
Allegheny County MBE Advisory Committee Meeting Minutes
Liberty Room, One Smithfield Street Building
Wednesday, January 26, 2011
12:30 p.m.

Advisory Committee Members in Attendance:

Victor Diaz – CEO, Pittsburgh Metropolitan Area Hispanic Chamber of Commerce
Kenneth Huston – President/CEO, Huston Trust, Inc.
M. Gayle Moss – Chair/President, MBE Advisory Committee/NAACP Pittsburgh Branch
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
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
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. Welcome**
- II. Approval of Previous Meeting Minutes**
- III. Remarks from the Chair**
- IV. Vote on Disparity Study**
- V. Future Committee Goals**
- VI. Adjournment**

I. Welcome**II. Approval of Previous Meeting Minutes**

The minutes from the November 10, 2010 meeting were reviewed and approved.

III. Remarks from the Chair

M. Gayle Moss noted that Abass Kamara and Tim Stevens had been reappointed to the Committee. Joyce Query, whose term was also due to expire, resigned.

IV. Vote on Disparity Study

Originally the Committee wanted to discuss its idea to request a disparity study with Councilman William Robinson. Councilman Robinson planned to attend the last meeting but did not. Ms. Moss feared that a disparity study may end up lowering the MBE/WBE goals. Toni Silva referenced the vote that was taken, and Ms. Moss responded that Committee participation in the vote was not very high. There were three yes votes and two no votes. However, Ms. Moss felt that the Committee could benefit from guidance from someone with experience with disparity studies so that their request, if made, would be well written. In response to a question from Victor Diaz, a summary of the history of the disparity study idea was given. Ruth Byrd-Smith said that compelling evidence that the goals should be increased must be presented to justify the goals being increased.

It was noted that Joyce Query advocated for a disparity study because she felt that her business should have more opportunities than it has had. Ms. Byrd-Smith offered that at times businesses of women of color help to fulfill the MBE goal instead of the WBE goal. Also, some products are purchased in much larger quantities than others, and sometimes there are no MBEs or WBEs that provide the products or services that an entity needs to purchase. Kenneth Huston agreed and offered that his company does not have the capacity to perform on a certain segment of contracts. Ms. Moss strongly felt that the Committee should educate business owners as to what they need to do in order to be able to handle projects of various types and sizes. Mr. Diaz stated that he would rather see the cost of the disparity study be put into a loan fund for MBEs/WBEs. Mr. Huston proposed that small companies even need to be careful with loans so that they do not borrow more than they can repay. A discussion on this topic ensued, which included references to the achievements that Charles Sanders has made with his business. Ms. Silva thought that capacity building would best contribute to the success of MBEs and WBEs. Mr. Diaz felt that over the ten years that he has lived in this region that the situation has improved for minority businesses, due in part to County directors that made sure that primes complied with the MBE/WBE goals. Mr. Huston wondered if informational sessions could be held to educate MBEs and WBEs. He and Ms. Moss shared some of their business

experiences with the Committee. She stated that if nothing else comes of this Committee, she would like to figure out a plan to educate minority vendors so that they can be competitive.

V. Future Committee Goals

Tim Stevens made reference to the County Executive's Business Breakfast Meetings and the M/W/DBE Department's Open Houses. Ms. Byrd-Smith responded that the Business Breakfast Meeting provided updates on diversity within the County, and the Open Houses are theme-driven and make information available regarding business opportunities. She mentioned that the County partners with several organizations that provide technical assistance including the Diversity Business Resource Center. Last week the M/W/DBE Department helped sponsor the National Association of Women Business Owners' seminar on filing business taxes. The M/W/DBE Department will also be participating in a series of workshops with the SBA, Building Bridges and the City of Pittsburgh. Two of the workshops will deal with financial literacy and young entrepreneurs, partly because there is interest in helping small businesses repair their credit so that they can take advantage of federal monies. The M/W/DBE Department disseminates notice of these events via magazine advertisements, the County website, Facebook and Twitter.

Ms. Moss announced that she will meet with the County Executive to discuss these issues and to confirm reappointment of the remaining members whose terms expired at the end of 2010. Mr. Stevens expressed concern regarding attendance at today's meeting, and Ms. Moss intended to discuss that with the County Executive. In addition, she still wants to speak with Councilman Robinson. A discussion ensued concerning the fact that the County is meeting the current MBE/WBE goals and the lack of interest from MBEs and WBEs in attending training workshops.

VI. Adjournment