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**Allegheny County MWDBE Advisory Committee Meeting Minutes**  
**(Virtual Teams Meeting)**  
**Tuesday, February 22, 2023**  
**1:00 p.m.**

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**Advisory Committee Members in Attendance:**

M. Gayle Moss – Chair, MBE Advisory Committee  
Roxanne Sewell – President, The LJS Group  
Tim Stevens – Chairman, Black Political Empowerment Project (B-PEP)  
James Overton – President/Principal Advisor, Overton Financial Group

**Advisory Committee Members Absent:**

Alberto Benzaquen – Commissioner, Pittsburgh Commission on Human Relations

**Advisory Committee Liaison Members Present:**

Mark Conner – Economic Development  
Loren Ganoë – Human Services  
Kelly Stockman – Purchasing  
Jason Molinero – Public Works  
Nancy DiNardo – Facilities Management

**Also Present:**

Lisa Edmonds – Chief Officer, Allegheny County Department of Equity and Inclusion  
Damian Wiles – Deputy Director, Department of Equity and Inclusions

## Agenda

- I. Open Meeting**
- II. Introductions**
  - a. Each person will be given 3 – 5 minutes to discuss themselves and the agency/department/entity they are representing
- III. Approval of Previous Meeting Minutes (September 13, 2022)**
- IV. Chairperson Report**
  - a. **Committee Seats (15)**
    - i. **County Staff Members (6)**
      - 1. **Liaisons**
        - a. **Economic Development – Mark Conner**
        - b. **Facilities Management – Nancy DiNardo**
        - c. **Human Services – Loren Ganoe**
        - d. **Purchasing – Kelly Stockman**
        - e. **Public Works – Jason Molinero**
      - 2. **Appointee**
        - a. **Bhavini Patel, Community Outreach Manager – County Executive’s Office**
    - ii. **Others**
      - 1. **Current (5)**
        - a. **Alberto Benzaquen**
        - b. **M. Gayle Moss**
        - c. **James Overton**
        - d. **Roxanne Sewell**
        - e. **Tim Stevens**
      - 2. **Candidates (3)**
        - a. **Holly Douglas – Cosmos Technologies, Inc.**
        - b. **Tina Daniels – Concrete Rose Construction**
        - c. **Fred Quinn – Urban League Young Professionals Civic Engagement Chair**  
(recommended by Ja’Lisa Brown, President of the Urban League Young Professionals of Greater Pittsburgh)
- V. DEI Chief Equity and Inclusion Officer Report**
  - a. **Staffing**
  - b. **Outreach Events**
- VI. Desired topics for next meeting**
- VII. 2023 Meetings**
- VIII. Miscellaneous**
- IX. Adjournment**

## I. Open Meeting

Gayle Moss opened the meeting and welcomed and thanked all members present. She discussed the possibility of the next meeting being in-person even though the virtual meetings have been very convenient.

## II. Introductions

### a. Each person will be given 3 – 5 minutes to discuss themselves and the agency/department/entity they are representing

Gayle Moss advised Lisa Edmonds to start the introductions for the new members.

Mark Conner – Allegheny County Economic Development, which helps manage large projects within the County that use federal and state funds. He works specifically in business development, which encompasses economic and community development. With an emphasis on whole community development in places like Braddock, Wilksburg, McKeesport, and Clairton, he is focused on getting small businesses technical assistance and funding, with attention on minority and veteran owned businesses. ACED takes a large interest in mixed-use development like housing and looks at economic development transitioning to a more organic, community-based focus. Assets of the community are taken into consideration and work is done to help develop those assets to bring in more housing, economic development, money, and jobs. While trying to encompass the whole range of specific communities to bring them up, small businesses are his go-to. He runs the Allegheny County funded loan program that has partnered with Axiom Advancement Corporation and is focused on getting small businesses the help that they need.

Loren Ganoë – Deputy Director for Office of Administration with the Department of Human Services. Joined DHS ~7 months ago and previously worked for New York City government and city of Washington, D.C. Now, and in previous positions, her purview covered contracts and procurement, and has familiarity with MWDBE programs. There is a lot of opportunity at DHS to take advantage of the MWDBE program and help inform the needs of a large department with a lot of purchasing power. DHS works with the most vulnerable individuals in the County, providing assistance to services including child welfare, development disability, mental health, substance abuse, aging, and community-based prevention. They mainly work with nonprofit entities but there is still purchasing that is done and services that they could take advantage of from MWDBEs. She is from the Mon Valley; graduated from McKeesport High School and is happy to be back home and working to assist people in her community.

M. Gayle Moss – chairperson of the Advisory Committee and has been involved with the Committee for about 15 years, beginning when she was the president of the Pittsburgh NAACP, with which her involvement spanned 36 years. She is a native of the Pittsburgh area; she grew up in Homewood, went to Taylor Allderdice High School, and spent a career of 33.5 years at the University of Pittsburgh. Her involvements have covered many positions and she is passionate about helping the least of us manage in our society.

Jason Molinero – Deputy Director for Public Works with Allegheny County. He discussed the 530+ bridges and 400+ miles of road that Allegheny County is responsible for maintaining. His group is the engineering group, which has staff engineers and other support positions that help them with their mission. ACPW does a lot of capital improvement projects, such as the ongoing Roberto Clemente bridge rehab, and they use a lot of professional services contracts for positions ranging from design consultants to right-of-ways, traffic management to structure builds. As part of those contracts, there are

the minority and women business requirements as part of the selection process for solicitations to qualify. They are also involved in construction projects that are put out to bid, with various funding sources.

Jason has been at the County since 2019, grew up in Dormont and now lives in Thornburg. Growing up in Pittsburgh he is honored to be invited to this group.

Gayle and Jason discussed the Forbes Avenue bridge that collapsed in Jan. 2022 and the importance of funding infrastructure projects in Pittsburgh and our surrounding communities.

Jim Overton – first would like to say that he is glad to make this Advisory Committee meeting and to meet the new members. For this Committee he represents Overton Financial Group, but he has recently also been involved with an engagement at the Pittsburgh Public Theater. Jim informed the Committee that the Pittsburgh Public Theater has a new member, Shaunda McDill, previously from the Heinz Endowment, who is now leading the business management efforts at the theater. She would be a nice person to know and see what engagements/collaborations can be had on many fronts. Shaunda has been in the Pittsburgh area for the last few years, and she would be a great attribute to some of the things that can be done in the city.

Jim is a native of Pittsburgh who worked for a number of years for United Way. He was a member of the City of Pittsburgh's Business Review Committee, which is where him and Lisa Edmonds first met as staunch advocates to ensure African Americans and women are a part of the business and commerce that goes on in this region. He moved from City of Pittsburgh to Allegheny County in the scope of continuing the momentum of advocacy supporting first Ruth Byrd-Smith, and now Lisa Edmonds for participation and economic enhancement to all of our community. He is glad to meet some of the new membership and organizations they represent and to be able to be involved himself.

Roxanne Sewell – she has not been on this Committee as long as some of the other members who have been doing the work in the trenches, but she appreciates those who are and is learning a lot. She hopes the other members will learn from the longtime members as well. She is glad to be apart of the Committee and hopes to contribute and help where needed and is looking forward to working with the new committee members.

Roxanne is a native of Pittsburgh, hailing from Homewood and attended Westinghouse High School. She is President of The LJS Group, which publishes Talk Magazine and has a non-profit branch, Talk Minority Action Group (TMAG), that works in civic engagement, voting, and civic education. The LJS Group was started over 60 years ago by her husband, Luther Sewell. Roxanne is glad to welcome the new members and is looking forward to engaging and learning from all.

She noted to Jason that she lives on a county road and is appreciative of how well they maintain the road, especially in winter when so many roads are troublesome to drive on.

Kelly Stockman – Deputy Chief Purchasing Officer of Allegheny County, which works with all County departments to get them the goods and services they need to function, and to help the constituents of the County. Kelly has lived in Pittsburgh and worked in Purchasing Department for 12 years and is originally from Baltimore. She attended Penn State for her undergraduate degree, where she met her now-husband. After graduation they returned to

their respective home communities, Baltimore for her and Penn Hills for him. After discussing that they both wanted to continue their relationship, they began applying for jobs in each other's cities. She received multiple offers here in the Pittsburgh area, so she moved here. Kelly is appreciative for being asked to join this Committee and is looking forward to learning more of what everyone does, and to be a resource as well as she can.

Damian Wiles – Deputy Director at the Department of Equity and Inclusion. He has been with the department for over a year and was born and raised in Pittsburgh.

Tim Stevens – welcomed the new members and hopes they will work with the Committee and make a difference in their communities. He has had the opportunity to be involved with the Committee from its inception, going back to when the Republican County Executive Jim Roddey initiated the Committee, and under other County Executives since then, trying to make a difference with a lot of work to do. Is chairman and CEO of B-PEP (Black Political Empowerment Project) Coalition Against Violence and facilitator for Corporate Equity and Inclusion Roundtable. Former AACP President.

Lisa Edmonds – Chief Equity and Inclusion Officer at Allegheny County Department of Equity and Inclusion and served as Deputy Director of the Department until 2020. She also worked for the City of Pittsburgh Minority Women and Disadvantaged Business Enterprise Department at one time. Lisa is excited to see new members joining the Advisory Committee.

Nancy DiNardo – Facilities Management, Deputy Director and has been with the County since 2010 in multiple roles. She started as a secretary with Judge McCarthy, then moved to Judge Wagner's office as her executive assistant, then came to Facilities when it was formed in 2013 as the manager of administration. Nancy is happy to work with Lisa and feels like this is a good group of people. She is looking forward to any input, suggestions, and ideas to help her grow and help others on the Committee.

### **III. Approval of Previous Meeting Minutes (September 13, 2022)**

M. Gayle Moss asked all in attendance if they had received and reviewed the previous meeting minutes. Lisa Edmonds sent all members and liaisons the previous meeting minutes and asked if new attendees should be voting on approval since they had not attended. M Gayle Moss made a motion to approve the previous meeting minutes from September 13, 2022, as long as members who were not in attendance at that meeting did not vote. Jim Overton seconded the motion. All members were in favor of approving the previous meeting minutes.

### **IV. Chairperson Report**

M. Gayle Moss started her report by mentioning that the big item to address is the filling of Committee Seats from County employees.

#### **a. Committee Seats (15)**

##### **i. County Staff Members (6)**

##### **1. Liaisons**

**a. Economic Development – Mark Conner**

**b. Facilities Management – Nancy DiNardo**

**c. Human Services – Loren Ganoe**

**d. Purchasing – Kelly Stockman**

**e. Public Works – Jason Molinero**

**2. Appointee**

**a. Bhavini Patel, Community Outreach Manager – County Executive’s Office**

Bhavini Patel will be attending the Committee’s future meetings.

**ii. Others**

**1. Current (5)**

**a. Alberto Benzaquen**

**b. M. Gayle Moss**

**c. James Overton**

**d. Roxanne Sewell**

**e. Tim Stevens**

**2. Candidates (3)**

Three candidate names have been submitted to County Council and two are awaiting being sworn in. There will be changes occurring after the election and Gayle is unsure what the timeline for candidate approval will be. Once all three candidates are accepted and sworn in by County Council, there will still be one seat remaining open on the Advisory Committee. Gayle asked that if any members have recommendations for a committee candidate, please submit names to either herself or Lisa so they can be contacted.

**a. Holly Douglas – Cosmos Technologies, Inc.**

**b. Tina Daniels – Concrete Rose Construction**

**c. Fred Quinn – Urban League Young Professionals Civic Engagement Chair**

(recommended by Ja’Lisa Brown, President of the Urban League Young Professionals of Greater Pittsburgh)

**V. DEI Chief Equity and Inclusion Officer Report**

Lisa Edmonds, and the Department of Equity and Inclusion, helps serve as the administrative arm of this Committee. Lisa is not a committee member and does not vote. If any committee member has information to share, they are welcome to reach out to the office and she will ensure it is forwarded to all members.

**a. Staffing**

Over the last few years, the Equity and Inclusion has been short staffed, but Lisa is excited to say that at this point in time the department is only down one position. While presenting the Leadership and Staff section of the department’s page on the Allegheny County website, she made note that Melodye Martin will have her title updated to *Contract/Certification Generalist*. Lisa also mentioned that the open position within the

department is the *Contract Compliance Specialist*; the posting was recently revised, and she is hoping to see more candidates to apply.

#### **b. Outreach Events**

It is exciting that our certification division is now fully staffed, and we have been receiving quite a number of certification applications. For those who do not know, the department is a member of the PA UCP (Pennsylvania Unified Certification Program), which is a statewide certification program mandated from US DOT that ensures Disadvantaged Business Enterprises (small firms owned and controlled by socially and economically disadvantaged individuals, with caps on personal net worth and caps on business gross receipts over a three-year period) have a fair opportunity to compete for federally funded transportation contracts. This program is inclusive to minority and women business owners. The state of Pennsylvania has five certifying agents: Allegheny County Department of Equity and Inclusion, Pittsburgh Regional Transit, SEPTA, City of Philadelphia Airport, and PENNDOT, and all agents provide the same certification. We have been going over applications, doing onsite work, and following through with our certification process. At one point in time, we had to transfer a number of certification applications to PRT, but Lisa is thankful that with our staffing, we no longer have to. DEI has been doing workshops regarding DBE certification and how to do business with Allegheny County, while not overstepping the Purchasing Department, but informing business owners on how to access the network and website and sign up for Bonfire. Recently we have done presentations for the Federal Bonding Program, sponsored by Allegheny County Airport Authority, and the African America Chamber of Commerce of Western Pennsylvania. Later this evening we are doing a presentation for BizFit, which is managed by the Riverside Center for Innovation. We are also beginning to do more in-person events. The MWDBE Governmental Committee, of which Mark Conner is also a member, has an Outreach Event coming up on March 3. It is an annual event where minority and women owned businesses come to network and meet with various government entities.

In reference to having future in-person Advisory Committee meetings, the DEI office is currently being renovated. Once it is complete, we will be able to host meetings.

#### **VI. Desired topics for next meeting**

Lisa Edmonds brought up what topics would be preferred for the next meeting.

Roxanne Sewell mentioned that with new members coming on board it would be helpful to hear how the departments that are represented can help the MWDBE certification process and how to use what's currently in place to improve outcomes for small, minority businesses.

M. Gayle Moss noted it is helpful to have a deeper understanding of what each new member does.

Tim Stevens asked to add the topic of having the new members discuss what they and their departments do. M. Gayle Moss advised him that was covered earlier in today's meeting, but he can always ask more in-depth questions in future meetings to learn more. Tim stated he would like to hear any updates that a department can give in regard to what they are doing, such as reports on current or upcoming projects.

Roxanne thought it would be helpful to learn how small businesses can improve their relationships with the departments.

Gayle noted it was a good point to learn more about how small businesses can give more insight in that regard with two of the Committee candidates also having their own businesses.

Roxanne advised switching up each meeting so every department would have a chance to cover their reports. Tim countered by asking if all departments could do a brief report each meeting but with one having the bulk of the coverage.

Nancy DiNardo requested that more information about the Advisory Committee be shared at the next meeting. She would like to learn what it is and how/why it was formed. Gayle advised that all new members review the [ordinance](#) covering the Advisory Committee so they can bring up any clarifying questions. She also advised that the Committee choose which department should be put on the agenda for an in-depth report. Lisa Edmonds added that there will be a section on the agenda for discussion of the ordinance.

Jim Overton suggested that there should be some thought put into the Committee's directional objectives. He noted that with vacant seats they have been working in more of a maintenance mode but with all the new members it would be good to have forward momentum for the Committee's wider agenda.

Lisa mentioned she would have recommendations on future topics for members to research.

Mark Conner asked Lisa how often there are updates showing the MBE and WBE compliance goals. Lisa advised that the department does an annual report, with the 2022 annual report currently being worked on, as well as quarterly reports that can be found on our website showing commitments made. She also noted to the Committee that the goals of 13% MBE and 2% WBE participation were based on population at the time of formation of the Allegheny County M/W/DBE Program, and that it may be constructive to reframe the way these goals are set with the population changes the county has experienced, as well as setting goals around number of business owners and not simply population.

Jim mentioned that it would be productive to train small business owners how best to reach opportunities and access to contracts.

Mark advised that there is a wide array of business support, but a large issue is businesses being able to connect the dots and find the appropriate resources necessary.

Committee members discussed the hurdles businesses are facing to grow and connect with opportunities.

## **VII. 2023 Meetings**

M. Gayle Moss brought up the timeline of future meetings. She asked committee members what would work best for their schedules, setting meetings for every other month or quarterly. She mentioned that there have been less meetings given the small membership the Committee has had recently but now that seats are being filled, having meetings more regularly is needed, but if the preference was for quarterly meetings that would be work.

Tim Stevens noted a discussion from a previous meeting that the Committee would meet every other month in an effort to move forward quickly to fill vacant seats, and once that is finalized moving to a quarterly meeting schedule.



Gayle asked if the bi-monthly meetings should continue until the final vacant seats are filled. With the upcoming November election, the future of the Committee and its members is uncertain, but they would continue to do what is needed until there are any changes made by a new County Executive, if any.

Tim mentioned it may be good to schedule meetings for every other month, so new members have time to get a better feel for what the Committee does and give their input.

Gayle asked the members if setting the next meeting for April would work.

It seemed to be okayed by all in attendance. Roxanne Sewell mentioned that meeting in-person for future meetings is good but asked about having the option to join virtually.

Gayle said that was her plan. Meeting everyone in person to break bread together would be helpful but having the regular meetings virtually is beneficial given the short time of the meetings, and the distance some members would need to travel to town. There is also a possibility of switching it so every other meeting would be in-person, but that could be decided at the next meeting since that one will be virtual.

There was discussion about consistency and frequency of meetings. It was agreed that the last Wednesday of the month, every other month would be a reasonable schedule for the time being.

Lisa Edmonds made note that for meetings taking place on the last Wednesday of every other month would put the date on April 26th. She asked if all present members would be available to attend a meeting scheduled for that day. There was discussion amongst members about scheduling conflicts, but all agreed they could attend a virtual meeting at 9:30 am on Wednesday, April 26, 2023.

Tim asked about planning for an in-person meeting to take place in June. With the DEI office being under renovation, Nancy and Mark advised that their conference rooms could be used if need be.

Lisa made note that given the department's smaller conference room, it would be practical to host an in-person meeting in the Facilities conference room.

Discussion ensued regarding a specific time and date for a meeting at the end of June, concluding with agreement to schedule an in-person meeting on Wednesday, June 28, 2023, at 9:30am., with a catered breakfast. Nancy blocked the conference room out for use.

#### **VIII. Miscellaneous**

No miscellaneous discussion.

#### **IX. Adjournment**

M. Gayle Moss noted that the meeting had been longer than usual and asked if all were in favor of adjourning today's meeting. Everyone was in agreement and the meeting was adjourned.