

Transparency, Engagement, and Communication Committee

Chaired by Mayor Pro Tempore Holmes

Committee Members: Holmes, Cook, Harman, and Moore

July 17, 2024 –9:00 a.m.

High Point Municipal Building

211 S. Hamilton Street

3rd Floor, Council Chambers

Transparency, Engagement, and Communications - Chair Michael Holmes

CALL TO ORDER

Chair Holmes called the Transparency, Engagement, and Communication Committee to order at 9:00 a.m. and stated all Committee Members were present.

Present: Chair Michael Holmes, Committee Member Cook, Committee Member Harman, and Committee Member Moore

2024-297 Disparity Study and MWBE Program Update

Staff will present an overview of the Disparity Study and provide an update.

Bobby Fitzjohn, Financial Services Director, spoke on the Minority and Women-owned Business Enterprises (MWBE) Program, the disparity study, and the recent resources added. He introduced Cynthia Barnes, the MWBE Coordinator.

Ms. Barnes provided an update on the progress of the past 14 months and thanked the Committee and Council for the huge investment in the community by funding this project. She provided some updates on community outreach and partnerships and explained the disparity study. She spoke on the analysis of minority-owned businesses and whether race and gender had been a barrier to equal access to public contracts in the past. She said the disparity study would help to recommend and implement remedies and solutions.

She mentioned the City of High Point study was her fourth study and said the High Point team was the best team of stakeholders she had ever worked with. She spoke on the staff involved and the steering committee.

Ms. Barnes highlighted some outreach events and efforts to ensure business owners participated in the disparity study and of the efforts being utilized to collect the data. She said the business survey was already underway and asked the Committee to encourage business owners in their districts to participate in the survey. She talked about the outreach efforts, including two upcoming virtual public meetings in August, weekly email blasts, and social media posts.

In response to Chair Holmes, she indicated that people could go onto the city website to get on the email list, as well as access the links for the disparity study and the virtual meetings. She said she would look into Chair Holmes' suggestion of creating a QR code for increased engagement.

Ms. Barnes spoke on the business focus group they were in the process of assembling. She said the preliminary phase of the project had been completed and shared some of the accomplishments of that phase. She provided an update on current and upcoming activities, including the public meetings.

In response to Committee Member Moore, she indicated the public meetings would be virtual and stated she has seen greater participation with the virtual platform.

Ms. Barnes provided an overview of her accomplishments in the 14 months she has been in the role and said a lot of the activity has involved an internal study of the existing program and executing the disparity study. She said she spent some time with the purchasing staff and team studying existing solicitation documents and identifying changes that needed to be implemented. She talked about the development MWBE training module to help internal staff understand the nuances of the program.

She spoke on community partnerships with MWBE agency advocates to foster collaborative initiatives and shared some of the entities she had established partnerships with to build a stronger diversity program.

In response to Committee Member Harman, she said spring of 2025 was a target date to present the findings of the disparity study to Council, and that the impact of the study would be dependent on the depth of resources and the findings presented in the study. She spoke on the timelines of the other studies she had been a part of in the past.

In response to Committee Member Moore, Ms. Barnes said the targeted businesses for the study were in the state of North Carolina. She spoke on the statistical market area and that their market went all the way to Charlotte and to Raleigh. She said the businesses were compiled of businesses identified in the local database, as well as the Department of Labor and Census Bureau. She emphasized the importance of getting feedback, including non-minority owned businesses to get an accurate picture.

She explained some of the changes she had already made because of the document review and shared some examples.

A discussion ensued regarding the selection process of contractors and some barriers to success that were identified for minority-owned businesses.

Chair Holmes thanked Ms. Barnes for her hard work and informative presentation.

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business to come before the Transparency, Engagement, and Communication Committee, the meeting adjourned at 9:54 a.m.

Michael Holmes, Chairman

Attest:

Alison Glynn, Deputy City Clerk