

SR 259 DBE Taskforce

Minutes from First Planning Meeting (September 27, 2019)

Members Present:

Sen. David Koehler (Chair), senatordavekoehler@gmail.com

Dr. Amir Al-Khafaji, amir@fsmail.bradley.edu

Sen. John Curran, senatorcurran@gmail.com

Mr. Guillermo Garcia, ggarcia@gsg-consultants.com

Sen. Mattie Hunter, mhunterassoc@sbcglobal.net

Ms. Jennifer Krug, jenniferk@k-five.net

Mr. Dan Meckes, dmeckes@cmtengr.com

Mr. Aaron Ozinga, aaronozinga@ozinga.com

Ms. Mary Person, mperson@fhpaschen.com

Ms. Leslie Sawyer, lsawyer@envdesigni.com

Ms. Harvind Singh, hkaur@singhinc.com

Mr. John Trotta, john.trotta@wsp.com

Absent:

Sen Chuck Weaver (VC), chuck@senweaver.com

Karen Jensen, kjensen@f-w.com

Mr. John Kapovich, jkapovich@sjconst.com

INTRODUCTION

Each member made their introductions and gave a brief bio of their involvement within their companies led by Senator Koehler. Everyone was asked to submit their picture and bios prior to the next meeting for the listing which will be posted on the website.

Sen. Koehler proposed the formation of a Steering Committee that would require approval by the Taskforce. He suggested Sen. Koehler, Sen. Hunter, Sen. Curran, Sen. Weaver and Dr. Amir Al-Khafaji be approved as the Steering Committee. The Taskforce members present voted unanimously to approve.

Sen. Koehler mentioned the importance and impact of our deliberations. He talked about the opportunities everyone will have in discussing the important issues before the Task Force, and the need for the to abide by the Public Meeting Act in all the meetings, including the Steering Committee. He wanted to see the group focus on long-term goals not just present. He stated that the Capital Bill will impact capacity building and development for Future Generations of women and minority businesses.

MAJOR ISSUES:

Insight of thoughts impediments, who is important, who's perspectives.

Dr. Amir Al-Khafaji: The Rebuild Illinois capital bill of \$45 billions will require a significant increase in minority capacity that doesn't exist today. Participation goals range from less than 10% in southern Illinois to more than 40% in Cook County. This means at least \$1 billion in new annual minority work without investments made by the private sector, O'Hare modernization and a new Tollway Capital. Minority capacity and participation goals are not being met at present without a new capital bill. There are capacity issues, new regulations, pre-qualifications, etc. that need to be addressed by this Taskforce. Existing regulations are sometimes expensive to meet due to inconsistency between State agencies. Participation goals and transparency are issues we need to address with CDB, CMS, IDOT and Tollway. For example, IDOT had a loan program of \$10 million directed at women and minority firms that awarded less than \$400,000. The program is no longer in effect. He stated that timely payment to small minority by State agencies and cities may cause some to go out of business. Discussed his meeting with NICOR – and NPL - it was a daylong event which included discussions about in-house minority participation and capacity building. They have developed joint programs for the youth called Career Academy and a substantial program to help minority firms.

Ms. Sawyer: mentions concern is viewed for capacity of primes more than just a sub-contracting. IDOT minimum requirement, Tollway is 40%- wants to grow appropriately sized.

John Trotta: in agreement with Ms. Sawyer in respect to contracting. Also agrees with the challenges and the variety of codes, rules and regulations in place. Goals to grow in sectors, payment are factors to look into.

Ms. Person: is in agreement on diversity and capacity for starting firms while creating opportunities for minority firms.

Sen. Hunter: Explained her experience from 2014 on a project for women and minority issues, also ended up with low percentages and no follow up on contracting appropriately. Capacity for understanding BPE structure is currently slow. There's a need to find accountability for consideration on existing statutes. Looks forward towards better implementation.

Ms. Singh: states her agreement on Capacity identified for growth, and perception has to be taken into consideration. Language is also an important consideration. Programs include diversity but not specific to race.

Ms. Person: mentions from her perspective a 20% goal aspiration is not enough for 2218 firms with out a 20% goal. Explained on how Contractors do not meet the goal due to regulations, there are various reasons. Mentoring is also mentioned.

Mr. Garcia: mentions barriers on pre-qualifications. Usually same individuals involved. Stressed the need for more awareness on accountability.

Mr. Ozinga: states the question how to build a lasting legacy. New leadership for a long process. Opportunity in education, migrate toward internship, trades and other areas. On the job learning, individuals and companies working together with opportunities.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR SENATE ADMINISTRATION

Ms. Krug: supports data, facts, and figures to tackle for insight.

Mr. Meckes: volunteered to develop the final report using his marketing department in Springfield. He will gather relevant information.

OVERVIEW

Minority and Women Business Capacity is an issue. Any additions? (none received)

Reality: What additional reality?

Mr. Trotta: Development with a 40% goal, plus utility with capacity, Tollway want to help growth. Developers are interested. Union 134 working on diversity programs exist. Pre-apprenticeship—put them to work and give guidance.

Sen. Koehler: How to implement comes up as an issue. Capacity is crucial to direct success. Youth involvement - how to get them involved.

Ms. Singh: Private sector, in agreement. Will always have challenges. Programs have been tight and with shortages. Contractors side: drug free work zone might be an issue due to Law changes. How will this affect work?

Sen. Curran: suggests inviting IDOT and Tollway, CBDC among other minority for participation. NICOR is good for identifying other organizations.

Ms. Krug: asserts that Federal Funds, Drug enforcement will always be in place. Procurement and process is separate. Low bid business perspective for her business is numbers, challenges, paperwork, etc. is overwhelming for smaller companies. Good firms fail due to existing practices.

Sen. Koehler: Best practices. Replicate. No diversity equals no contract. How do we help in achieving success.

Ms. Person: seems to think that perhaps Math is an issue for some trades. Possibility to address issue at the schooling/Trade schools.

Another suggestion is Consulting in the areas with multiple clients.

Ms. Singh: has question regarding the consulting (certification)?? Accounting for consulting/certification

Ms. Sawyer: might be expensive for small businesses, cost issue for minority ownerships

Mr. Ozinga: states that certification is an eye opener to his group.

Dr. Al-Khafaji: gave an example of different certification requirements by various State Agencies that are expensive to meet. Stated he can invite people to share their experiences from the private to speak on mentor protégée programs. Some agencies like IDOT and others to share input on where they stand to address what has and has not worked for them in order to move forward with plans future minority capacity building. Also pointed out a story of three African American men he met recently looking for jobs and yet we have minority capacity issues. Some speak about the \$15 per hour minimum wage as being high when one can be encouraged to join unions and make \$50 per hour by going through an apprenticeship program. Instead of encouraging them to handle a spatula teach them how to handle a shovel and go from \$15 to \$50 per hour.

Sen. Koehler: steps in to excuse Sen. Hunter's need to step out at this time.... Speaks on a project that recently had finished and there were inquiries on whether it worked or not? Followed by more interest to know what didn't work in order to proceed and perhaps use as an example.

Ms. Sawyer: mentioned that mid-size companies can relate. Goals are needed. Firms that are starting up have very little options for advancement opportunities and goals are different to a company. Size of company – how does a company move forward under similar career paths? More options are needed.

Sen. Koehler: Reminds everyone the time coming to a close.

Dr. Al-Khafaji: volunteers to provide more information on an IDOT loan program that had expired in June 2018.

Ms. Singh: has questions on this on specificity

Sen. Hunter: mentions some times are conflicting as far as rules. Asks the question as to why did it not succeed?

Mr. Trotta: brings up the issue of Minority and that apprenticeship programs are in place and would be a great opportunity to elevate what is currently here.

Sen. Koehler: mentions the importance of the committee getting to know one another within the group.

Mr. Meckas: mentions a firm that has experience on the matter.

John Trotta: comments that percentages are low.

Mr. Garcia: mentions the Metropolitan Water & Construction companies.

Ms. Sawyer: mentions growth, Bio comment on How to change the rules?? This is a struggle.

Dr. Al-Khafaji: explained to Ms. Sawyer the targeting goals of before and after capital bill.

Ms. Sing: At this time took advantage to pass out copies of a report relating to the Asian Community.

Sen. Koehler: Mentions the Taskforce needs to complete its work by July 1 of 2020.

Dr. Al-Khafaji: gave special thanks to the Republican Senate Leader Bill Brady and Senate Majority Leader John Cullerton on their effort to form this taskforce and their commitment to this worthy cause. He also thanked Chairman Sen. Koehler on his effort.

Meeting is adjourned

NEXT STEP:

Future Meetings are set for:

October 28th Steering Committee will meet in Springfield at 9 am in Committee Room 400, Capitol Building. All are welcome to attend.

November 15th, 2019 from 10 a.m. to Noon

Committee Room C600, Bilandic Building, 160 N LaSalle, Chicago IL 60601

December 6th, 2019 same time 10 a.m. to Noon, same place.

The taskforce need to complete its work by July 1 of 2020