**Minority Business Initiative Advisory Board**

***June Meeting Minutes***

**Thursday, June 16, 2022**

1:00 PM – 2:30 PM

Remotely Held by Teams Meeting Software

Hartford CT, Connecticut

**Attendance:**

* Board Members Present: Howard Hill, Avery Gaddis, Leticia Colon de Mejias, George Mathanool and Pedro Soto.
* Members Absent: Doug McCrory and Roberta Hoskie
* Quorum: Yes
* DECD Staff Present: Commissioner David Lehman, Deputy Commissioner Paul O. Robertson, George Norfleet, Alvetta Spencer, Sheila Hummel, Gerry Garcia and Kerron Vernon

**Welcome and Introductions:**

Howard Hill welcomed the group and opened the meeting at 1:13 p.m.

**Minutes:**

Howard Hill passed a motion to approve May minutes and minutes were approved.

Abstentions: Leticia Colon de Mejias

**Review of MBI 1.0/Look ahead to MBI 2.0:**

Members continued discussion regarding a new, re-imagined MBI 2.0. Gerry Garcia joined DECD the previous week and was introduced formally to the MBI board.

Members suggested that the board review the legislation that created the MBI board to identity new approaches to access different communities to provide equal opportunities to all minorities groups as we develop MBI 2.0. It was further suggested that MBI 2.0 take a more inclusive approach to its goals. and identify ways to address economic disparities as it relates to business, homeownership, and prosperity agencies.

**Steps to Achieve MBI 2.0**

Board members raised different qualities they believed would help MBI achieve success in its new iteration. They include board members becoming visionaries on economic development in the state. Creating a broad strategic plan. Aligning with state priorities and initiatives for maximum impact.

Focus on execution, grow the program, host focus groups and improve our relationships with CT communities. **S**ecure the funds and make sure we have measurable improvements.Execute faster and find more efficient ways to share information to the community.

**Reflections on MBI**

Members discussed MBI’s successes to date and DECD reiterated that it will continue to support MBI and minority communities throughout the state. Various organizations evolved with MBI support and are now on solid ground independently of MBI.

**MBI to Evolve**

Board and staff discussed time it takes to get things done impactfully and how the board had to overcome a learning curve. The board will continue to evolve and explore other groups that Board may wish to include. MBI can learn this through communication with targeted municipalities and strategically designed focus groups that will help bring out this information. Board asked that data be shared include a few distressed communities.

Members raised interest in revisiting MBI’s mission, ensure it is all inclusive, use the focus groups to understand how MBI can serve every minority community. Each community may have different needs, MBI should strive to be more transparent about our activities and about serving all communities more equitably. Some felt that opportunities through MBI have been given to the same groups of people because of the lack of communication, and that MBI needs to diversify who is receiving the funding. The DECD needs to have a standard, well thought-out way of sharing this information with the board.

**Current Programs Briefing**

Sheila Hummel reported on current programs:CT Community Challenge, Community Investment Fund, Small Business Technical assistance and grant program, CT small business program low interest loans (technical assistance provided) One place of entry. MBI can spread the word about the New Programs and Resources. Over $47M for grants and technical assistance for Small Businesses Statewide. $3M for forgivable loans through HEDCO -the funds have been reallocated.

**Financial Report:** None

**Program Update:** None

**Adjourn:**

Howard Hill: Asked for a motion to adjourn the meeting. Motion passed and meeting was adjourned at 2:20 p.m.