



ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT & UNIVERSITY RELATIONS COMMITTEE

COMMITTEE MEETINGS

~ MINUTES ~

Wednesday, May 29, 2024

11:30 AM

Sullivan Chamber
795 Massachusetts Avenue
Cambridge, MA 02139

The Economic Development and University Relations Committee will hold a public hearing to follow up on its September 27, 2023 meeting on our recent Disparity Study focused on the procurement of goods and services. The purpose of the hearing is to receive an update from city staff on any progress made in developing strategies to reduce barriers and promote city efforts to contract with more minority and women owned businesses identified in the Disparity Study.

Attendee Name	Present	Absent	Late	Arrived
Marc C. McGovern	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Sumbul Siddiqui	<input type="checkbox"/> Remote	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Jivan Sobrinho-Wheeler	<input type="checkbox"/> Remote	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Paul F. Toner	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Ayesha M. Wilson	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	

A public meeting of the Cambridge City Council’s Economic Development and University Relations Committee was held on Wednesday, May 29, 2024. The meeting was Called to Order at 11:30 a.m. by the Chair, Councillor Toner. Pursuant to Chapter 2 of the Acts of 2023 adopted by Massachusetts General Court and approved by the Governor, the City is authorized to use remote participation. This public meeting was hybrid, allowing participation in person, in the Sullivan Chamber, 2nd Floor, City Hall, 795 Massachusetts Avenue, Cambridge, MA and by remote participation via Zoom.

At the request of the Chair, Clerk of Committees Erwin called the roll.

- Vice Mayor McGovern – Absent
- Councillor Siddiqui – Present/Remote
- Councillor Sobrinho-Wheeler – Present/Remote
- Councillor Toner – Present/In Sullivan Chamber
- Councillor Wilson – Present/In Sullivan Chamber

Present – 4, Absent -1. Quorum established.

The Chair, Councillor Toner offered opening remarks and noted that the Call of the meeting was to follow up on the September 27, 2023 meeting on the City’s recent Disparity Study focused on the procurement of goods and services. The purpose of the hearing is to receive an update from city staff on any progress made in developing strategies to reduce barriers and promote city efforts to contract with more minority and women owned businesses identified in the Disparity Study. Present at the meeting was Iram Farooq, Assistant City Manager for the Community Development Department (CDD), Pardis Safari, Director of Economic Opportunity and Development, Allyson Allen, Senior Manager of Economic Opportunity and Development, Elizabeth Unger, Purchasing Agent, Megan Bayer, Acting City Solicitor Evan Bjorklund, Assistant City Solicitor, Deidre Brown, Chief of Equity and Inclusion, and Claire Spinner, Assistant City Manager for Finance. Also present at the meeting was Councillor Pickett and Councillor Nolan.

The Chair, Councillor Toner opened public comment.

Jessica DeJesus Acevedo, 3 Palermo Street, Cambridge, MA, spoke in strong support for women and minority owned businesses.

The Chair, Councillor Toner recognized Iram Farooq who offered opening remarks. Pardis Saffari, who along with Elizabeth Unger, gave a presentation titled "Supplier Diversity Update". The presentation was provided in advance of the meeting and included in the Agenda Packet. The presentation offered an executive summary, data from the Disparity Study, review of an interdepartmental working group to lead supplier diversity efforts, working with the recommendations from the Disparity Study, ongoing and future efforts on tracking supplier diversity, education and training, information on promoting vendor participation, and using feedback to evaluate and improve efforts.

The Chair, Councillor Toner opened Public Comment.

Nicola Williams, 8 Brewer Street, Cambridge, MA, spoke in favor of the work being done around the Disparity Study.

The Chair, Councilor Toner recognized Iram Farooq who provided information on the Commonwealth Development Compact which Cambridge signed onto in the previous term with support from the Mayor and City Manager Offices. Iram Farooq provided a brief overview of the program.

The Chair, Councillor Toner recognized Councillor Wilson who thanked the City for their presentation and those who spoke in public comment. Councillor Wilson pointed out that there is still a lot of work to be done, and noted the importance of being successful with that work and expand to bring in greater partnerships. AW what other districts are using a system like this. Pardis Saffari shared that the two are Commonwealth of Massachusetts and Boston, and small business association for federal contracts. Talking with Boston on how Cambridge can partner with them and provided examples of efforts being made with both Boston and the State.

The Chair, Councillor Toner asked clarifying questions.

The Chair, Councillor Toner recognized Councillor Sobrinho-Wheeler who asked if there are other municipalities with sheltered markets. Evan Bjorklund responded by sharing that currently only Boston does. Iram Farooq provided additional information relative to sheltered markets and the challenges and constraints it could possibly put on the City and businesses who are interested in putting in bids in multiple cities and towns. Iram Farooq shared that more information can be prepared regarding this to be available to the public.

The Chair, Councillor Toner recognized Councillor Siddiqui who asked if the Law Department has responded to the letter from Lawyers for Civil Rights. Even Bjorklund responded and shared that the Law Department along with other stakeholders in the community and the City have put forward general recommendations and that they are in consideration, just as some of the other groups. Councillor Siddiqui asked what the timeline is for this work and when there will be additional updates. Pardis Saffari responded and noted that much of this work is ongoing and some workshops will begin in FY25. Pardis Saffari highlighted that supplier diversity will continue and that the City can come back annually to report data and provide updates. Councillor Siddiqui shared that a timeline would be helpful and that she is excited for all the work that is happening and will continue to happen. Elizabeth Unger and Evan Bjorklund provided additional information on sheltered markets.

The Chair, Councillor Toner recognized Councillor Wilson who asked why the sheltered market is attractive if there are limitations. Megan Bayer and Allyson Allen responded noting that it does help

diversify contracts, but that there are not enough of diverse vendors that are available for the work that Cambridge wants to do, making it limited because there is a small pool of vendors to choose from. Councillor Wilson stressed that the City does not want to be in a position where it is limiting small businesses.

The Chair, Councillor Toner recognized Councillor Nolan who emphasized comments made by previous Councillors and noted the importance of being transparent about the opportunities that are available for vendors. Councillor Nolan stressed that accountability and established goals are important and will help to create results. Councillor Nolan shared that she looks forward to continuing the conversation to help support and encourage small businesses to be successful. Councillor Nolan suggested that once a bid is public, outreach should be done to those small and minority owned businesses to help make them aware of what is available.

The Chair, Councillor Toner recognized Councillor Pickett who shared that she appreciated the conversation and learning more about this topic. Councillor Pickett had a clarifying question on businesses being certified and being a part of the statistics in the data that is presented. Iram Farooq pointed out that it was specifically for the Disparity Study and that the City is continuing to help businesses on the path to being certified. Iram Farooq also shared information on how CDD is planning to collect certification data going forward. Elizabeth Unger provided additional information on the process of retrieving data relative to certified vendors. Councillor Pickett shared that it is important to have goals that tie into a foundation of support and that the City could do a deeper analysis on the data in order to create smart goals.

The Chair, Councillor Toner who asked which professional services would be exempt through the procurement process. Elizabeth Unger responded by sharing how businesses could be exempt in relation to the Disparity Study. Chair Toner had clarifying questions on the unbundling piece of the Study. Elizabeth Unger and Iram Farooq responded by sharing information on contracts with vendors and procurement, noting that it is a learning experience and process. Councillor Toner asked that when looking at businesses is the City considering those who are employed through the business and if they are minorities. Allyson Allen responded and shared that much of the work that is done around diverse vendors is about wealth equity and highlighted the importance of ownership and equity.

The Chair, Councillor Toner recognized Councillor Wilson who shared that she appreciates the conversation and educational learning process. Councillor Wilson stressed the need that work is done to support small businesses and setting specific goals and timelines to reach those goals. Councillor Wilson asked why a business would need to recertify. Pardis Saffari shared that it is a State requirement and provided additional examples of why a recertification may be needed.

The Chair, Councillor Toner recognized Councillor Wilson who made a motion to adjourn the meeting.

Clerk of Committees Erwin called the roll.

Vice Mayor McGovern – Absent

Councillor Siddiqui – Yes

Councillor Sobrinho-Wheeler – Yes

Councillor Toner – Yes

Councillor Wilson – Yes

Yes – 4, No – 0, Absent – 1. Motion passed.

The meeting adjourned at approximately at 1:30p.m.

Attachment A – The City Clerk's Office received one written communication from the public.

Clerk's Note: The City of Cambridge/22 City View records every City Council meeting and every City Council Committee meeting. This is a permanent record. The video for this meeting can be viewed at: https://cambridgema.granicus.com/player/clip/770?view_id=1&redirect=true

A communication was received from Pardis Saffari, Director of Economic Opportunity and Development, transmitting a presentation regarding the supplier diversity update.

Economic Development and University Relations Committee
5/29/2024
Public Comment

Resident/Small Business Owner: Jessica De Jesus Acevedo + 02141

Disparity study

Thank you for your continuous commitment to equity and economic justice for minority and women small business owners.

I am here today virtually to provide our small business recommendations for further developing systems to reduce barriers and promote city efforts to contract with more minority and women-owned businesses, especially family child care programs.

I am a proud family childcare owner, doctoral candidate, and realtor.

Previously, we applied for and identified as a WBE WMBE to strategically create a pathway for private-public partnerships and financial opportunities. More recently, we have chosen not to renew our certificate because of a lack of opportunities or bids for women of color and small businesses.

Childcare and early education are essential, not just for children but employers and policymakers.

- The first recommendation is to increase bids and projects geared toward resident social services.
- Increase 20% to be minority and or women-owned businesses.

Before the pandemic, the city of Cambridge was home to an estimated 30 family childcare programs and depleted to merely 19 programs, including my own. Some childcare owners retired, permanently closed or have chosen to keep their license active but no longer operate. This percentage of childcare closures directly leads to hundreds of young children daily without adequate childcare or early learning opportunities, and mothers and fathers unable or forced to join an unstable workforce to sustain their family's necessities: food, shelter, and childcare.

- Increase the percentage of FCCS programs and childcare options by 20%; reevaluate eligibility and grants that may be limited to home-based businesses or contractors.

Cambridge resident's basic needs cannot be met without city and state resources, funding, and advocacy; this statement also applies to minority and women small business owners!

- 20% increase in events or information sessions focused on the enhancement, development, and advocacy for minority-owned businesses.
 - A current directory only supports this issue if small businesses are utilized or contracted.

The disparity study is a written record of this city's exclusive system and lack of standards. As a researcher, I must highlight that the data does not depict the decades of economic resources, grants, and support not provided equally to minority and women small business owners despite a legal obligation to ensure a city of equal opportunity for all.

In sum, our childcare business would like to see a

- 20% increase in the city using minority and women small business owners for subcontracting, events, and future projects, especially childcare programs and essential need services
- 20% increase in sheltered programs; small business development/coaching, professional services, workshops
- Creating a system or group to focus on the city of Cambridge's minority and women minor business enhancement
- A 5-year plan is to build a foundation of economic and racial equity by empowering small business owners, dismantling systemic barriers to their basic needs, and creating a city of equal opportunities for all Asian, white, black, and Hispanic business Owners.

Again, Thank you for your continuous commitment to equity and economic justice for minority and women small business owners.

Examples/Resources:

[Find a licensed Family, Group or School Age Child Care program | Mass.gov](#)

[Child Care Search \(site.com\)](#)

Article

[Mayor Maynard Jackson gave Atlanta's Black businesses a lift, but at a cost \(ajc.com\)](#)