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**Allegheny County MWDBE Advisory Committee Meeting Minutes**  
**(Virtual Teams Meeting)**  
**Wednesday, April 26, 2023**  
**9:30 a.m.**

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**Advisory Committee Members in Attendance:**

M. Gayle Moss – Chair, MBE Advisory Committee  
Roxanne Sewell – President, The LJS Group  
James Overton – President/Principal Advisor, Overton Financial Group  
Alberto Benzaquen – Commissioner, Pittsburgh Commission on Human Relations  
Tim Stevens – Chairman, Black Political Empowerment Project (B-PEP)  
Bhavini Patel – Community Outreach Manager, County Executive’s Office

**Advisory Committee Members Absent:**

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**Advisory Committee County Liaison Members Present:**

Jason Molinero – Public Works  
Nancy DiNardo – Facilities Management  
Loren Ganoe – Human Services  
Kelly Stockman – Purchasing

**Advisory Committee County Liaison Members Absent:**

Mark Conner – Economic Development

**Also Present:**

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

## Agenda

- I. **Open Meeting**
- II. **Introductions**
- III. **Approval of Previous Meeting Minutes (February 22, 2023)**
- IV. **Chairperson Report**
- V. **Advisory Committee Ordinance Review**
- VI. **Member Updates and Discussion on Possible Ways to Improve Small Business Relationships with County Departments**
  - a. **Mark Conner – Business Development Coordinator, Department of Economic Development, Allegheny County**
  - b. **Nancy DiNardo – Deputy Director, Facilities Managements, Allegheny County**
  - c. **Loren Ganoe – Deputy Director, Office of Administration, Department of Human Services, Allegheny County**
  - d. **Kelly Stockman – Deputy Chief Purchasing Officer, Purchasing Department, Allegheny County**
  - e. **Jason Molinero – Deputy Director, Public Works Allegheny County**
  - f. **Bhavini Patel – Community Outreach Manager, County Executive’s Office, Allegheny County**
  - g. **Alberto Benzaquen – Commissioner, City of Pittsburgh, Commission on Human Relations**
  - h. **M. Gayle Moss – Chairperson, MWDBE Advisory Committee**
  - i. **James Overton – President/Principal Advisor, Overton Financial Group**
  - j. **Roxanne Sewell – President, The LJS Group**
  - k. **Tim Stevens – Chairman/CEO, Black Political Empowerment Project (B-PEP)**
- VII. **DEI Chief Equity and Inclusion Officer Report**
  - a. **Update on the Committees (3) Suggested Candidates**
    - i. **Holly Douglas – Vice President, Business Infrastructure at Cosmos Technologies, Inc.**
    - ii. **Tina Daniels – Owner, Concrete Rose Construction**
    - iii. **Fred Quinn – Civic Engagement Chair, Urban League Young Professionals of Greater Pittsburgh**
  - b. **Posted Quarterly and Annual Reports**
  - c. **2022 Annual Report Update**
  - d. **Staff Training Opportunities**
- VIII. **Desired topics for next meeting**
- IX. **Miscellaneous**
- X. **Adjournment**

## **I. Open Meeting**

M. Gayle Moss opened the meeting, thanking all present for attending. She noted that she will discuss with Lisa Edmonds an approach called Sanctuary to open meetings, wherein as meeting participants speak up for attendance, they would also take a moment to mention how they are feeling so that committee members can get to know each other better.

## **II. Introductions**

Brief introductions were made for attendance purposes prior to the opening of the meeting.

## **III. Approval of Previous Meeting Minutes (February 22, 2023)**

M. Gayle Moss asked the committee if there were any additions or corrections needed on the previous meeting minutes, or if there were any questions related to them. James Overton noted he had no questions or corrections but mentioned the introductions are very helpful with the addition of the new committee members. Gayle agreed, and noted it is particularly beneficial due to the nature of the virtual meetings. Gayle then asked for a motion to accept the previous meeting minutes of February 22, 2023. James Overton moved to accept the previous meeting minutes, and Roxanne Sewell seconded the motion. All members were in favor of approving the previous meeting minutes.

## **IV. Chairperson Report**

No updates to discuss. The committee is in a waiting game that feels like it is partially due to the upcoming May election. There may be more news and updates on requests that the committee needs once the election passes.

M. Gayle Moss asked Lisa Edmonds if all committee members were provided with the Allegheny County Ordinance Code that covers the MWDBE Advisory Committee. Lisa noted that it was emailed to all members as well as sent as an attachment with today's meeting request.

Roxanne Sewell asked for clarification for herself and the new members regarding what has been requested of the county that the committee is waiting for. Gayle noted that member candidates to fill committee seats were awaiting County Council approval.

## **V. Advisory Committee Ordinance Review**

Lisa Edmonds shared her screen so the committee would be able to discuss Allegheny County Ordinance §435-4. M/W/DBE Advisory Committee. M. Gayle Moss briefly discussed the process they had undergone a few years prior to update the ordinance with County Council.

Roxanne Sewell asked if committee members are still able to recommend candidates for consideration to fill committee seats. Gayle assured that accepting candidates was still a possibility as long as the candidates name, resume, and contact information can be put forth. Since the current candidates have not yet gone before County Council for approval, adding more candidates would be constructive.

Lisa shared some history in reference to the MWDBE Advisory Committee from her tenure with the Department of Equity and Inclusion. Starting in 2005 the MWDBE Advisory Committee had over 30 members, and they met monthly/quarterly. Councilman Robinson proposed this new ordinance to bring the committee membership to a more easily managed number, today's 15-seat Advisory Committee.

Tim Stevens asked for clarification as to why the committee was reviewing the ordinance; if there was discussion of proposing changes on the table or if it was simply to understand the ordinance. Gayle advised that it was fundamental to review the ordinance with all attending members so if there were any questions needed for clarification, the long-standing members could address them.

Tim also asked if the five county department directors are being directly involved with the committee. Gayle stated that they are playing a direct role in attending these meetings and giving their input. In the event of committee members having questions for the departments they are directly available to advise and assist, as well as being able to give feedback to the committee if they have suggestions for process to work more smoothly. Tim recalled the county staff being present at older meetings and would prefer if that format returned. Gayle advised that the county staff is present in the meeting now although just in a virtual setting instead of in person.

Tim asked what the process would be as far as recommendations for committee seats. Any recommendations need to be forwarded to Gayle who will then pass that on to County Council for approval. Gayle mentioned that she talks with County Executive Rich Fitzgerald on a regular basis and reminds him each time. She is hopeful that after the primary election more forward movement will come from County Council. Roxanne remarked that it is challenging waiting for action to be taken. Tim suggested that Gayle could send an email to the County Executive/County Council stating that the committee would like the recommended appointments addressed.

Lisa asked Roxanne and Gayle if they were open to recording the name of the candidate Roxanne would like to recommend for the committee, and they agreed they were. Roxanne stated the candidate as Dr. Rikell Ford, from Clairton, PA. Dr. Ford is currently on the school board in Clairton and recently finished her Ph.D. in a field relative to community organizing. Roxanne also noted it is vital to bring younger people onto the committee for the ongoing efforts. Lisa remarked to Roxanne that she believed Dr. Ford may be a county employee, and to verify this with the candidate before submitting her for recommendation to County Council.

## **VI. Member Updates and Discussion on Possible Ways to Improve Small Business Relationships with County Departments**

M. Gayle Moss asked Lisa Edmonds to share ideas with the county liaisons about what information they can pass on that would be helpful to the committee. Lisa clarified whether Gayle was asking her to comment on the type of assistance she believes the Department of Equity and

Inclusion needs from the liaison members. Lisa advised that she could give more details at a future meeting, but it is valuable to have the liaisons on the committee to be made aware of what input is needed. Lisa does periodically correspond with the department liaisons in regard to how the departments work together with DEI. At this point in time, she advised that continuing to partner as they have is the best course of action. Lisa stated that she has made a previous issue known and it is currently being addressed, specifically regarding contracts, that DEI should be involved up front prior to a proposal publicly going out for bids. To be a part of the initial formation of the documentation before it goes public would be beneficial so the department can get ahead of potential MBEs and WBEs that would be able to participate on the type of contract and be more aware of what to expect for a particular scope of work.

Roxanne Sewell clarified that DEI would like to have a better understanding of the contracts in order to be more proactive to help make sure contracts have successful participation by MWDBEs. Lisa stated it would help DEI to understand what MBEs/WBEs could be involved with the project before it is put out to the public for the bidding process as well as a better understanding of the detailed scope of work. Tim Stevens added that there could be a policy recommendation written and sent to the County Executive in an effort to make this an enforceable change. Gayle agreed that is a useful suggestion, and hoped the liaisons agreed. She also noted that the committee is hopeful in bringing everyone to an even start line.

Roxanne stated that certification alone does not assist in businesses obtaining contracts, but it does help owners to see the big picture of what is available. Having the committee try to help them through the process would be advantageous. Since vendors are unable to take time away from their businesses to spend the time it takes to understand/get through the process of applying for certification, it is important to assist in building the capacity of MWDBEs and enable the story to be told of what the committee does in its efforts to help small businesses be aware of opportunities.

Tim asked Gayle if it would be acceptable to make a motion to send a policy recommendation to the County Executive. Gayle advised that Lisa should write it up first so the committee may review it and then make a motion to submit it to the County Executive. Tim clarified that he felt it should be expedited and not wait for the next meeting of the committee and asked if he could make a motion to empower Lisa to write a document for Gayle to review. Lisa said she could summarize what was previously discussed and would send it to Gayle for edits and approval. At which point it would be emailed to all committee members for review, comments, edits, and a vote. Gayle asked all members present agreed to the process. All were in agreement, and Lisa stated she would have it prepared.

Lisa noted the timeframe left in today's meeting and asked about covering items a-k under this agenda item and advised Mark Conner had made her aware he would be unavailable for today's

meeting due to attending a training. Gayle advised they should move on to agenda item seven: DEI Chief Equity and Inclusion Officer Report.

## **VII. DEI Chief Equity and Inclusion Officer Report**

Lisa Edmonds stated item a of her report had already been discussed. (See agenda item five.)

She noted that the next meeting of the committee is scheduled to be in-person and a catered breakfast had been requested. Nancy DiNardo had offered to hold the meeting in the Facilities Management conference room.

### **a. Update on the Committees (3) Suggested Candidates**

See M. Gayle Moss's discussion with the County Executive covered in agenda item five.

- i. Holly Douglas – Vice President, Business Infrastructure at Cosmos Technologies, Inc.**
- ii. Tina Daniels – Owner, Concrete Rose Construction**
- iii. Fred Quinn – Civic Engagement Chair, Urban League Young Professionals of Greater Pittsburgh**

### **b. Posted Quarterly and Annual Reports**

Lisa wanted the committee to be made aware that both quarterly and annual reports that note MWDBE participation are posted publicly on the county website and viewable at any time.

### **c. 2022 Annual Report Update**

DEI is currently finalizing the annual MWDBE 2022 Report, after which it will be sent to the county stat department, then onto the County Executive for the addition of his letter. It will then undergo a final review before being posted to the website. Lisa stated previous committee members active during 2022 would be included in the MWDBE Advisory Committee section and noted that any members who were appointed this year would not be shown in the report.

### **d. Staff Training Opportunities**

As a review, B2GNow is the online system DEI uses to track contract compliance participation with vendors. Once a contract is entered into the system, prime vendors are required to report their spending with MWDBEs monthly. The PA UCP also utilizes this system for certification management. The software owner conducts training annually, and as the system is relatively new to us for certification, three DEI staff members were approved to attend the training held this May in Arizona to better understand the system. There are government agencies and corporations from all over the country that attend the training and it will be a great opportunity to understand best practices in regard to monitoring contracts and managing certification data.

Tim Stevens asked to clarify what the software was. Lisa stated she believed B2G was short for business-to-government, and that the owner was AskNow Incorporated DBA B2GNow. They work with many government entities, including US DOT, which utilizes

their service for a national database. Previously, Allegheny County only used the software for compliance purposes, while certification data was managed separately by PennDOT, and Lisa is grateful that certification and contract compliance are now under one system.

Roxanne stated she thought that the training was an excellent idea and would be a good way to learn more in understanding the way businesses need assistance with their certification. Lisa stated she has always viewed trainings where other entities/agencies attend as great opportunities to understand best practices and bring ideas back for policy or process adjustments.

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

M. Gayle Moss requested agenda item five be discussed in the next meeting.

#### **IX. Miscellaneous**

M. Gayle Moss noted she was grateful and happy to have the county staff members actively participating in the committee.

She reiterated that Lisa Edmonds would be preparing a policy recommendation for the committee to review before submission to the County Executive regarding DEI's up-front involvement prior to a contract proposal publicly going out for bid, in an effort to be a part of the initial formation of the documentation to be aware of what is expected for a particular scope of work.

Loren Ganoë shared that as DHS is the largest county agency, they could play a role in marketing MWDBEs to provider agencies due to the volume of subcontracts. Working together to develop materials about best practices to direct vendors to find MWDBEs would be beneficial in increasing participation.

#### **X. Adjournment**

M. Gayle Moss asked if all were in favor of adjourning today's meeting. Everyone was in agreement and the meeting was adjourned.