
Allegheny County MBE Advisory Committee Meeting Minutes
204 County Office Building
Tuesday, August 20, 2013
9:00 a.m.

Advisory Committee Members in Attendance:

Austin Davis – Executive Assistant, Office of the Allegheny County Executive
Victor Diaz – President, VideoTek Construction
Amy Griser – Deputy Controller, Office of the Allegheny County Controller
Ola Jackson – Founder/CEO – Onyx Woman Network (OWN)
M. Gayle Moss – Chair, MBE Advisory Committee
Roxanne Sewell – President, LJS Publishing/Talk Magazine
Toni Silva – Supplier Relations Director, UPMC
Gregory Spencer – President/CEO, Randall Industries, LLC
Tim Stevens – Chairman, Black Political Empowerment Project (B-PEP)

Advisory Committee Members Absent:

Larry Brinker – President/CEO, Brinker Group
Abass Kamara – Carey Group
Philip La May – Deputy Director, Allegheny County Division of Facilities Management
Marc Little – CEO/President, Minority and Women Educational Labor Agency (MWELA)
Iftikhar Malik – President, Shawn Malik, Inc.
James Overton – Chairman/President, City of Pittsburgh Equal Opportunity Review Commission/
Overton Financial Group

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. Open Meeting**
- II. Approval of Previous Meeting Minutes**
- III. Director's Report**
- IV. Old Business**
- V. Adjournment**

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

Amy Griser explained the changes to the minutes she proposed regarding the City/County contracting process. A short discussion on this topic ensued. The minutes from the April 30, 2013 meeting were approved with the changes incorporated.

III. Director's Report

Packets of information were distributed to the Committee. Ruth Byrd-Smith stated that she received a request from Councilman Robinson to answer several questions about how the M/W/DBE Department reports and tracks information. She then directed the Committee's attention to several copies of a book of information about the Pre-Award, Award and Post-Award Processes that were compiled in response to this request. The books also include reports that the Department utilizes in order to monitor the progression of a contract. She invited the Committee to peruse it if they so desire, and offered to provide copies on a compact disc. She declared that the 2012 Annual Report has been submitted to Communications and it should be available for the next meeting. Ms. Byrd-Smith referenced that the M/W/DBE Department advertises in the Women's Yellow Pages, included in the packet. The Department also advertises in other publications such as LJS, Onyx Woman and the Erie Black Business Directory. The Department was awaiting the Erie Black Business Directory to be sent from Connie's office in Erie. In addition, there was a handout in the packet regarding Talk Shoe. Ms. Byrd-Smith invited the Committee to visit the website and listen to the 53 Taking Care of Business shows that have been uploaded to Talk Shoe. Talk Shoe houses the M/W/DBE Department's recordings from 2007 to present which provide good, technical information for small business owners.

Ms. Byrd-Smith was a speaker at Duquesne University's 15th Annual Entrepreneurial Growth Conference regarding certification issues. She was also a panel expert at the University of Pittsburgh Urban Entrepreneurship Program. She sits on the Mentorship Programming Board of the Women's Entrepreneurship Center at Chatham University.

The M/W/DBE Department is working with Computer Services to implement OnBase, a document control system that the County purchased to allow for the sharing of documents. There are other departments with which the M/W/DBE Department works closely, and often documents need to go back and forth. OnBase allows documents to be easily viewed and shared at any time. On-Base testing should be done by next week and it should be live by the first part of September. There has been the installation of thin-client processors, a County environmental initiative to save energy. The standard desktop tower has been replaced with a much smaller unit that has the same capabilities but uses less energy.

Ms. Byrd-Smith referenced the M/W/DBE Department's upcoming Open House on September 12, 2013 and informed the Committee that there are still spaces available if they would

like to RSVP and attend. She also mentioned the 125/225 Committee in which Lisa Edmonds participates that will be holding a celebration of the County's and the Courthouse's anniversaries.

IV. Old Business

Gayle Moss mentioned the emails from Greg Spencer and Roxanne Sewell that include action items for improving the M/W/DBE Department's operation. Their recommendations were:

- review piggyback process to make sure minority companies are not eliminated;
- review sole source contracts for access by minority companies;
- review contracts up to \$10,000 that can be awarded without bids – raise the threshold higher than \$10,000;
- exposure of minority companies to the COSTARS program;
- look at how to manage open-ended contracts and how they affect minorities;
- provide training to minority companies to understand online bidding and online research to find bidding opportunities;
- updating of the County's electronic capabilities – in 2011 bidding process went online but tracking was not a part of the program. Programming needs updated to pull information for reporting on who got the contract, total amount of contract, and portion to minority contractor, when payments are due and when payments are made, when contract is finished.

Ms. Byrd-Smith clarified that the piggyback process is a Purchasing function. Chief Purchasing Officer John Deighan explained to her that whatever the terms of an original contract are cannot be changed once the contract is in place, except for an unusual circumstance. Ms. Griser stated that she is not sure how often piggyback contracts are used, but demonstrated through an example of replacing carpeting in the Controller's office that because everyone was so consumed with their work and lives, it was easiest to use the carpeting contract that was already in place. However, since that purchase was estimated at \$30,000, Ms. Griser was not sure if they were being overcharged so the person who controlled the purchase was asked to obtain more quotes. When asked if any minority companies were included in the search, she responded that she was not sure because she did not follow up with the purchaser. Mr. Spencer expressed concern that it is so easy to piggyback, and that there is more incentive to do it because it makes the job easier. Ms. Byrd-Smith presented another benefit of piggybacking: if there is already a minority company performing a job and there is another minority company that can assist while also fulfilling someone else's goal. Gayle Moss offered that if a minority company is not contacted about a job, then that minority company will not know that there is potential work available.

Victor Diaz thought that emphasis on M/W/DBEs is needed among purchasing and County agencies. Bundling contracts could create a lot of work, but those who handle contracts need to be aware of M/W/DBEs who can do the work and where to find them. Ms. Sewell asked how this problem could be solved. Austin Davis asked Ms. Griser how long a contract normally stays in place in the County. She replied that the Law Department is resistant to allowing a County contract to go past the end of the current elected executive's term because they do not want to bind a future administration. Typically, a County contract lasts 3 or 4 years at the most. Mr. Davis wondered if there was a minority company who did carpeting, for example, why would they not bid on the original RFP. Two people responded that that was because they piggybacked. Mr. Spencer stated that he has seen a piggyback contract last six years.

Ms. Griser asked what the best source of information is for herself or people who handle purchasing for minority businesses. Ms. Byrd-Smith pointed her to the PAUCP website and

explained how it works. Ms. Griser suggested sending an email to purchasing people that includes a link to the PAUCP website, urging those people to consider the M/W/DBEs in that database as well when they are putting together a contract. Mr. Spencer asked if it is too difficult for a contract to go through John Deighan when a vendor wants to piggyback. Ms. Griser answered that they do go through John. Mr. Diaz said that in order to get more M/W/DBEs involved, change has to start at those who are in charge. After a lengthy demonstration of how putting a contract in place works between the M/W/DBE and Purchasing Departments, Mr. Spencer expressed dissatisfaction with the County's effectiveness to include M/W/DBEs or the proposed solution.

A discussion ensued regarding Allegheny County having an integrated process for M/W/DBE inclusion. It was decided that a subcommittee would be formed to further discuss this issue.

V. Adjournment