

**Allegheny County Department of Equity and Inclusion
MWDBE Advisory Committee Meeting
Public Works Conference Room
505 County Office Building, 542 Forbes Avenue
Wednesday, December 13, 2023
11:00 AM**

Agenda

- I. Open Meeting**
- II. Roll Call**
- III. Approval of Previous Meeting Minutes (November 1, 2023)**
- IV. Chairperson Report**
- V. DEI Chief Equity and Inclusion Officer Report**
- VI. Liaisons Discuss Department Procurement Process**
 - a. Economic Development
 - b. Purchasing
 - c. Facilities Management
- VII. Next Meeting Date and Desired Topics**
- VIII. Miscellaneous**
- IX. Adjournment**

Allegheny County MWDBE Advisory Committee Meeting Attendees
December 13, 2023, 11:00 AM

Advisory Committee Members Present:

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

Advisory Committee Members Absent:

Alberto Benzaquen – Commissioner, Pittsburgh Commission on Human Relations

Advisory Committee County Liaison Members Present:

Loren Ganoe – Human Services
Jason Molinero – Public Works
Kelly Stockman – Purchasing
Sydney Rabinovitz – Economic Development

Advisory Committee County Liaison Members Absent:

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Also Present:

Kevin Halaja – Facilities Management
Lisa Edmonds – Chief Officer, Allegheny County Department of Equity and Inclusion
Damian Wiles – Deputy Director, Department of Equity and Inclusion
Erin Johnson – Office Clerk, Department of Equity and Inclusion

Allegheny County MWDBE Advisory Committee Meeting Minutes
December 13, 2023, 11:00 AM

I. Open Meeting

M. Gayle Moss opened the meeting.

II. Roll Call

Attendance of committee members and liaisons was taken.

III. Approval of Previous Meeting Minutes (November 1, 2023)

M. Gayle Moss asked the committee if there were any additions or corrections to note from the November 1, 2023 meeting minutes. Corrections are noted in red.

Loren Ganoë advised on two corrections needed in her overview of DHS/s procurement process in section six: 2,000, **200,000 people**; ~~elder welfare~~, **aging services**.

Holly Douglas advised on a correction to the spelling of her husband's name in section four: ~~Fredrick~~ **Frederick** Douglas.

Jason Molinero advised on a correction needed in his overview of Public Works' procurement process in section six: ~~Cyclical Monitoring for Continuous Improvement~~, corrected **Construction Management and Construction Inspection**.

Roxanne Sewell motioned to approve the previous meeting minutes as corrected. Holly Douglas seconded the motion. All members present voted to approve the previous meeting minutes with corrections.

IV. Chairperson Report

M. Gayle Moss stated she did not have much to report, but she does have good news and she is very excited. Lisa Edmonds will be retained by the incoming County Executive. Any committee appointments or term renewals will be done after the start of the new administration.

V. DEI Chief Equity and Inclusion Officer Report

Lisa Edmonds advised that the third quarter progress report for MWDBE commitments on contracts reviewed by Equity and Inclusion has been posted to the county website.

As mentioned by M. Gayle Moss, Lisa confirmed the retention of her position with the County. She mentioned receipt of an email from the incoming County Executive noting her anticipation for them working together.

Lisa and four DEI staff attended the African American Chamber of Commerce of Western Pennsylvania (AACCWP) annual business luncheon, which featured Governor Josh Shapiro as keynote speaker. He discussed the work being done at the state level to build MWDBE capacity.

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Lisa advised the committee members to bring projects/changes in MWDBE factors at the state/county level (Department of General Services) they may come across to the attention of the rest of the committee. Holly Douglas mentioned that the state closely tracks diverse supplier engagement and asked what that looks like at the county level. Lisa advised she could review the DEI process of tracking engagements with MWDBEs at a future meeting. There was also discussion regarding Allegheny County's ACH policy. Loren Ganoe advised that the Controller's Office is the department that oversees outgoing payments and they do have ACH payouts, however, they have not been accepting new vendors to be added paid via ACH. Committee members agreed they would like to make a recommendation to the County Executive to have more businesses added to the ACH process.

Lisa discussed her attendance at the 11th annual CEIR event in November, noting advisory committee liaison Loren was one of the presenters. She mentioned it was a wonderful conference and as always there was a lot of knowledge shared. Loren noted that in her presentation she mentioned DHS recently launched a new solicitations webpage and would send the information/link to all committee members.

Lisa noted that Purchasing, DHS, and Public Works are now all utilizing Bonfire for bids and solicitations. Kelly Stockman advised that while there are separate landing pages for the various departments, it is all the same procurement system. Roxanne Sewell asked if an account would automatically be created in Bonfire once a business became DBE certified. Lisa advised that it is a business owner's choice whether they would like to create an account on Bonfire to bid on/submit proposals for contracts with the County.

Lisa stated DEI has been in the early planning stages with Economic Development to host an outreach event in Spring 2024 to advise business owners on the processes of doing business with Allegheny County. As the event comes closer, more departments will be engaged in this planning. Tim Stevens noted it would be beneficial to bring the County Authorities on board for such events, as they have significant contracting opportunities.

VI. Liaison Discussion of Procurement Process

a. Economic Development: Sydney Rabinovitz

Sydney is the new liaison for Economic Development with the MWDBE committee and works as a business development specialist. She advised the committee that all authorities Economic Development administers for have monthly board meetings which are open to the public and the minutes are accessible online. She is still learning the procurement process but noted solicitations are sent to MWDBE networking groups, and commitment statements of good faith efforts must be outlined in bids.

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Tim Stevens brought forward the concern that the requirement of a good faith effort on paper is typically better than in practice and advised for stringent definitions of good faith efforts, and to have strong consequences for when bidders do not meet those requirements. Jim Overton noted that commitment statements are heavily dependent on which work codes are required for a bid and the availability of contractors to perform the work. Holly Douglas noted she wanted to have an in-depth discussion on the good faith efforts process within the County, including when contractors send a blast of email notices looking for MWDBE subcontractors. Lisa Edmonds advised that the issue of a vendor sending a blast of emails to all MWDBEs regardless of work code does not constitute a good faith effort, and DEI follows up with vendors on their good faith efforts when goals are not met.

Lisa noted to the committee that all purchasing for Economic Development is done through the County but purchasing done as the administrative arm for authorities does not necessarily have the same requirements as County spending. Kelly Stockman clarified grant funding sources may also have stipulations for distribution.

There was brief discussion of future meetings informing the committee on what services or programs all County departments offer and what opportunities are seen or lacking for MWDBEs and discussing recommendations to propose to the County Executive.

b. Purchasing: Kelly Stockman

Purchasing & Supplies procures all goods and services that the County requires to function and works closely with departments to forecast upcoming projects, which will be more of a focus in the coming year. Some projects are done proactively as part of regular County operations, while reactive purchasing is done for projects based on urgent recommendations by a department.

Kelly noted that if a vendor does not show a good faith effort to include diverse suppliers, Purchasing will move to the next lowest, responsible, responsive bidder. They also work to choose the best fit for project proposals that are being submitted.

Tim Stevens asked if the County creates opportunities for new bidders at the end of the regular operation contracts. Kelly advised marketing is done in preparation of a contract's end/begin cycle to receive bids for the next cycle of a contract.

Kelly also shared that Purchasing is excited to have the Bonfire software used by DHS and Public Works for projects and contracts, and agreed to reach out to Bonfire to ensure all County solicitations are accessible upon login.

c. Facilities Management: Kevin Halaja

Kevin discussed the process of County projects from planning to bids to completion, noting it is a complicated and multi-avenue process depending on the type of project.

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Once notice is received regarding work for a department, they will set a meeting to discuss what the scope of the project will and what is needed to complete it. Depending on the complexity of a project, a consultant may be employed. For capital projects, once outlines are established in design meetings, Facilities Management uses a competitive process based on proposal guidelines to select a consultant. Then, once a full spec is received from the consultant, it is sent to Purchasing to generate a bid solicitation. As Facilities Management submits Work Order Authorizations (for on call architectural firms), DEI should be included.

Tim Stevens asked what the process is to identify potential architects. Kevin noted it is publicly advertised. Kelly Stockman stated advertisements are also posted in the Pittsburgh Tribune and the Pittsburgh Post-Gazette.

M. Gayle Moss noted her interest in a recommendation to expand advertising publications used by the County to include those noted from the committee's previous meeting (Soul Pitt, Brother Ash Productions, African American Chamber of Commerce, Pittsburgh Metropolitan Area Hispanic Chamber of Commerce, Riverside Center for Innovation, Pittsburgh Urban Media). She would also add that all County projects should be advertised in a wide range of publications managed by the County as a whole instead of having each department manage which advertisers they utilize.

VII. Next Meeting Date and Desired Topics

DEI will send a selection of dates in January to committee for review for the next meeting.

Request Sydney Rabinovitz to give an overview of the authorities Economic Development is the administrative arm for, and what type of contracts go out from those authorities.

M. Gayle Moss will reach out to a potential candidate to recommend filling a seat on the committee.

Tim Stevens asked that when meetings are in person to have name tags available for committee members and liaisons.

Holly Douglas advised adding action items to the agenda and addressing them to strike off at the next meeting as completed, or in progress. This was agreed to be discussed by the committee.

VIII. Miscellaneous

IX. Adjournment

M. Gayle Moss adjourned the meeting at 1:32 PM.