

Minority Business Initiative Advisory Board
September Meeting Minutes
Thursday, September 15, 2022
1:00 PM – 2:30 PM
Remotely Held by Teams Meeting Software
Hartford CT, Connecticut

Attendance

- Board Members Present: Howard Hill, Doug McCrory, Pedro Soto, Avery Gaddis, Leticia Colon de Mejias.
- Members Absent: George Mathanool and Roberta Hoskie
- Quorum: Yes

DECD Staff Present: Commissioner David Lehman, Deputy Commissioner Paul O. Robertson, George Norfleet, Alvetta Spencer, Gerry Garcia and Kerron Vernon

Welcome and Introductions

Gerry Garcia welcomed the group. Meeting began as a workshop until quorum was present. Quorum was established at 1:32PM and Commissioner Lehman called the meeting to order.

Minutes

Leticia Colon de Mejias made a motion to pass minutes from the August meeting. Deputy Commissioner Paul Robertson seconded the motion. The motion to approve August minutes was approved unanimously without abstentions.

Mission and Vision Subcommittee Report

Ms. Colon de Mejías, Mr. Mathanool and Mr. Gaddis served on the Mission and Vision Statement Subcommittee and presented the board with their recommendations.

The Subcommittee introduced the following as a Mission Statement:

The Mission of the Minority Business Initiative (“MBI”) is to promote access and remove barriers to entrepreneurship for Connecticut minorities so that business ownership across Connecticut reflects the state’s demographic makeup.

Board members discussed whether the mission statement, as proposed, was too short and whether it succeeded in capturing the history and intent of the body.

After deliberation, Ms. Colon de Mejías made a motion to vote on the mission statement. It was seconded by Deputy Commissioner Robertson. The mission statement was adopted unanimously.

The subcommittee developed two versions of a vision statement for board review. Originally, the subcommittee had recommended adoption of a shorter, broader vision statement. However, discussion of both versions among Advisory Board members resulted in a reconsideration of the two and favored a longer, more detailed version that reads:

MBI's vision is that all Connecticut minorities should have fair and equal opportunity, access support to pursue entrepreneurship. Many social and environmental factors impact the likelihood an individual will succeed as an entrepreneur. These factors include access to quality education, access to information, adequate food, affordable healthcare, shelter and economic stability, and the degree to which individuals have access to these factors collectively reflects their economic resiliency. As a body within Connecticut's Department of Economic and Community Development ("DECD"), MBI will strive to address economic resiliency gaps consistent with DECD's mission and goals, and will seek partners and allies to collaborate with MBI to impact economic resiliency components that fall outside DECD's charge. With this holistic and collaborative view, MBI seeks to close the business ownership, prosperity and economic resiliency gaps for all Connecticut residents.

Leticia Colon de Mejias made a motion to adopt the above vision statement. The motion was seconded by Senator McCrory. The motion was passed unanimously.

MBI Program Components to Achieve Mission and Vision

Gerry Garcia presented MBI program components to the Advisory Board. These program components were called MBLocal, MBLive and MBCT. Mr. Garcia indicated that if the Advisory Board wished to move forward that he would contact individuals regarding committee assignments.

MBLocal would be MBI's 'eyes and ears' on the ground in municipalities with the highest concentration of minorities, MBI's local network of people with whom MBI would have regular contact so that MBI can provide targeted, timely solutions.

MBLive would be MBI's media campaign to celebrate the state's minority entrepreneurs and to showcase the economic service organizations that are available to help entrepreneurs on their journeys. MBI would decide on a series of vignettes that could be compiled together as a documentary.

MBCT would be MBI's back office cleanup including database building, web site upgrades, social media presencing, and annual report on MBI's efforts and on the state of minority business.

Finance Report and CT Boost Update

Gerry Garcia indicated that there remain approximately \$88,000 in MBI's account and that according to Sheila Hummel, that contracts with Black Business Alliance and Spanish American Merchants Association are in process.

Deputy Commissioner Robertson presented on progress with the CT Boost launch. He and Commissioner Lehman indicated that loan applications are overwhelmingly from minority and women applicants. Leticia Colon de Mejias and Pedro Soto raised concerns about the program's transparency, communication, and accessibility. They shared personal anecdotes to illustrate their concerns. Commissioner Lehman agreed to look further into the concerns raised by the advisory board members to understand them better and to make any changes if they are warranted.

Adjourn:

Commissioner Lehman adjourned the meeting at 2:28PM.

