
Allegheny County MBE Advisory Committee Meeting Minutes
Rachel Carson Room, One Smithfield Street Building
Wednesday, November 10, 2010
5:00 p.m.

Advisory Committee Members in Attendance:

Jim Johnston – Senior Business Development Specialist, Allegheny County Department of Economic Development (for Dennis Davin)
Joyce A. Query – Vice Chair/President, MBE Advisory Committee/i-Squared
Toni Silva – Supplier Relations Director, UPMC
Tim Stevens – Chairman, Black Political Empowerment Project (B-PEP)

Advisory Committee Members Absent:

Dennis Davin – Director, Allegheny County Department of Economic Development
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
Kenneth Huston – President/CEO, Huston Trust, Inc.
Timothy Johnson – Allegheny County Department of Administrative Services
Abass Kamara – Director of Government Affairs, Pittsburgh Penguins
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
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. Welcome
- II. Approval of Previous Meeting Minutes
- III. Open Questions for Councilman Bill Robinson and the Advisory Committee's Role
- IV. Discussion on Disparity Study/Recap of the City's Disparity Study
- V. Vote on Recommendation to County Council for Conducting a Disparity Study
- VI. Other Issues for Consideration
- VII. Next Meeting Date
- VIII. Adjournment

I. **Welcome**

II. **Approval of Previous Meeting Minutes**

The minutes from the September 22, 2010 meeting were reviewed and approved.

III. **Open Questions for Councilman Bill Robinson and the Advisory Committee's Role**

Since Councilman Robinson was not there, Joyce Query proposed compiling a list of questions for him to answer. Ruth Byrd-Smith asked if these questions should be e-mailed to him and Ms Query answered yes.

Questions suggested are as follows:

- Please explain in what form recommendations of the Committee should be presented and what content needs to be provided;
- Please explain the process for the Committee to submit recommendations to Council;
- Please explain how and when the Committee will receive a response;
- Has the Committee missed the opportunity to get something approved for the 2011 budget? If not, what is the timeframe?

Ms. Byrd-Smith read aloud the course of action that was to be taken following the conference call of October 25th. Toni Silva asked of those action items had been completed and Ms. Query answered yes, with the exception of distributing the voting ballot because there is no guideline within the legislation to establish a quorum. Tim Stevens asked if the rule of thumb for organizations with no bylaws is that a quorum is one-third. Ms. Byrd-Smith verified that there is nothing within the legislation that speaks to a quorum. Ms. Silva thought it was half. Mr. Stevens made reference to statements Gayle Moss had made in favor of asking Council to fund a disparity study, so that would make 5 members, which would be one-third. Ms. Silva thought that Ms. Moss should express her opinion in writing instead of the Committee assuming that. Ms. Query recapped the activity regarding the disparity study request since the last Committee meeting.

IV. **Discussion on Disparity Study/Recap of the City's Disparity Study**

Ms. Query noted that the City of Pittsburgh's disparity study recommended goals of 25/10 but the City decided to set them at 18/7 to make them more defensible in court. Lisa Edmonds clarified that the City's goals were 25/10 and the disparity study lowered them to 18/7

to make them more defensible. Mr. Stevens wondered why the City would set its goals lower than those the disparity study suggested.

Ms. Byrd-Smith noted that this disparity study only examined construction, architecture and engineering, and that a fuller complement of study would be more expensive. Mr. Stevens wondered what the new disparity study should include. Ms. Byrd-Smith stated that a new disparity study would probably only use information as far back as 2008. Ms. Query shared her experiences with fulfilling the 2% WBE goal on contracts, and a discussion ensued.

Ms. Byrd-Smith offered to ask Dr. Ralph Bangs to speak with the Committee regarding what a disparity study consists of. She stated, as she has before, that private industry does not need to have contracting goals. A discussion ensued regarding voluntary contracting goals, particularly those of ALCOSAN and UPMC.

V. Vote on Recommendation to County Council for Conducting a Disparity Study

Mr. Stevens made a motion to ask the Committee to vote for or against requesting the disparity study. Jim Johnston stated that he would abstain from the vote since he is a County employee and due to the possibility that his department may be asked to contribute to the funding of the disparity study. Ms. Query seconded the motion and read into the record the wording for the vote to be distributed to the Committee. A discussion ensued regarding the working of the potential request of Council.

VI. Other Issues for Consideration

Ms. Query asked if the Committee had any other ideas regarding minority and women contractors. Mr. Stevens wondered if any improvements could be suggested for minorities and women in the workforce, and Ms. Byrd-Smith answered that the M/W/DBE Department only deals with minority and woman owned businesses. Mr. Johnston offered that his department is involved with employment due to Section 3 requirements of projects. Mr. Stevens stated that he is concerned with workforce as well because so many more minorities and women are part of the workforce.

Mr. Stevens made reference to comments that County Executive Dan Onorato made in the past with reference to recognizing majority businesses that demonstrate a history of employing significant amounts of minorities and women. Mr. Stevens felt that workforce and M/WBEs are interrelated. Mr. Johnston sees that recognition reflected when majority companies' proposals are selected in part because they have plans to meet or exceed the County's M/W/DBE contracting goals. He does not think, however, that that can be measured in construction contracts because it could be interpreted as unfair. Ms. Silva thought that that was already built into the contracting process.

Ms. Query suggested pursuing a mentoring program since the Committee has Councilman Robinson's ear. Ms. Byrd-Smith would like to again explore mentoring because past mentoring programs did not work. Ms. Query posed that the Committee make this recommendation to Council. Ms. Silva wondered if some research regarding the previous mentoring programs needed to be performed. Ms. Query thought that a subcommittee could be formed to examine this issue. Ms. Silva would like to see the County and City join together in developing a County-wide process for M/W/DBE capacity building so that they can perform on large contracts.

Ms. Query discussed the fact that she was only appointed to the Committee for a one-year term, so she wondered how that would be handled. This was added to the list of questions for Councilman Robinson.

VII. Next Meeting Date

Ms. Query stated that she and Ms. Moss discussed postponing or cancelling the December 1st meeting if the Committee votes on the capacity study and proceeds with the recommendation in the meantime. Mr. Stevens would like to keep the December 1st meeting date to further discuss the mentoring program and capacity building. Asking Dr. Audrey Murrell to speak to the Committee regarding these issues was suggested.

VIII. Adjournment