes cannot be made immediately. Mr. Stevens replied that the County Executive had expressed interest in raising the dollar amount of discretionary spend. Ms. Byrd-Smith reiterated that she will inquire with Purchasing as to how these contracts are handled. In response to a question about M/W/DBE participation on projects funded by stimulus money, Mr. Johnston stated that stimulus money from the federal government comes with its own regulations. Ms. Byrd-Smith explained how projects funded by different federal sources are handled.

Since the last quarterly meeting, another subcommittee held a conference call to discuss updating the Allegheny County website. Ms. Byrd-Smith and Lisa Edmonds showed the Committee all of the resources currently available on the general County website. Ms. Byrd-Smith also explained some of the contents of 49 CFR 23 and 26 that determine eligibility for PA UCP certification. Mr. Stevens asked if the M/W/DBE Department provides any training for those whose face challenges in utilizing computers and internet technology, and Ms. Byrd-Smith replied that the M/W/DBE Department assisted in founding the Diversity Business Resource Center (DBRC), which provides technical assistance. Also, the M/W/DBE Department encourages primes to use the PA UCP website to locate M/W/DBEs as part of the primes' good faith effort for a contract. Ms. Byrd-Smith fielded further questions regarding PA UCP certification and the PA UCP website.

Ms. Byrd-Smith reviewed the contents of the M/W/DBE Department's page on the County website. Her office is currently working on an About section that will replace the Mission Statement and Program Objectives that are listed on the home page. In addition, she would like to have a group photograph of the Advisory Committee taken at the next meeting for posting on the M/W/DBE Department web page. She offered to post a link to each Committee member's company or agency next to their name if they would like. She also offered to post events submitted by Advisory Committee members to the Events & News page. She reviewed the department's 2008 Annual Report and described the resources offered by the DBRC. She

asked the Committee for suggestions on possible additions to the website. Ms. Query posed posting step-by-step instructions on doing business with Allegheny County. Ms. Byrd-Smith asked Ms. Edmonds to pull up the Purchasing Division's website so the Committee could view the items already available there.

In response to a question, Ms. Byrd-Smith explained the County's "green" initiative and what ESCO contracts, which deal with energy evaluations, consist of. Mr. Johnston offered that the Department of Economic Development just received a grant from the Department of Energy to perform similar energy evaluations of 100 municipal buildings. He believes that contracts to perform the installation work will follow through the Councils of Government.

Ms. Byrd-Smith informed the Committee that great strides have been made in the inclusion of M/W/DBE participation on food service contracts within the County, which are very large contracts. Also discovered through the vetting of primes on commodity contracts is that several already had relationships with M/W/DBEs but did not know it, which enabled them to meet participation goals. A discussion ensued regarding the vetting process the M/W/DBE Department follows. Also talked about was the fact that "best practices" means different things to different County departments. Only the County Executive's or the County Manager's Offices would have the authority to determine "best practices" for the County as a whole

Gayle Moss had asked if there were M/W/DBEs that provide paper and plastic products because she knows those contracts can be very lucrative, and RS Wholesale is a certified PA UCP that provides those items. She stated that through her position on the Jail Oversight Board, she has become aware of all of the vendors with whom the County contracts to provide resources to inmates. In her time on the Jail Oversight Board, she has pushed for leftover money from the commissary to be used to fund programs for inmates.

Kenneth Huston referenced an event held by the City at which divisions of the City were available to discuss contracting with the City and asked if the County had ever held a similar event. Ms. Byrd-Smith replied that the County co-sponsored that event with the City. Someone suggested that it would be helpful if a success story of a prime and sub collaboration could be presented at the trade show, perhaps including a breakdown of the steps that were taken to forge the relationship. It was proposed again that County Directors make themselves available at the event, but Ms. Byrd-Smith pointed out that there are several that do not deal with purchasing and thought that targeting key County departments would be the most beneficial.

## **V. New Business**

## **VI. Announcements**

## **VII. Adjournment**

The next MBE Advisory Committee meeting is scheduled for June 2, 2010 at 5:00 p.m. in the Homestead Grays Room of the One Smithfield Street Building.