

**CITY OF BRIDGEPORT
CITY COUNCIL
SPECIAL INFORMATIONAL SESSION
JUNE 20, 2011**

ATTENDANCE: Council President Thomas McCarthy, Chair; Denise Taylor Moyer; Richard Paoletto; Susan Brannelly, Lydia Martinez; Robert Curwen; Richard Bonney, Michelle Lyons, Andre Baker; AmyMarie Vizzo-Paniccia; Yvette Brantley (6:20 p.m.), Angel dePara (6:20 p.m.)

STAFF: Deborah Caviness, SMBP Senior Program Administrator; Mr. Dennis Scinto, Office of Contract Compliance; Bernd Tardy, City Purchasing Agent

CALL TO ORDER

An informational session given by Deborah Caviness of the Small and Minority Business Resource Office on the topic of the City's Small and Minority Business Program.

Council President McCarthy called the meeting to order at 5:38 p.m. Ms. Caviness introduced herself and said that she was the Senior Program Administrator for the Small & Minority Business Senior Program Administrator.

In 2009, there were 140 new businesses, the majority of which were Bridgeport based. There were 86 African American businesses, 26 Caucasian businesses, 24 Hispanic businesses, and 4 others. In 2010, there were 141 businesses including 88 African American businesses, 25 Hispanic businesses, and 24 Caucasian businesses among others. She then reviewed the numbers for 2011, which are not completed because the year is in progress.

There have been 21 workshops and over 500 attendees. The office has formed strong relationships with the CEF and other governmental offices that provide finances for small business. The vendors database has been updated and is available on the website. Ms. Caviness said that Mr. Santiago was doing a significant amount of translation for the department but was frequently in Hartford at legislative meetings. Now another employee has been hired for the Spanish speaking work in the department.

Council Member Paoletto said that he was very aware of the amount of work that her office does particularly since his office is located near hers.

Ms. Caviness said that regarding the landscape architects; she had gotten an email saying that there were only 2% of minorities involved in this particular career area in the nation.

Council Member Taylor Moye asked about the licensing and other issues. Ms. Caviness explained that the City requires insurance and licenses. When the contractors don't have the papers filed properly, they can't be recognized by the City or employed by the City.

Council Member Martinez said that she had participated in the activities that Ms. Caviness had organized.

Council Member Curwen said that he wanted to applaud the work that Ms. Caviness had done for the City. He reminded everyone that the Council had supplied Ms. Caviness with CDBG funding for the programs. He said that there were obstacles for the businesses. He said that Ms. Caviness had overcome a number of obstacles for the various groups. Bonding is still an issue. Ms. Caviness explained that her role was education.

Mr. Scinto pointed out that Council Member Bonney had asked about the compliance structure. He then reviewed the various items in his information packet. The packet included the Contract Compliance Notice; a Subcontractor Payment Verification Form; Prevailing Wage & MBE Violations Investigation Results; and a copy of a recent check resulting from fines as a results from violations.

Council Member Bonney asked about the details about the debarment process, which Mr. Scinto reviewed with him.

Mr. Scinto then reviewed the list of the contract awards that the City has given from January 1, 2011 to the present. He said that over 85% of the contracts that have been awarded have been to minorities.

Council President McCarthy and Council Members Paoletto, Curwen, Vizzo-Paniccia, and Baker, left the meeting at 6:00 p.m.

Council Member Martinez asked how the office knows who the subcontractors were. Mr. Scinto said that the contractor who was going to be subcontractors usually informs him. Council Member Taylor-Moye had several questions about the details.

Council Member Baker rejoined the meeting at 6:03 p.m.

The discussion then moved to the Marionville Co-op Housing project and the subsequent investigation. Council Member Bonney asked if the City could require the contractors to certify that the workers have all the proper papers for working.

people to sign up on it. It is important to maintain the information to members. Council Member Bonney asked what percentage of minorities had received contracts. Mr. Tardy said that when someone joins the Bid-Sink, they select the minority classification. Council Member Bonney wanted Council Member Baker asked about the Bridgeport residency requirement. Mr. Scinto said that there isn't an ordinance, but he does track the information.

Council Member Vizzo-Paniccia and Council President McCarthy returned to the meeting at 6:07 p.m.

Ms. Caviness said that she always encourages the contractors to have Bridgeport residents. Mr. Scinto said the PLA has been very helpful.

Council Member Lyons asked if the vendors purchase their supplies locally. Mr. Scinto said that he was working on this, and Ms. Caviness said that she was talking to various suppliers about this in an effort to establish lines of credit for small contractors that the City is hiring.

Mr. Scinto said that there had been a number of times where contractors have not bid on jobs under \$100,000, which does not require bonding. Ms. Caviness added that when talking to the small contractors, a lot of contractors do not want to deal with the amount of paperwork. She said that she often suggests they hire someone to handle the paperwork.

Ms. Caviness said that she was trying to establish relationships with Norwalk and Stamford, but there hasn't been much response.

The discussion then moved to a LIUNA boot camp for deconstruction and twelve workers were sent up to Comfrey for training.

Council Member Bonney then asked about whether there is a State organization that assists with bonding and funding. Ms. Caviness said there is a group in Hartford that has received money for small contractors to help with bonding, but no one from Bridgeport has shown much interest to her knowledge.

Council Member Bonney asked if the 30% threshold for Mobs had been met. Mr. Tardy said that the City uses a system called Bid-Sink and there had been a lot of reluctance for to know why the City did not track the number of the total contracts offered that were fulfilled by minorities. Mr. Tardy said that there were some areas where there were no MBEs. Council President McCarthy then explained that there was a problem in that there was no way to verify the fact that the businesses are minorities. Ms. Caviness also pointed out that there were a number of contractors who will not register as a minority because they want to be hired because they are good work men. Because of this, they are not counted. Also the City is involved in a number of State contracts where minority companies were involved, but the State is not required to meet the MBE guidelines.

Council Members Brantley and dePara joined the meeting at 6:20 p.m.

Council President McCarthy suggested that Ms. Caviness, Mr. Tardy and Mr. Scinto list the system's flaws and the problems in a memo for the Council members.

Mr. Scinto asked Council Member Bonney if he was looking to see what the percentage of contacts were minorities were fulfilled. Mr. Bonney said that this was what he wanted to know. Mr. Scinto said that he would get this information to Council Member Bonney.

ADJOURNMENT

Council President McCarthy adjourned the meeting at 6:30 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Sharon L. Soltes
Telesco Secretarial Services