

Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) Business Advisory Committee January 2022 Meeting Summary

Attendance

Members **Present** (10) Vicki Gray, Marcus Johnson-Smith, Kimberly Massenburg, Jennie Song, Jaswinder Kaur, Samuel Gebru, Zina Thompson, Angela Hofmann, LaTonya Smith-Winston, Erinn Pearson

Absent (3) Jason Doo, Allentza Michel, Nephtaliem McCrary

City staff (3) Iram Farooq (CDD), Pardis Saffari (CDD), Bonnie-May Shantz (CDD)

Others 3 members of the public.

Welcome & Introductions

Iram Farooq (IF) opened the virtual meeting at 4:00 PM by welcoming members of the BIPOC Business Advisory Committee and staff. Committee members introduced themselves, their business, and one thing that was new for their business.

Cambridge BIPOC Business Survey Preliminary Results

Pardis Saffari (PS) presented some preliminary results from the business survey. 91 business owners responded to the survey, and the City. Once all the analysis and follow-up interviews are complete, then CDD will provide the Committee a report and presentation of additional results.

Presentation highlights included outreach, demographic breakdown, information employees and pre including local business associations, Cambridge Housing Authority, and local community associations

There were 91 respondents to the survey and so far there have been 7 interviews. The rest of the interviews and analysis will be completed over the next month. Staff will provide the Committee with a full report soon after.

Committee comments on preliminary results:

- We would like to know more about the businesses and their sectors who stated that they did not have a change in revenue between 2019 to 2020, and other details on questions.
- Some members had heard that getting certified with the Massachusetts Supplier Diversity Office was difficult and not useful for their type of business. Other Committee members stated that the State had recently streamlined this process and it was not difficult. Some members thought it was useful for everyone to get registered so they could leverage their certification status, and that this may unlock other opportunities if not public contracts.

General Business

Iram Farooq asked the Committee if they had ideas of things the City could do to further assist BIPOC-owned businesses. Committee comments were:

- More outreach to cottage industry business owners, home-based businesses, and residents in pop-ups (such as Popportunity)
- A possible policy proposal could be for the City to look into starting a small business banking partnership. For example, the City could bank with a local bank contingent on the bank providing more loans/programs to women and minority owned businesses.
- Find ways to streamline small business grant programs (e.g. do not require so many documents and quotes for participation in programs)
- Celebrate milestones (e.g. anniversaries) for BIPOC-owned businesses such as receiving a Key to the City
- Begin a pop-up program for BIPOC businesses and artists to occupy vacant storefronts
- Information for new businesses starting up on who they can reach out to in the City for permits, licenses and programs, supporters in their local community (e.g. neighboring businesses), and business associations or Chamber of Commerce
- Provide a “How to open a business” checklist

PS spoke about the Small Business Portal website that is being developed to be a “one-stop-shop” for businesses to find all the City information that they may need as they are starting and growing their business.

Possible discussions for upcoming meetings:

- A presentation on the Cycling Safety Ordinance
- Discussion on the Committee’s outreach, policy, and program recommendations
- A presentation on recent retail/home occupancy zoning changes
- “Dark stores” information and update
- How to promote and amplify BIPOC-owned businesses
- Meet the new Police Commissioner
- Meet the business associations and Chamber of Commerce leaders
- Visit each other’s businesses and get to know each other in-person, perhaps in spring

Next meeting will be Monday, February 28, 2022.

Public comment

None.

Meeting adjourned at 5:30 PM.