



Richland County Council  
Office of Small Business Ad Hoc Committee  
**MINUTES**  
April 23, 2024 - 1:00 PM  
Council Chambers  
2020 Hampton Street, Columbia, SC 29204

COUNCIL MEMBERS PRESENT: Derrek Pugh, Chair; Gretchen Barron, and Chakisse Newton

OTHERS PRESENT: Jesica Mackey, Angela Weathersby, Pamela Green, Ashiya Myers, Kyle Holsclaw, Anette Kirylo, Margaret Jones, Michelle Onley, Leonardo Brown, Patrick Wright, and La'Sasha Breland

1. **CALL TO ORDER** – Chairman Derrek Pugh called the meeting to order at approximately 1:00 PM.
2. **APPROVAL OF MINUTES**
  - a. July 25, 2023 – Ms. Barron moved to approve the minutes as distributed, seconded by Ms. Newton.  
In Favor: Pugh, Barron, and Newton  
The vote in favor was unanimous.
3. **ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA** – Ms. Newton moved to adopt the agenda as published, seconded by Ms. Barron.  
In Favor: Pugh, Barron, and Newton  
The vote in favor was unanimous.
4. **ELECTION OF CHAIR** – Ms. Barron moved to nominate Mr. Pugh for the position of Chair, seconded by Ms. Newton.  
Ms. Newton called to close the floor to nominations, second by Ms. Barron.  
In Favor: Pugh, Barron, and Newton  
The vote in favor was unanimous.  
In Favor: Pugh, Barron, and Newton  
The vote was in favor of electing Mr. Pugh as Chair.
5. **ITEMS FOR INFORMATION**
  - a. Office of Small Business Opportunity –Update – Ms. Pamela Green, Interim Director – Office of Small Business Opportunity, provided a brief update. She thanked the committee and Council for their vote to make the office a standalone department.
    - ❖ *OSBO Mission*: The Office of Small Business Opportunity provides a race—and gender-neutral tool for the county to use in its efforts to ensure that all segments of its small and local business community have a reasonable and significant opportunity to compete and participate in contracts (Ordinance 049-13HR).
      - Goals/Services: Advocacy, Business Development Services, Capacity Building, Contracting Opportunities, Goal Setting (Projects), Networking/Outreach, SLBE Certification, and Technical Workshops and Training
    - ❖ *Effective Stewardship of OSBO Department*
      - Department Provisions and Objectives
        - Sections 2-639 and 2-640

- Collaboration with Procurement
  - Intentional efforts to bridge the gap
- Importance of having a seat at the table
  - Helps to stage small businesses to be ready, willing, and able when contracting opportunities are present
  - Forecast of upcoming projects
  - Allows for effective goal setting
- Awareness, education, and interaction with other Richland County Departments
  - Increase project opportunities and participation goals for SLBEs
  - Re-enforces purpose of OSBO
- Understanding Economic Impact of small business growth and development
  - Implementation of the goals from the Strategic Plan

<b>OSBO</b>	<b>PROCUREMENT</b>
Advocacy	Fiscal Accountability
Goal setting and oversight are led by OSBO	Procurement provides the information to the prime referencing the goal set by OSBO
OSBO advocates for SLBEs to participate in Sheltered Market Projects that are \$500k or less and can perform as a prime	Procurement's goal is to advertise as a SLBE project

❖ *Economic Development*

- OSBO's Contribution to Economic Development
  - Strategic plan for small business growth
  - Assessing and implementing performance measures to deliver strategic plan goals
- Intentional & Targeted Recruitment of SLBEs
  - Identification of Industry Gaps
  - Who do we need – RC Department Input
  - Work closely with the Business License Department
  - Partner MOUs
- Retention of SLBEs
  - Renewal strategy
  - Added value without contracting
  - Front-end follow-up
  - Postured exit interviews upon certification
  - Small business community task force
- Community Outreach & Engagement
  - Hosting, Participating, and co-hosting community partner events, workshops, and networking opportunities

❖ *Tracking*

- QR Codes and Microsoft Forms
- Implementation of appointment-setting flowchart processes
- Multi-lab use
- Intentional SLBE recruitment, follow-up, and retention
- Community task force
- Consistent Reporting of OSBO Programs

❖ *SLBE Retention*

- Exit interview process (to be postured at initial certification)
- Anecdotal information from SLBEs
- Upfront “touches” of contact to set appointments and follow-up calls
- Virtual networking events

❖ *Education & Training*

- Recommend SLBEs attend at least two (2) workshops per year to maximize the benefits of the SLBE program
- Collaborating with SLBEs for OSBO-led events
- Connect SLBEs with tools and resources for business growth and development, B2B initiatives
- Encourage attendance of community partner events and workshops
- Access to Capital Initiatives (Community Development Financial Institutions [CDFIs])

Ms. Mackey inquired about the long-term benefits for the businesses targeted by the CDFIs.

Ms. Green replied that the institutions had been identified by the federal government and designated for certain areas considered to be underserved. A specific amount of money has been appropriated for these institutions. Optus Bank, Security Federal, and SC Community Fund are three of the ones the county is working with. Regarding revenue and the number of employees, there are certain thresholds. She noted that some are financially driven, and with others, it is the business's capacity to scale.

❖ *Economic Development 101*

- Ongoing Workshop Training for SLBEs
  - Insurance/Bonding (virtual – 40 attendees)
  - Ready-Willing-Able Firms (virtual – 38 attendees)
  - Procurement Process, Contracting with Richland County (In Person – 50 attendees)
  - Important Indicators of Business Cashflow (70 registered to date)
  - Introduction to Size Up SC (June 2024 – virtual)

Ms. Newton inquired as to which services are available strictly to SLBEs and which are available to the public.

Ms. Green indicated that the workshops are open to any small business, but the business-to-business and virtual events will be specifically for SLBEs. We are looking for a task force of SLBEs to ensure we are in front of challenges.

Ms. Barron inquired if there is a cost associated with this benefit.

Ms. Green replied there is no cost. In addition, with the June workshop, the company allows for coaching to help businesses walk through this. Lastly, the plan is to have this as a link on the county website.

Ms. Barron requested that Ms. Green confirm there will be no backdoor sales pitch at the June workshop.

❖ *Total Small Local Businesses/Enterprises*

- In April 2023, there were 114 SLBEs
- Currently, there are 178 SLBEs
- The goal by October 2024 is to have at least 250 SLBEs

Ms. Mackey asked if all of these businesses are new or if some of them are recertified.

Ms. Green responded there is a mixture of new and existing SLBEs.

❖ *SLBE Goaled Projects*

- Tracking the projected completion dates and whether goals were met
- Tracking the prime on the projects to ensure they are meeting the goals and, if not, there are no repeat offenders
- Currently, tracking approximately \$8M tied to SLBEs

Ms. Barron inquired how the various industries are targeted.

Ms. Green stated that, as it relates to Architectural and Engineering Services, they look at the number of projects and whether there are enough SLBEs in that industry to set a goal. If not, they target that industry.

Ms. Barron suggested we be proactive by looking at the type of contracts we award overall.

Ms. Green indicated they need to involve Procurement and the Procurement Code to ensure we do things accordingly. If we are involved in the initial letting with the departments, that would get us in front of things.

Ms. Mackey inquired if the department is working on any “share your story” pieces where we can highlight a successful business and show the end product.

Ms. Green noted they are reconstructing the website. As part of the reconstruction, there will be highlights of businesses and departments working with the OSBO Department. She pointed out they are attempting to get fully staffed and shift the responsibility of a newsletter to a Program Coordinator.

Ms. Mackey asked if the department had established a three or 5-year plan, goals, and what success would look like.

Ms. Green stated she welcomes input from Council. She indicated one of the things they needed to do was establish a baseline of where they are. Right now, the short-term goal is to ensure we are maintaining the database, have a diversified number of businesses, and can set goals on as many projects as possible.

Ms. Mackey requested that the Administrator include this in our annual report. She acknowledged this is a big part of economic development, and it would be good if we could show the return on the impact the small businesses have had on the community and how the county has been able to assist them.

Ms. Green stated that the completion date for the diversity study has been extended to July 2024 because a questionnaire had to be sent to prime vendors via US Mail. This has been noted in the vendor's contract. The first draft of the anecdotal summary has been received. A meeting is being convened to address

questions regarding the document.

TASK	NOTES
Anecdotal Chapter	Accumulated data from Public Hearings, Focus Groups, Survey, Organizational Interviews, and e-comments.  Public hearings were held on 11/07 (23 attendees) and 11/09 (30 attendees).

❖ *Proposed Department Structure*

- Program Coordinator
  - Internal Awareness of OSBO
  - Liaison for internal stakeholders
  - Ambassador for social media & programs
  - Establish OSBO liaison for each RC Department
  - Monitors procurement website for solicitations
  - Meets w/ internal departments for semiannual training
  - PIO Liaison/Coordination
  - Develops monthly, quarterly, and annual reports requested by the Director of OSBO and Administration/Council
- Business Development & Outreach Coordinator
  - Boots on the Ground
  - Promotes awareness of OSBO/SLBE programs
  - Identifies & establishes additional avenues for SLBE capacity building for emerging businesses
  - Conducts educational workshops for SLBEs with/ the collaboration of professional consultants
  - Develops presentations to inform leadership of activities conducted with SLBEs
  - Produce and implement BD programs to improve entrepreneurial & technical skills of SLBEs
- Certification & Compliance Specialist
  - Conducts all phases of the certification process to ensure applicants meet eligibility requirements
  - Reviews certification applications and makes recommendations based on the information submitted by firms seeking certification
  - Forwards recommendations to the supervisor to make the final determination of certification
  - Monitors, tracks, documents, and reports SLBE activity & progress on executed SLBE contracts
  - Contracts/Payments Compliance Auditor

❖ *Next Steps*

- Staffing department
- Disparity Study Recommendations – July 2024
- Staff recommendations:
  - Increase certification period from 2 years to 3 years
  - Increase certifying revenue thresholds (Construction: \$7M → \$10M; Engineering: \$2.5M → \$5M)
  - September Signature Event (OSBO will collaborate with City of Columbia Office of Business Opportunity)

Ms. Barron questioned who has to approve the proposed department structure.

Mr. Brown responded that there are two specific things regarding the department structure. When Council made the original move, it was done in the current fiscal year, which means you had a current fiscal year that did not anticipate this. He noted that some things are in the works that will be set up in the next fiscal year. He thinks everything on the list can be accomplished within the department's structure. Ultimately, it will take Council action to add personnel.

Ms. Barron inquired if the structure would still be a proposal or if the structure would become permanent.

Mr. Brown responded it would become permanent unless Administration or Council determines they want something different.

6. **ADJOURNMENT** – Ms. Newton moved to adjourn the meeting, seconded by Ms. Barron.

In Favor: Pugh, Barron, and Newton

The vote in favor was unanimous.

The meeting adjourned at approximately 1:46 PM.