



**Business Enterprise Program
Council for Minorities, Females and Persons with Disabilities
Monday, October 26, 2020
1:30 PM – 3:30 PM
BEP COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES**

- I. Director Forde welcomed everyone to the meeting.
- II. Director Forde called the meeting to order at 1:36 p.m.
- III. Kori Acosta performed roll call. Quorum was established.

BEP Council				
ATTENDANCE ROSTER: COUNCIL MEMBERS				
Members	Present			Absent
	In person - Chicago	In person- Springfield	via WebEx	
Janel Forde, Chair			x	
Denise Barreto			x	
Alex Bautista			x	
Bola Delano			x	
Emilia DiMenco			x	

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Beth Doria			x	
Karen Eng			x	
Larry Ivory			x	
Jesse Martinez			x	
Sharron Matthews			x	
Jonathan McGee			x	
Edward McKinnie			x	
Kaney Frances O'Neil			x	
Jaime Di Paulo			x	
Jorge Perez			x	
Hedy Ratner			x	
Sharla Roberts			x	

BEP Council Meeting				
ATTENDANCE ROSTER: Agency Representatives				
Agency	Representative	Present		
		In person - Chicago	In person - Springfield	via WebEx
Central Management Services	Kori Acosta Carlos Gutierrez			x

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BEP Council Meeting				
ATTENDANCE ROSTER: Agency Representatives				
Agency	Representative	Present		
		In person - Chicago	In person - Springfield	via WebEx
	Radhika Lakhani			
	Irma Lopez			
	Mike Merchant			
	Harry Reinhard			
	Rebecca Roussell			
	Nicole Mandeville			

IV. Approval of the Minutes for the Council Meeting held on August 24, 2020.

- Member Doria motioned for approval of the minutes. Member Eng seconded the motion. All agreed. The minutes were approved.

V. Chair's Report –Director Forde shared the following:

- Recap of National Women's Small Business Month
 - i. Chair Forde acknowledged the successes they have had with Hispanic and Latin businesses as well as recognizing the achievement of women owned businesses during the months of September and October.
 - ii. She stated they celebrated National Women's Small Business Month with online recognitions and very specific programing in partnership with many of the council member's organizations and the Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity (DCEO).
- Introduction of Rebecca Roussell, Acting Deputy Director, BEP
 - i. Chair Forde introduced Rebecca Roussell, Acting Deputy Director of BEP and current Deputy Director of Diversity Equity and Inclusion.

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- ii. She described Ms. Roussell as a hybrid marketer, cultural story-teller, and strategist with more than 10 years' experience in marketing and communications.
 - iii. Chair Forde stated Ms. Roussell was listed as Diversity MBA magazine's Top 100 under 50 Emerging Leaders, the Chicago Defender's Women of Excellence list, and Dillard University's Top 40 Under 40 Game Changers list.
 - iv. Chair Forde also welcomed Mr. Jonathan McGee, Director of Regional Economic Development for DCEO and council designee. She detailed that he is a social entrepreneur, civic leader, and external affairs expert with over 7 years of non-profit, public sector and social impact experience.
- Chair Forde encouraged vendors to join the list serve at CMS.BEP@illinois.gov not only for BEP events and program but for resources and information from various sources.
 - Chair Forde explained that BEP holds 3 distinct weekly webinars on BEP certification to assist vendors in the application process
 - She called for increased partnership and for providing technical assistance to the vendor community, stating that BEP is open to more robust engagement with the Council.
 - She added they also provide information on the State's procurement process and bulletins in order to ensure they are providing resources to individuals and relevant stakeholder groups to let them know what they are working on and to receive feedback.
 - Chair Forde expressed the desire for their partners to feel confident when talking with a vendor or working at a pre-bid conference that CMS BEP is holding these events to make sure they are providing the right technical and strategic assistance that vendors need. She noted that all of these events are listed on the [BEP events](#) page and that they may also reach out to Kori Acosta with any questions and she will be happy to point them in the right direction.
 - Chair Forde offered that if anyone is not receiving them or want to add a colleague to that list to please email Kori.Acosta@illinois.gov to be added to that communication or for any questions.
 - Chair Forde stated she joined Director Erin Guthrie from DCEO in a round table fireside chat. She said it was an opportunity for them to discuss the importance of women owned businesses, in particular small businesses and the role of Procurement Technical Assistance Centers ([PTACs](#)).
 - Chair Forde emphasized that if there are partners or council members who would like to engage with them in a more robust fashion, they should feel free to reach out to Nicole Mandeville, the BEP Associate Deputy Director.
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- 2020 by 2020 Campaign
 - i. Chair Forde noted that the reason for wanting to grow the vendor pool is that more vendors mean more participation and higher goals. Director Forde stated that more ready and willing vendors means that they know they have reengaged and reinvigorated their vendor pool.
 - ii. Chair Forde explained that FastTrack means that they will accept a business in good standing with a Cook County or City of Chicago certification into the BEP vendor pool upon completion of one affidavit. She reported they have added at least 400 vendors since July for a total 25% increase in the vendor pool on FastTrack alone in the last 2 months.
 - iii. Chair Forde welcomed the council members to partner with them to get their members certified and to suggest any type of programming that would be interesting to their constituency group. She noted that some of their programming is held in Spanish and the recordings can be made available.

VI. Subcommittees Reports

- Certification Subcommittee Report – Chair Sharla Roberts provided the following update:
 - The Certification subcommittee reviewed 3 appeals
 - Stoops Plumbing, Inc.- **Denied**
 - Capital contributions came from a joint account held by Mrs. Stoops and her husband(non-qualifying male)
 - Additional signatories on the business bank account with the ability to indebted the company.
 - A & A Contractors, LLC -**Denied**
 - Ownership and Control- unable to prove 51% woman owned.
 - Additional signatories on the business bank account with the ability to indebted the company.
 - Inspired Solutions, Inc. -**Decision pending additional information**
 - Vendor over \$75MM sales cap with investment (30 ILCS 575/2)
 - Vendor to provide IVHQ Contract information
 - Chair Roberts stated the Certification subcommittee requested details on doubling of the vendor pool
 - The types of contracts available to vendors

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- What is being done for the rest of the state concurrently,
 - How the BEP Council can be a partner in rolling out the plan.
- Chair Roberts noted that Certification the subcommittee also discussed the following concerns:
 - External companies certifying with the State and taking business from Illinois Procurement code nor BEP Act have preference for Illinois residents
 - Member Doria clarified that this discussion was centered around those seeking an exception to the over the cap rule.
 - Member Eng requested guidance regarding emails received from vendors in light of the email received from Stoops Plumbing, Inc. Chair Forde asserted the need to abstain from ex parte communications and not engage with vendors outside the context of the council.
 - Mr. Gutierrez confirmed the Stoops' appeal will be heard at the next Council meeting
- Outreach Subcommittee Report – **Chair Emilia DiMenco** provided the following update:
 - Chair DiMenco stated that the outreach committee is working with the outreach division to develop a one-page marketing document and an onboarding document for council members
 - She said the subcommittee asked to be made aware of pending legislation and encouraged that it be brought to the council and outreach subcommittee as soon as they are notified of any legislation that could impact their responsibilities.
 - Chair DiMenco reported that activities over the last 12 months have accumulated 1551 respective participants
 - She noted that they are trying to ensure they close that gap between the number certified and procurement opportunities in some way.
 - She said they are working on refining the key performance indicators.
 - Chair DiMenco stated they are looking into the kind of vendors that win contracts and having some type of Mentor Protégé Program.
 - Chair Forde agreed that the council should have on-boarding materials and that they will be made aware of pending legislation
- Compliance Subcommittee Report – **Chair Sharla Roberts** provided the following update:

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- Chair Roberts stated that Assistant Director Merchant provided an update on the CMS goal setting pilot program.
- She said that vendors are encouraged to registered in BidBuy
- Chair Roberts strongly encouraged pre-bid conferences to increase vendor utilization
- Chair Roberts requested a survey from CMS of what types of Small Business Set-Aside (SBSA) procurements had BEP goals
- Chair Roberts requested that state agencies and PIHE with the biggest spends will be invited to go over their plans at compliance meetings; to discuss goals so that they can work better to understand requested exemptions and make better assessments on goals being established.
- Chair Roberts stated they held a working group discussion with Mr. Reinhard on what the process for not allowing additional exemption; requested an update on COVID spend; spend on BEP firms
- Chair Roberts requested the \$20MM/ 20% report
- She stated that sheltered markets were declared for IT and Marketing but the only one utilized was for IT.
- Chair Roberts requested a survey of all IT contracts that went out and that could have been used for a sheltered market
- Chair Forde responded that there is information on COVID spend that Mr. Reinhard can bring to the next BEP Compliance Subcommittee meeting. Chair Forde said sheltered market is a standing open agenda item.
- Member Ivory noted that sheltered markets are perhaps one of the best tools they have to correct disparity. He stated that additional markets should be established. Chair Forde noted that she, the team, and the administration want to absolutely be in a place where they are seeing new sheltered markets.
- Member Matthews stated the need for brand development and making BEP more attractive. She suggested new branding for the Mentor Protégé Program noting that business owners want to be thought of as partners or partners in capacity-building.

VII. Ongoing Business

- Update on Dispute Resolution – **Radhika Lakhani**
 - i. Ms. Lakhani reported the pilot program is still ongoing and that they continue to see positive movement in each case.

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- **Update on Utilization Plan 20.0 – Harry Reinhard**
 - i. Harry Reinhard stated the updated utilization plan offers detailed completion instructions and that the compliance division will only accept version 20.0
 - ii. Mr. Reinhard declared they have a mandate that all participants in the utilization plan are mandated to report in their Diversity Compliance monitoring system.
 - iii. Mr. Reinhard shared that a tutorial webinar was created to assist in completion of utilization plans. He said Compliance Training webinars will be held on October 28th, November 17th, and December 9th.
 - iv. Chair Roberts commented that the BEP liaisons were not included in the October 20th APO meeting and stated she wanted to ensure they are included.
 - v. Chair Forde noted that the APO meetings are just for the APOs. She clarified that this is the first time BEP has been part of the APO, even agenda, for this meeting and that they are trying to integrate BEP and BOSS more into joint programming. Chair Forde stated the APO meetings are managed by BOSS.
- **Update of Mandatory Pre-bid Conference – Harry Reinhard**
 - i. Mr. Reinhard informed the council that pre-bid conferences cannot be mandated.
- **Update on Doubling Vendor Pool – Carlos Gutierrez & Irma Lopez**
 - Mr. Gutierrez reported on the doubling of the vendor pool.
 - He indicated the certification and outreach divisions hold webinars and hosts partnership series.
 - Mr. Gutierrez said that BEP is exploring options to expand Recognition and Fast Track opportunities with neighboring states and other parts of the state.
 - Mr. Gutierrez stated that Fast Track has a 95% approval rate, approved 435 vendors, and continues to target economic corporations.
 - Chair Forde highlighted the ease of getting Fast Track Certified, indicated that 2800 vendors were certified, and reported that the goal is 4000.
- **Update on Overall BEP Outreach Strategy – Irma Lopez**
 - Ms. Lopez provided a recap of the outreach strategy and events from Hispanic Heritage month along with sharing recaps of Fast Track certification events.

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- An invitation was extended to the council to support outreach events and partner to further the BEP mission.
- Update on \$20MM/20% Report – **Harry Reinhard**
 - Mr. Reinhard shared an overview of the over \$20 million without a 20% BEP goal report. He added that with this new data from BidBuy, they can now have a front-end loading of contract data and bring their system up to full implementation and automation.
 - He stated that moving forward the data will be supplied to the BEP Compliance Subcommittee, beginning with the very next meeting.
- Sheltered Markets Discussion – **BEP Council**
 - Mr. Merchant commented that CMS agrees with the views of Member Ivory and Chair Roberts that sheltered markets are a very useful tool and wants to begin implementing more sheltered markets.
 - He stated that they want to execute a process that will withstand any legal scrutiny. Mr. Merchant stated that a working group as mentioned by Chair Roberts is a great idea. He pointed out that as Mr. Reinhard said, CMS has bolstered their data team and are beginning to get more data-based evidence.
 - Member Roberts suggested taking a look at the City of Chicago's sheltered market for a baseline to start with. Mr. Merchant thanked her for the great suggestion.
- Update on Disparity Study – **Michael Merchant**

This item was skipped.

VIII. New Business

- Waivers & Requested Exemptions – **Harry Reinhard**
 - Mr. Reinhard stated this item was placed on the agenda for the council to reconsider the blanket decision made about requested exemptions. He implored the BEP Compliance Subcommittee to reconsider this discussion.
- Senate Hearing Recap – **Michael Merchant**

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- Mr. Merchant provided a recap of CMS' (BEP/BOSS) participation at the senate hearing working group on economic development. Mr. Merchant stated notifying the Council about the hearing would have been beneficial so the Council they could show there for support.
- Mr. Merchant said the items they presented on were similar to the Chair's report and on the efforts BEP has been making. He stated they are striving to help vendors create generational wealth, build more capacity, and have more State opportunities. He stated they were asked to return in 60 days to present an update which they will also share with the council and added they look forward to their input.
- Member Doria asked about the stakeholders and their reactions. Mr. Merchant replied that former Senator James Clayborne who has always been very supportive of the program expressed concern about the 20% goal and felt that no contracts should fall below that. Mr. Merchant noted CMS was not allowed to respond.
- He said Senator Clayborne listed other items such as the compliance of vendors and subcontractors and that contracts should be reviewed more than once. Mr. Merchant said they look forward to presenting more on the efforts they have all been working towards.
- Member Delano requested a summary of the report and copy of the upcoming presentation for council members to give comments on.
- Member Martinez stated the CDB (Illinois Capital Development Board) was also at the hearing. He pointed out that they rely heavily on CMS/BEP vendor pool and asserted that FastTrack is the best thing that has happened to them in 2020.
- Member Martinez said they are helping DCEO with goal setting, site visits and compliance and he is trying to get an extension of that authorization when it comes to the capital grants and good faith efforts processing, in order to be more effective.
- Member Ivory motioned to grant the extension to CDB. Member Roberts seconded. All agreed. The motion was passed.
- Chair Forde stated the motion comes with the acknowledgement that Member Martinez will come before the BEP Compliance Subcommittee to report and keep the broader council informed of any exemptions, waivers, and updates on said exemptions.

IX. Public/Vendor's Testimony

➤ Mr. Herb Stokes – Chicago Minority Supplier Development Council (CMSDC)

Mr. Stokes expressed his concerns about CMSDC having a seat on the BEP Council and expressed concerns about having the prior President & CEO of CMSDC seat filled. Mr. Stokes also commented on identifiable trends within the vendor pool as it relates to Fast Track.

Ms. Elizabeth Howard – Howard & Son Construction

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Ms. Howard asked how she can certify as a BEP vendor for no charge. Chair Forde stated that the cost to certify is free and highlighted the current BEP Fast Track initiative.

X. Adjournment

- Chair Forde entertained a motion to reschedule the December 28th BEP Council. Chair Roberts suggested motions to reschedule both the BEP Council and BEP Compliance Subcommittee meetings.
- Member Doria motioned to reschedule the BEP Council meeting to January 11, 2021. Chair Roberts seconded. All agreed. The motion was passed.
- Chair Roberts motioned to reschedule the BEP Compliance Subcommittee meeting to November 18, 2020. Member Matthews seconded the motion. All agreed. The motion was passed.
- Member Doria motioned to adjourn. Member Roberts seconded the motion. All agreed. The meeting adjourned at 3:33 p.m.

BEP [Outreach Events](#)

Note: There will be no IPB Notices and Solicitations Reports for this meeting.