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**Allegheny County MBE Advisory Committee Meeting Minutes**  
**Facilities Management Conference Room, County Office Building**  
**Monday, November 30, 2015**  
**10:00 a.m.**

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**Advisory Committee Members in Attendance:**

Austin Davis – Executive Assistant, Office of the Allegheny County Executive  
M. Gayle Moss – Chair, MBE Advisory Committee  
James Overton – President/Principal Advisor, Overton Financial Group  
Toni Silva – Supplier Relations Director, UPMC  
Roxanne Sewell – President, LJS Publishing/Talk Magazine  
Barbara Parees – Deputy County Manager, Office of the Allegheny County Manager  
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  
Victor Diaz – President, VideoTek Construction  
Abass Kamara – Partner, Carey Group  
Ola Jackson – Founder/CEO, Onyx Woman Network (OWN)  
Marc Little – CEO/President, Minority and Women Educational Labor Agency (MWELA)  
Iftikhar Malik – President, Shawn Malik, Inc.

**Also Present:**

Ruth Byrd-Smith – Director, Allegheny County Department of M/W/DBE  
Kristy Kwisnek – Clerk Typist II, Allegheny County Department of M/W/DBE

**Agenda:**

- I. Open Meeting**
- II. Introductions**
- III. Approval of Previous Meeting Minutes**
- IV. Director's Report**
- V. Old Business**
  - A. Consultant's Report**
- VI. New Business**
  - A. Ideas for Recommendations in 2016**
- VII. Miscellaneous**
- VIII. Adjournment**

**I. Open Meeting**

The chairman asked each committee member to give a reflection of their life over the past year.

**II. Introductions****Approval of Previous Meeting Minutes**

June 26 Minutes were approved as presented.

**III. Director's Report**

Ruth Byrd-Smith noted that 2015 was an exciting year. As of this morning, 546 firms were certified through Allegheny County for PAUCP status. Commonwealth wide, through MWDBE and its four other offices, about 2,000 businesses are certified.

She also mentioned two completed projects will make her job easier going forward: 1.) The search for new contract compliance and tracking software has been completed. The new system will be implemented sometime in January. 2.) MWDBE will now be overseeing Public Works Department projects, which include responsibilities for construction, engineering and architecture. Until this point, MWDBE reported on these functions, which include millions of dollars, but did not oversee them. This restructuring requires one person moving from Public Works to the MWDBE office.

Ms. Byrd-Smith was also a speaker at SBA's Emerging Leader Class at Duquesne University. This class helps to shape businesses that may have a greater chance of success with more input.

Ms. Byrd-Smith discussed this year's successful Open House. Judith Mason, In-House Credit Counselor from Dollar Bank, spoke about credit and financial fees. The Open House covered making sure companies had the financial backing to be successful, as some had not recovered from the recession.

To assist with the certification process, MWDBE acquired a subscription to LexisNexis, the legal research software for government which aids with investigation, verification and accuracy. Also, SKYPE will be used more frequently, reducing travel time and cost and opening certification to a wider range of people.

On a sadder note, Ms. Byrd-Smith announced the retirement of her long-time Office Manager, Nancy Florence, who leaves her position on January 8 after 15 years in the position. Mrs. Florence's address will be sent to the Committee as she would appreciate hearing from everyone.

Roxanne Sewell suggested Go to Meeting or Blue Jeans as alternatives to SKYPE.

#### **IV. Old Business**

M. Gayle Moss said that a draft of the consultant's report remains in the manager's office. It should be completed early in the first quarter of 2016. When completed another meeting should be called with the consultants to discuss the report.

Austin Davis said a draft of the report is in the Executive's Office and the legislation will be ready to submit to County Council again in late January or early February.

#### **V. New Business**

Mr. Davis gave the Board an assignment. Please be thinking of, or on the lookout for, new ideas or programs from other jurisdictions that may help the businesses certifications and bring the information to the table. Let's be more user friendly by educating these businesses as much as possible on what the department does, what Allegheny County does and what these businesses can do with the County.

Mr. Davis will also inform Ms. Moss of County Council's new Chairperson of Economic Development.

Toni Silva asked Ms. Byrd-Smith what the Committee could do for her. Ms. Byrd-Smith responded that when Committee members receive invitations to MWDBE events, please consider attending to see which certified firms attend. She also asked that they post MWDBE's events and speaking engagements to their social media.

This led to a lively discussion regarding promoting the positive work of MWDBE, which included mentions of the following:

- Is it inappropriate for the County to do marketing?
- Can we market our progress?
- The information is in the Annual Report. Can we use that report as a marketing tool? Direct people to read the Annual Report?
- We will never satisfy everyone.
- Can we do something to be proactive around the issue of marketing and communication? We want the County to be more proactive.
- Can we put out a statement for 2016 regarding our progress through 2015 not just for the naysayers, but for everyone under the name of Madam Chair?
- We have participation from every County department such as food programs at the Kanes, jail, and lunch programs, the health department and through Black Enterprise borrowing money.
- Every year we could put out information on the work of this committee in January and, maybe, get on Elaine Effort's show (KQV).

- We should highlight what happens here in Allegheny County. People don't understand what the County provides, the type of work provided by MWDBE. We must tell our story or people won't know. It's a vehicle to give people a new perspective of who we are and what we do. Address all media.
- January work on a report, pitch a media story.
- Cannot put out a communication without approval from County Communication officer.

**VI. Adjournment**

The meeting was adjourned.