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**Allegheny County MBE Advisory Committee Meeting Minutes**  
**Regional Enterprise Tower, 31<sup>st</sup> Floor**  
**Wednesday, September 22, 2010**  
**4:00 p.m.**

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**Advisory Committee Members in Attendance:**

Jim Johnston – Senior Business Development Specialist, Allegheny County Department of Economic Development (for Dennis Davin)  
Kenneth Huston – President/CEO, Huston Trust, Inc.  
Marc Little – CEO/President, Minority and Women Educational Labor Agency (MWELA)  
Iftikhar Malik – President, Shawn Malik, Inc.  
M. Gayle Moss – Chair/President, MBE Advisory Committee/NAACP Pittsburgh Branch  
Joseph Olczak – Director, Allegheny County Department of Public Works  
Joyce A. Query – Vice Chair/President, MBE Advisory Committee/i-Squared  
Toni Silva – Supplier Relations Director, UPMC

**Advisory Committee Members Absent:**

Victor Diaz – CEO, Pittsburgh Metropolitan Area Hispanic Chamber of Commerce  
Mark Patrick Flaherty – Controller, Office of the Allegheny County Controller  
Amy Griser – Director, Allegheny County Department of Budget and Finance  
Timothy Johnson – Allegheny County Department of Administrative Services  
Abass Kamara – Director of Government Affairs, Pittsburgh Penguins  
Im Sook Reinhart – President, Controls Link, Inc.  
Tim Stevens – Chairman, Black Political Empowerment Project (B-PEP)

**Also Present:**

Ruth Byrd-Smith – Director, Allegheny County Department of M/W/DBE  
Lisa Edmonds – Deputy Director, Allegheny County Department of M/W/DBE  
Philip La May – Deputy Director of Administration and Operations, Allegheny County Department of Public Works

**Agenda:**

- I. Introductions**
- II. Approval of Previous Meeting Minutes**
- III. Director's Update**
- IV. Upcoming Meetings**
- V. Committee Goals**
- VI. Adjournment**

**I. Introductions**

Prior to introductions, M. Gayle Moss and Joyce Query thanked the Committee for electing them as Chair and Vice Chair, respectively.

**II. Approval of Previous Meeting Minutes**

The minutes from the June 2, 2010 meeting were reviewed and approved.

**III. Director's Update**

Ruth Byrd-Smith described the various events that the M/W/DBE Department participated in and/or attended, including the Race in America Conference, planning meetings regarding the ESCO (energy savings) program and 2011 budget planning meetings. She also referenced the informational meeting held by Councilmen Fitzgerald and Robinson to address County Council's expectations of the restructured MBE Advisory Committee. Two key points discussed at the meeting were that a chairperson should be elected and the Committee should be more structured as reflected in defined goals and recommendations.

Ms. Byrd-Smith attended an International Roundtable Forum at La Roche College, which dealt with increasing business opportunities in the Lagos State of Nigeria. She also began working with Computer Services staff to plan the implementation of OnBase, an automated document management process, for the M/W/DBE Department. The system will allow multiple County departments to view the same documents. Ms. Query asked about the access level and Ms. Byrd-Smith answered that at least for now it is for internal use only.

Other events Ms. Byrd-Smith attended include a meeting at the Builders' Guild with companies that deal in the energy industry, a Power of 32 community conversation meeting, the Chatham University Center for Women Entrepreneurship Board quarterly meeting, the Celebrate and Share and Fearless Women's Luncheon, and a GACAAA meeting.

In October, the M/W/DBE Department will again offer a complimentary bid-matching BidNet subscription to PA UCP certified firms based in Allegheny County. BidNet is the service that Allegheny County uses to advertise its open bids and post bid specifications. Also included in the Director's report were statistics relating to the M/W/DBE Department's activity for 2010 thus far, including certification and bid-related meetings.

Mr. Little asked about the volume of certification applications, and Ms. Byrd-Smith replied that it varies dependent upon the amount of projects in the area. She stated, however, that the certification-related workload is usually heavy because it also includes close examination of applicants' assets and maintenance of existing files. A discussion ensued regarding PA UCP requirements and other existing certification programs.

#### **IV. Upcoming Meetings**

Ms. Moss stated that she would like to continue having the M/W/DBE Department set the Committee's meeting schedule, provide refreshments and generate the meeting minutes. Ms. Byrd-Smith and the Committee agreed.

#### **V. Committee Goals**

Ms. Moss and Ms. Query proposed possible goals for the MBE Advisory Committee, one of which being to invite Councilman Robinson to the next quarterly meeting so he can see whether the Committee is on target with Council's expectations. Also, Ms. Moss questioned meeting frequency. She would like to hold another meeting next month to set an agenda for the following year, and then meet thereafter on a bimonthly basis with conference calls in between if necessary. Ms. Query was in agreement.

Ms. Query asked Ms. Byrd-Smith if there were any outstanding goals with which she would like the Committee to assist. Ms. Byrd-Smith replied that she feels that the M/W/DBE Department is in a good place with the current administration. The County met the M/W/DBE goals last year and is exceeding the goals this year, which she believes is attributable to policies in place now that were not in place prior to this administration.

Ms. Byrd-Smith referenced that the County's contracting goals of 13% MBE/2% WBE have been in place since 1981. Ms. Query suggested asking County Council for a new disparity study to be performed because she feels that the 13/2 goals do not accurately represent the M/W/DBE makeup in Allegheny County. Mr. Little thinks a case can be made for that because the City of Pittsburgh's combined goal of 25% is regularly met. Ms. Query feels that many WBEs, including hers, do not pursue jobs as subcontractors because they are only offered 2% of the contract. Ms. Byrd-Smith offered that a disparity study costs approximately \$400,000 for just a limited review. Ms. Query noted Council's renewed interest in the Committee, and she wondered if Council would entertain a disparity study if the Committee recommended it. Philip La May mentioned that County Council will approve the 2011 budget at the beginning of December. He also noted that Councilman Robinson is the Chair of the Committee on Budget and Finance. Ms. Byrd-Smith described some components of a disparity study, including proving past discrimination through anecdotal information and providing compelling evidence as to why a change is necessary. She added that based on the results, the consultant could recommend going to a race neutral program. Ms. Moss asked if there was another way to change the goals. Ms. Byrd-Smith offered to explore that before the next meeting, but the disparity study helps to avoid a court challenge. She suggested holding a conference call with the Assistant Solicitor to discuss this issue.

For the next meeting, Ms. Moss asked Ms. Byrd-Smith to give a presentation on the M/W/DBE Department's part within Allegheny County's procurement process. Ms. Moss also asked if anyone had suggestions of other goals for the Committee. Ms. Byrd-Smith referenced the fact that the Working Capital Loan Program is underutilized. She feels that there is a disconnect between the minority and women borrowing public and public money. Mr. Little asked who contractors would contact about the loan program and Ms. Byrd-Smith listed four consultants that will package the loan for the applicant. Toni Silva asked Ms. Byrd-Smith if she would be willing to do an interview with the Pittsburgh Courier and Ms. Byrd-Smith replied that she already had, as she had with other publications. Jim Johnston explained that up to 80% of the contract or up to \$100,000 can be borrowed and once it is repaid, the same borrower is free to borrow again. Ms. Query wondered why contractors feel that the program is not working, and Ms. Byrd-Smith replied that the same companies use it over and over but new companies are not taking advantage of it. She went on to say that the County takes assignment of the contract.

In addition to promoting the loan program, Ms. Byrd-Smith asked the Committee to attend events that the M/W/DBE Department hosts whenever possible.

Mr. Little asked Ms. Moss if other potential goals for the Committee could be submitted before the next meeting, and Ms. Moss requested that they be submitted by the end of October. Ms. Moss proposed holding the conference call with the Assistant Solicitor in October and the next Committee meeting on November 3<sup>rd</sup>. In the interest of time she would also like to discuss formulating the request for a disparity study during the October conference call.

## **VI. Adjournment**