City of Schenectady
Affirmative Action Advisory Board
MINUTES
City Hall, Room 110

July 21, 2016

MEMBERS PRESENT: Hector Ramirez, Chair
Dave Chetram, Vice Chair
Ellie Pepper, Secretary
Kanema Haynes

MEMBERS ABESENT: Rev. Arnetta Dix
Angela Tryon
Adriel Linyear
Jennifer Eaddy-Garvin

ALSO PRESENT: Richard Homenick, Schenectady Municipal Housing Authority; Marva Isaacs, Municipal Housing Authority Board Member; Domanni Farley, Chenectady City School District

Call to Order: The meeting was called to order at 6:17pm by Chair, Hector Ramirez.

Welcome and explanation of board duties for benefit of Mr. Homenick.

Approval of Minutes:
There being no quorum, this was tabled until the August meeting.

Presentation by Mr. Homenick, Schenectady Municipal Housing Authority (MHA):

Mr. Homenick spoke about the lack of employment diversity at MHA. Although he believes he is doing a lot of outreach to attract minorities, applications are not coming in. He would like suggestions/assistance around how to attract more minority applicants. MHA has hosted training for civil service exams required for some of the positions but did not have many in attendance. What are the barriers? Is it a belief that there is no way they would get hired? Does it have something to do with the civil service system? What would work? There are times when jobs aren't civil service, they are entry level. How can MHA get people in even for those? In an effort to open dialogue on the matter, board members asked several questions.

Board member questions:

Q: Is there a regular schedule of training available?

A: No, there is no regular training for civil service exams that Mr. Homenick is aware of.

Domanni Farley commented that he has been able to get a large number of people to a recent training for the dispatcher civil services exam. This would indicate there is a benefit to connecting with leaders within the minority community to get the word out about available training for the exams.

Q. How long do people stay in MHA? They are potentially a ready population of people for training and testing

A. Ball park 8 years but Mr. Homenick will get a more definite number.

Comment: Since they are there so long and a stable group, community organizations could begin training and prepping MHA residents for the exams. For example helping people get paperwork taken care of or dealing with any issues around background checks.

Comment: Civil service exam- minorities typically score lower on the exams so are never be seen by those hiring leading to a process that is inherently biased.

Comment: Some groups in the Hudson Valley are working to be more inclusive by hiring those who have not taken the exam once the pool of those who have taken it is exhausted. They are then hiring as conditional employees until the next exam opens. This allows for on the job learning and gives a greater chance at success in taking the exam.

Q: What outreach is done about the non-civil service positions currently open at MHA?

A: The Family Self Sufficiency Coordinator reaches out and saturates the potential workforce that live in MHA. The information is sent out to the County's Affirmative Action Manager's mailing list. MHA also utilizes all the usual vehicles for advertising open jobs.

Comment: Decision making bodies/groups at MHA need to be comprised of a diverse group of people to inform processes, decisions, etc… MHA could create an interview committee that is diverse. Mr. Ramirez offered to send information to Mr. Homenick with on examples of how such a committee might work. Domanni Farley stated that the Schenectady School District is doing something similar.

Q: How does MHA handle procurement for construction work?

A: The last paying contract was with Northeast Parent and Child Society. Currently MHA is employing individuals to do odd jobs like painting.

Q. How does MHA handle procurement for commodities?

A. Mr. Homenick stated he is interested in reviewing applications from vendors who can offer a better rate.

ANNOUNCEMENTS:

Ramayan in the Park, 8/6 3-8pm Music Haven.

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Due to member emergency, no further business was discussed. Items four and six on the agenda tabled for next meeting.

ADJOURNMENT:

Meeting was adjourned at 7:25p.m.

The next meeting is scheduled for August 18th @ 6:00pm.

Submitted by Ellie Pepper

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