

Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) Business Advisory Committee February 2024 Meeting Summary

Attendance

Members Present (8) Angela Hofman, Margaret Pimentel, Jennie Song, Keisha Greaves, Zina Thompson, Erinn Pearson, Jaswinder Kaur, Sukia Akiba

Absent (3) Jason Doo, Vicki Gray, Nephtalie McCrary

City Staff Present (7) CDD: Pardis Saffari, Allyson Allen, Tyrone Fells
Purchasing: Liz Unger, Purchasing Agent & Shuo Wang, Asst. Purchasing Agent
Law: Evan Bjorkland, Asst. City Solicitor
Deidre Brown, Chief of Equity and Inclusion

Others (1) Latoya Weaver (Community Engagement Team member)

Welcome & Introductions

Allyson Allen (AA) opened the virtual meeting at 4:00 PM by welcoming members of the BIPOC Business Advisory Committee. City staff in attendance introduced themselves.

Discussion

Disparity Study Results

Economic Opportunity and Development Director Pardis Saffari (PS) and Allyson Allen (AA) presented a slide deck sharing the highlights of the Disparity Study results. PS explained what a Disparity Study entails and shared the project background. A Disparity Study is an objective research tool that determines whether there are disparities in a governmental agency's procurement activities of certain groups. It further determines if those disparities are statistically significant and likely caused by the race and gender status of firm owners. The project started in 2021 with a City Council request and an RFP was issued later that summer. PS then detailed the study parameters and described the process involved including the community engagement and outreach performed. The study looked at fiscal years 2017-2021 and gathered data and conducted analysis before issuing findings and recommendations.

General findings indicate that certified available and interested minority business enterprises (MBEs) and women business enterprises (WBEs) in the marketplace are being underutilized.

Recommendations include:

- Tracking Prime and Subcontracting Utilization of MWBEs and Veterans When Applicable
- Internal Annual Aspirational Goals
- Aspirational Contract Goals
- Encourage Certification
- Forecasting
- Targeted Outreach
- Contract Compliance
- Data Reform

PS described current efforts to improve procurement policies and practices to encourage participation from MBEs, veteran-owned business enterprises (VBEs) and WBEs and shared thoughts about future efforts. AA outlined current efforts at building capacity for diverse businesses including technical assistance workshops, grant assistance programs before describing future efforts under consideration. Currently, EOD co-hosts a *reverse* supplier diversity vendor fair with MIT. AA revealed the results of the satisfaction survey completed by fair attendees and then shared some ideas for future efforts including making the bid website more user-friendly.

BIPOC advisory committee members wondered what metrics the City plans to capture and utilize. That is currently being determined by the interdepartmental working group. Member JS is newly certified after completing a process that was started long ago – she shared that the biggest hurdle was time. It's hard to devote the time needed to get all the documents in order to apply for certification. What would have helped in the process of becoming certified is a checklist iterating everything required. Once certified, businesses could use some direction about what's next. EOD will take those ideas under advisement for future program planning.

Updates

Committee member JK thanked committee members for their help and guidance regarding selecting and utilizing a new a point-of-sale system. Members celebrated the achievement of India Pavilion existing for 45 years in Central square and were excited to hear the restaurant was to be featured on Chronicle 2/7/2024.

Other committee members shared how difficult January is for business; there was some bounce back after COVID but they are finding they are not seeing the income they have in the past.

Committee member AH shared that Nussli 118 is hosting Valentines Day Dinner on 2/10/24, 2/14/24 and 2/17/24.

Other Committee Items

Committee members would like to meet in person for our next meeting in late spring. Members suggested a networking activity where they could bring a fellow Cambridge business owner.

Public comment

None

Meeting adjourned at 5:40 PM.