



**Business Enterprise Program Council
CERTIFICATION SUBCOMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES**

Monday, September 28, 2020

10:00 am – 12:00 pm

Location: Webex

SUBCOMMITTEE COUNCIL MEMBERS IN ATTENDANCE

Bola Delano; Beth Doria; Karen Eng; Larry Ivory; Sharron Matthews; Sharla Roberts

SUBCOMMITTEE COUNCIL MEMBERS NOT IN ATTENDANCE

Jaime DiPaulo; Edward McKinnie

OTHERS IN ATTENDANCE

N/A

COUNCIL SECRETARY

N/A

CMS STAFF IN ATTENDANCE

Kori Acosta; Carlos Gutiérrez; Paul Kuchuris; Radhika Lakhani; Kajanda Love; Nicole Mandeville



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Monday, September 28, 2020

10:00 am – 12:00 pm

Location: Webex Videoconferencing

Webex Meeting Number (access code): 133-640-5557

Password: pVrqsV9FC85

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AGENDA

- I. Welcome
- II. Call to Order
- III. Roll Call
- IV. Posted Business
 - Approval of May 15, 2020 Certification Subcommittee Meeting Minutes
 - Approval of July 31, 2020 Certification Subcommittee Meeting Minutes
 - Appeals:
 - Stoops Plumbing, Inc.
 - Inspired Solutions, Inc.
 - A & A Concrete
- V. Upcoming Business Enterprise Council & Subcommittee meeting dates:
 - Next BEP Council Meeting – Monday, October 26, 2020
 - Next Certification Subcommittee Meeting – Monday, November 23, 2020
 - Next Outreach Subcommittee Meeting – Tuesday, September 29, 2020
 - Next Compliance Subcommittee Meeting – Wednesday, September 30, 2020
- VI. Public / Vendor Testimony
- VII. Adjournment

**In accordance with the Illinois Open Meetings Act (5 ILCS 120) and the
Freedom of Information Act (5 ILCS 140) the above meeting is open to the public
BEP Council Certification Subcommittee**



I. Welcome

Chair Roberts welcomed everyone to the meeting.

II. Call to Order

Chair Roberts called the meeting to order at 10:03 a.m. and proceeded with roll call.

III. Roll Call

Roll call conducted. Quorum was established.

IV. Posted Business

- Approval of the Minutes for the May 15, 2020 BEP Certification Subcommittee Meeting
Member Delano moved to approve the minutes from May 15, 2020. Member Matthews seconded. All agreed. The minutes were approved.
- Approval of the Minutes for the July 31, 2020 BEP Certification Subcommittee Meeting
Member Matthews moved to approve the minutes from July 31, 2020. Member Ivory seconded. All agreed. The minutes were approved.
- Appeals:
 - Stoops Plumbing, Inc.

Chair Roberts welcomed Ms. Jennifer Stoops and introduced the Council members. She thanked Mrs. Stoops for presenting her appeal and explained the proceedings. Mrs. Stoops introduced herself as President and owner of Stoops Plumbing, Inc. She stated she completed her application on October 16, 2019 and received notification in June that she was denied due to failure to provide evidence that proves her ownership is real and failure to demonstrate that she has direct control over her business. She disputed these findings and noted that she provided a letter and exhibits to the subcommittee and wanted to take this opportunity to demonstrate who she is and what she is to her company.

Mrs. Stoops reported that her company has been a family-owned business since it was incorporated in 2003 as a side venture for her husband and father-in-law until 2011 when they decided to leave their employer. She explained that they split the shares and both families invested start-up funds into the company. Mrs. Stoops detailed that her father-in-law was already elderly and decided to step back from the company while her husband was overwhelmed by the demand of both field and office work and wanted to step back from ownership of the company. She noted that around 2003 she attended college for graphic design then started work at State Farm where she held a number of roles including payroll, human resources, online enterprise security, technology development and roll outs. She stated she quit when their youngest son was born with heart defects in 2012. Mrs. Stoops asserted that these experiences provided her with much insight in how to effectively run a



business and she acquired an array of skills to help make Stoops Plumbing the success it is today.

Mrs. Stoops stated she started with the company in 2015 with fresh eyes. She reported they had no processes for anything, there were files everywhere, outdated software, and no accountability for any of it. She said she implemented project management software, consistency in documents and communications, had the men log in every day and took many of their accounts online. She stated they agreed with the way she wanted to take things and in 2019 she was appointed President of the company.

Mrs. Stoops reported that her husband and father-in-law were encouraged by her leadership and decided to render all the shares to her to make her leadership immovable. She stated that under her leadership the company has gone from having losses several years in a row to now being profitable, employing around 3 times more employees, and they have gone from servicing the immediate central Illinois area to working across four states. She commented that her husband works as an estimator and when she doesn't need him to estimate for her, he works in the field. Mrs. Stoops explained he is better suited to the project aspect of the work, while her father-in-law is near retirement and prefers to work in the field or tooling around in the shop. She stated that neither possesses the desire nor the know-how to manage the day-to-day operations of the business. She said she has full control over the business practices and her processes surpass even what their larger contractors have in place.

Mrs. Stoops outlined that she thought she would never have this ownership opportunity because she is a woman. She said her father, uncle and grandfather still run a successful construction business. Mrs. Stoops explained that growing up she learned from her father in the construction business but also learned from his business that women didn't belong in construction and there was never going to be a place for her there. Mrs. Stoops noted she was always interested in the business and here she was given the chance to prove herself and take the business further than her husband and father-in-law ever dreamed. She stated that many of their general contractors encouraged her to become certified as a WBE after she took over ownership. She affirmed that people who call to speak to the business owner, president, project manager, accounting, human resources, purchasing, payroll and etc., end up talking to her. Mrs. Stoops asserted she is truly who she claims to be and deserves this certification. She stated she has had a hard-enough time gaining respect in this business because she is a woman so the rejection of a certification that is supposed to empower a woman in her position came as a heavy blow.

Mrs. Stoops addressed the issue of her monetary contribution coming from a joint account with her husband from a 2015 joint deposit making this an equal partnership in contribution and that shares of the firm were transferred by her husband and father-in-law in 2019 to Mrs. Stoops. She stated that neither the Act nor the administrative guidelines provide that the contribution of capital by the minority or female shall be in proportion to the ownership interest acquired and that the Act defines a woman-owned business as a



business that is at least 51% owned by one or more women and managed or controlled by one or more of the women who own it. Mrs. Stoops outlined that the administrative guidelines further provide that such ownership must be real, substantial, and continuing and not a matter of form. She added that those factors make clear that her ownership is real, substantial, and continuing. Mrs. Stoops asserted that none of the factors that may indicate insufficient contribution apply to her. She affirmed that her contribution is no small matter to her and that she and her husband contributed \$19,000 to the company in 2015 through a home equity line of credit with equal \$9500 contributions split up. Mrs. Stoops stated that is a substantial sum to her. She added that her acquisition required her to take over the risks and liabilities of the company which wasn't in great health at the time and that she has much to lose. She said she personally holds the stock certificates, transfer letters, and all stockholder agreements which she submitted.

Mrs. Stoops stated she controls the decision of the shareholders, composition of the board of directors, there are no voting agreements that can dilute her control of either and that she has provided proof of such. She reported that her research revealed related federal guidelines stating that when a disadvantaged individual appears to have acquired ownership of a company through transfer or gift from a non-disadvantaged individual, the presumption of certain agencies that the ownership of the disadvantaged individual is not real can be overcome by demonstrating that the gift or transfer was made for reasons other than obtaining WBE certification and that the disadvantaged individual actually controls the management, policy, and operations of the firm notwithstanding the continued business relationship with the non-disadvantaged individual whom provided the gift or transfer. Mrs. Stoops asserted that the shares were not transferred to her for the purpose of obtaining the certification and that she came to decide to apply for certification by herself which was 10 months after becoming president. She affirmed that the company wasn't transferred to her because she is a woman, she earned every piece that she has and earned it because she is smart, innovative, honest, hardworking and can be a force to be reckoned with.

Mrs. Stoops listed that the second issue for her denial is that she failed to demonstrate that she has direct control of the company and that there are four authorized signers on the bank account who can indebt the company without any oversight. She explained that the first issue comes from a misunderstanding of their corporate documents and confirmed the denial letter correctly state the bylaws provide for two directors but incorrectly states that quorum cannot be met unless a majority of shareholders is present. Mrs. Stoops delineated that section 2.8 of the bylaws provide that a majority of the outstanding shares of the corporation shall constitute a quorum at any meeting of the shareholders. She stated she possesses the majority of the outstanding shares and her presence alone constitutes a quorum. Mrs. Stoops asserted she has complete control of decisions made by shareholders, the power to remove directors with or without cause and that there is no scenario whereby her vote and direction cannot control. She added that on the other hand section 3.6 reflects that the quorum required for the transaction of business at any meeting does require the presence of the majority of director, whom she has the control to change



or remove. She further explained that the additional 2 directors do not impede her control of the business but are on the board because they provide valuable insight, they are her family, and she relies on their honest feedback so she can make the right decisions for the company. Mrs. Stoops declared she could easily have the bylaws modified to delineate her control of the company.

Mrs. Stoops addressed the issue of the 4 signatories who remain on the bank account and explained that the finding that the signatories can indebt the company without oversight is purely speculative. She commented that this along with other issues could have been cleared up with a phone call. She stressed that it is crucial to the business for all 4 signatories to remain on the bank account because she cannot be at every job site at all times and that sometimes checks have to be written in the field without delay, including instances where final checks need to be written to lay off workers or pay a trucking company they have never used before to haul out materials. Mrs. Stoops stated that only certain trusted people may write a check only after receiving permission from her and said they do not use a debit card. She explained she has full and complete oversight over this process, monitors all transactions, and said that others do not have the proper credentials to access the information at all.

Mrs. Stoops reported that her business has evolved even further since she first applied for certification. She stated that her name is on the business paperwork with her bank as the owner and president of Stoops Plumbing, along with vehicle purchases, loan documents, tax paperwork, union agreements, and contracts. Mrs. Stoops noted she has made much needed changes, determined set geographical hourly rates, implemented several options for open communication channels between herself and filed employees and others. She declared she is incredibly passionate about her career and that all depend on her to run this company into the future. She added that she never stops thinking about what she can do next. Mrs. Stoops outlined that because this is a male-dominated industry she has to work hard to earn her place there. She affirmed she believes this certification is a step in the right direction for her company and it's all for her family. She invited members to ask questions. Chair Roberts thanked Ms. Stoop.

Member Doria asked if she is a licensed plumber. Ms. Stoop responded she is not. Member Doria asked what is her technical experience. Ms. Stoop replied she knows all of the basic fundamentals of the trade, works closely with the local unions, journeymen and foremen, the local 63 apprenticeship program, is very familiar with the processes that are used, tools, timelines, she can quote small jobs on her own, and has had exposure to the trade since she was 15. Member Doria asked who estimates the very large technical jobs. Ms. Stoop replied her husband. Member Doria asked what prompted the ownership change after she had been office manager for a number of years. Ms. Stoop stated they had a very bad experience with the secretary they had previously hired, who did not pay union dues, taxes and stole money. She explained she dug them out of a pretty deep hole over a long period of time, then her father-in-law wanted to step back due to his age, and it is unhealthy for her husband, making her the best choice.



Member Ivory noted her previous statement was that others encouraged her to get certified and that she has been President for about 10 months. Mrs. Stoops stated that is correct. She added she has had a lot of previous exposure to these general contractors and took over a lot of the roles before the changes were made. Member Ivory asked her to describe the timeline of her economic impact on the company. Mrs. Stoops replied it was a slow process and most of the economic recovery of her company took a long time to progress mostly before her presidency was made official through the paperwork.

Member Ivory what she did to resolve the issue of the union dues. Mrs. Stoops explained that when she first started, she found files everywhere, unopened letters and said the guys didn't know how to handle it being mostly field employees, plumbers trying to run the office. She stated there were letters from the union describing liquidated damages, some accrued to almost \$100,000, which she recovered from a serious collection effort from their accounts receivable, was able to pay their batch dues, and back taxes. Mrs. Stoops said she worked with the union lawyer and asked him to waive some of the liquidated damages, she explained what happened, and she explained to them there were no problems going into the future. Member Ivory asked if the union put them through an audit. Ms. Stoop stated they do an annual audit because they are signatory with local 63, 149, 137, 99 out of Bloomington. Member Ivory attested to the fact that unions can be difficult. He asked out of curiosity how much they forgave. Mrs. Stoops replied that some of the smaller ones were waived completely and believes they received about a 10% deduction on the larger ones.

Member Eng requested the officer roster. Mrs. Stoops listed herself as President, her father-in-law Steve is Vice President, Logan her brother-in-law is Secretary, and her husband Wyatt is the Treasurer. Member Eng pointed out that the Treasurer also has fiduciary responsibilities per their bylaws. Ms. Stoop confirmed this and stated he can sign waivers and that some waivers require 2 signatories. Member Eng asked her to describe the loan she took out with her husband. Ms. Stoop stated they do not differentiate between what is his and hers because they have been together since they were 15 but if need be, she could look at it as equal contributions. Member Eng asked her about the 10 shares that were gifted to her by her father-in-law. Ms. Stoop stated her father-in-law wanted to step back and with her leadership skills that was just the decision they all made. Chair Roberts asked if they were gifted to her. Ms. Stoop confirmed they were gifted to her.

Ms. Stoop expressed sincere hope that they would reconsider her appeal and certify her business. She stated she has provided sufficient clarification to both grounds for the denial, has come a really long way with her business, is very proud of where they are going, and knows the certification will help her stand out in a sea of male-owned plumbing contractors because that is all that is out there in Central Illinois. Chair Roberts thanked Mrs. Stoops for her time and explained the proceedings.



- A & A Concrete

Chair Roberts welcomed Ms. Crystal Anderson and introduced the Council members. She thanked Ms. Anderson for presenting her appeal and explained the proceedings. Ms. Anderson introduced her project coordinator, Levi Cuman, who was joining her this morning as well. She contested she is 51% owner and always has been since she started the company but explained that her accountant made an error. She confirmed that her attorney had set that up correctly. Chair Roberts thanked Ms. Anderson and opened the floor for questions.

Chair Roberts asked how long she has been in business. Ms. Anderson replied in 2017. She explained she had always been interested and her dad did construction. She noted that she worked for Local 841 and that her husband and son were in the union and always travelling. Ms. Anderson stated she had some extra money, wanted them closer to home so she decided to open the business. Member Doria asked her to explain that the financial statement shows Corey Anderson with A & A but herself as being with the City of Champaign. Ms. Anderson responded that until she feels secure enough to quit the job permanently, she continues to work but explained that she starts the crew before work, checks on them during lunch, and sits in the office all night until 10-11 pm. Member Doria noted she is only devoting 15% of her time to the company and asked who is running the show the other 85% of the time. Ms. Anderson described she takes vacation time and time off, so she is there a lot of the day, otherwise she corresponds with her husband and son all day long during lunch, break and when she gets off.

Member Doria noted that Corey is the primary signatory on all the documents and asked why that is. Ms. Anderson surmised that the bank made it that way. Member Doria pointed out that the 2019 taxes state Corey is President and asked who are the officers. Ms. Anderson stated she is President, Corey is Vice President, and Garret is the Treasurer. Member Doria asked for further clarification. Ms. Anderson stated that may also have been something their accountant failed to do correctly. Member Doria asked if she signed the 2019 taxes. Ms. Anderson confirmed she did.

Member Doria said she noticed a check from her payable to J & S Concrete that was endorsed by Garret as A & A and asked for clarification. Ms. Anderson said she started the company with \$20,000 deposited into an account called A & A Concrete. Member Doria asked then why the check is endorsed by Garrett? Ms. Anderson responded that for her initial part she put in \$10,200 and explained it should have been A & A Concrete and it is her handwriting that looks like she wrote "J" rather than "A". She said she doesn't know and that maybe Garret took the deposits to the bank for her and that's how the company was started. Member Doria asked why the union agreement was signed by Corey. Ms. Anderson explained that he just happened to be there that day and that they are all owners of the company and thought that didn't matter. Member Doria detailed that the K1s demonstrate a 50/50 split. Ms. Anderson stated that was an error made by her accountant and that her attorney had the correct paperwork which she sent in for their appeal.



Member Doria stated that paperwork is still part of her taxes that show Corey is president and which she signed. Ms. Anderson confirmed this. Ms. Anderson said her copy shows her as president. Member Doria confirmed that her submission to them shows Corey as president on the 2019 taxes.

Member Ivory asked if she is participating in the big project in Champaign and Decatur. Ms. Anderson stated they are not and that they do most of their work in Champaign. Member Ivory asked if they do more structural work. Ms. Anderson stated that they do a lot of flat work, ADA ramps because not a lot of people like to do them, and they just did a bid project for Across Construction and they did all the subcontracting for the ADA ramps. Member Ivory asked her how long they have been doing work with the IDOT. Ms. Anderson explained they are a subcontractor only. Ms. Anderson confirmed they are not a DBE. Mr. Cutman stated they do roadways and roadwork. Member Ivory asked how long they have been in business. Ms. Anderson replied since 2017. Member Ivory asked the name of the contractor they mainly work with and what their revenues were for 2019. Ms. Anderson stated they did close to a million. Mr. Cutman said they did close to over \$900,000 last year. She listed they did a lot of work for Open Road Paving, Joe Lamb Company, and some for Cross Construction. Member Ivory asked if have they worked for UCM. Ms. Anderson stated they did not. Chair Roberts opened the floor for her closing remarks.

Ms. Anderson thanked everyone for her time, said she gets very nervous doing these things and has always been a firm believer in hiring people who are smarter than herself. She stated belief that she could have a successful company with the BEP and IDOT certification and then her WBE. She noted it has been really hard with COVID and was told by Champaign they will be cutting their budget for next year, so this is critical for her to get to keep going. Ms. Anderson thanked everyone. Chair Roberts thanked Ms. Anderson, explained the proceedings, and told her to continue to have a great day and don't be nervous.

- Inspired Solutions, Inc.

Chair Roberts welcomed Ms. Piña and introduced the Council members. She thanked Ms. Piña for presenting her appeal and explained the proceedings. Ms. Piña introduced herself and thanked the council. She said she is the CEO of Inspired Solutions, an information technology, value-added reseller, and logistics management firm. Ms. Piña explained they provide turnkey IT solutions and logistics management solutions to their customers. She stated she is from a tiny Caribbean island called Domenica, came to the U.S. legally around 1993 with nothing but the clothes on her back and sandwich in her backpack. She joined the military in 1994 meaning to be there for 3 years but 21 years later was still there and served many roles including as a logistician overseeing over \$500 million worth of equipment. Ms. Piña became an officer, worked as a peri-operative nurse, and was administrator of several medical boards. She said she deployed to combat twice. She stated that by 2015 she was closing her time with the military and then decided she would call her company Inspired because it is meant to inspire others and create an environment



for employees to remain inspired. Ms. Piña noted that in 2015 when they started, she attended a lot of small business administration classes and learned about getting certified. She stated she is currently certified by the Small Business Administration (SBA), 3rd party certified for WOSV and WBE by WEBANK and MNSDC and certified by the VA.

Ms. Piña stated she learned that a good way to grow your business was to get into a mentor protégé program. She said one of her friends, referred her to a company in St. Louis VA which took her on. Ms. Piña stated she sold part of Inspired to the company because the SBA recommended that the mentor would be more vested in them if she sold them a part of her company and that it is supposed to help shield the company from the mentor. Ms. Piña reported Worldwide Technology have been mentoring her very well. She stated she has five people in Illinois, so she became interested in filing for Illinois certification. She said she was surprised that without any consultation her application was just denied because of her affiliation with her mentor and that together they were over the cap.

Ms. Piña asserted that she runs, lives, and breathes Inspired Solutions. She contested that she only has a mentor protégé affiliation with her mentor and would like the board to reconsider her application. Ms. Piña apologized for becoming emotional and explained that she never thought her Mentor Protégé relationship would get in the way of her certification. She explained that she is a service disabled veteran due to going to war twice and having an explosion right next to her, and not knowing the effect the Mentor Protégé relationship that was meant to help her would affect her and prevent her growth, she said she would just like the board to reconsider her MBE and WBE. Ms. Piña thanked the members. Chair Roberts thanked Ms. Piña for her statements and for serving.

Member Doria expressed gratitude to Ms. Piña for her service from one military family to another. She stated her awareness of SBA Mentor Protégé Program and the issues where the federal program does not match the state-level program and suggested they just need some legal guidance on this. Member Doria asked whether she was still EDW OSB. Ms. Piña responded that she is still in the WOSB and EDW OSB. Member Doria informed her that puts her underneath the gross cap on the federal side.

Member Ivory asked about Worldwide Inc. Ms. Piña stated that she said she learned from Worldwide, her husband works for them, and she does business with them. She said they remain one of her many customers. Ms. Piña said she is on the pediatric board and they also donates a lot to her board. Member Ivory thanked her for her service and commitment to the country.

Chair Roberts asked was she required to give the mentor part ownership of her company? She added that a lot of Mentor Protégé programs have a 5 % or more affiliate and asked if she gave them more. Ms. Piña stated that in the program you could give up to 40% of your company to your mentor or another firm. She said it is not required but SBA personnel who told them about this said that the person who has a stake in your company would be



more apt to helping you. She said she didn't know it would affect her for certifications and that she doesn't have as much as the \$75 million cap. Ms. Piña stated it was not mandatory but highly advised so she gave part of her company to become part of the Mentor Protégé Program. She mentioned she has certifications in other states.

Member Ivory asked what they gave her for 40% of the company. Ms. Piña demonstrated a packet outlining what the Mentor Protégé program can give you. She listed management and technical assistance, help with contracting, financial assistance, bringing them on to assist them with a government contract, strategic planning assistance, 10 to 1 year mark planning, general administrative assistance, and she stated they can basically help you with everything your business requires. She highlighted that the SBDC said she has one of the most successful mentor-protégé relationships they have seen. Ms. Piña clarified that if she had known that the program would hinder her certification, she may have rethought the amount of equity she gave up.

Member Matthews thanked Ms. Piña and asked about how much she received for 40% of her company. Ms. Piña responded that her company at that time was not valued as much because it was under \$500,00 so she received \$15,700 and something at the time. She said they paid her for her shares. Chair Roberts opened the floor to Ms. Piña for closing remarks.

Ms. Piña thanked everyone for their time. She said the company means the world to her and is all she has. She acknowledged understanding of the laws and said there are thousands of businesses in Mentor Protégé Programs. Ms. Piña asked the council to take the time and reconsider her certification and stated it helps her company.

Chair Roberts asked if there was a pending contract up for consideration for her. Ms. Piña said she does have a pending contract at Quincy Veterans Home. Chair Roberts stated they need the contract number for her to be considered for the program for the over the cap exception. Mr. Gutierrez stated she cannot be considered as a veteran firm. Chair Roberts explained that she would have to be in the State of Illinois for that consideration and asked Mr. Gutierrez to confirm. Mr. Gutierrez confirmed. Ms. Piña said she could ask if they put it under any other certification. Mr. Gutierrez explained they would need the contract from her prime in order to determine the scope of work and verify if there is goal percentage for MBE or VBE. Member Ivory interjected they have 10 of their members participating on the Quincy Veterans Home project in construction. Chair Roberts thanked Ms. Piña and explained the proceedings.

Member Ivory motioned to move to executive session to discuss the appeals presented today. Member Eng seconded the motion. All agreed.

Deliberations were held, votes taken, and the following recommendations were made:

- **Stoops Plumbing, Inc.** – Recommended upholding the denial



- **Inspired Solutions, Inc.** - Recommendation to extend the exception and table full certification pending review of further documentation
- **A & A Concrete** – Recommended upholding the denial

V. Upcoming Business Enterprise Council and Subcommittee Meeting dates:

- Next Council Meeting – Monday, October 26, 2020
- Next Certification Subcommittee Meeting – Monday, November 23, 2020
- Next Outreach Subcommittee Meeting – Tuesday, September 29, 2020
- Next Compliance Subcommittee Meeting – Wednesday, September 30, 2020

Member Matthews asked Mr. Gutierrez for an update on Fast Track. Mr. Gutierrez reported that they are processing Fast Track files and currently the number processed is at 101. He informed council members they are still working with some technical difficulties and are using a Plan B work around for processing consisting of having the applicant submit a copy of their letter from the city or Cook County along with a signed affidavit. Mr. Gutierrez added that they are doing an email blast campaign to approximately 2,261 Cook County and city vendors and are trying to reach their goal of certifying 4,000 vendors into the vendor pool by the end of the year.

Chair Roberts asked how realistic is it for the Council to have a goal to increase the vendor pool just by accepting certifications from the City of Chicago in less than 6 months and stated the need to look at having more realistic goals in certification. Member Delano agreed. Chair Roberts asked Mr. Gutierrez how many they currently have certified. Mr. Gutierrez replied 2,400. She declared it took them 20 years to get 2,400 certified and asked how do they expect them to get realistically over that in less than 6 months. Chair Roberts stated the council should be looking at how they can have more realistic goals around certification and put some measurements in place. The members agreed.

Ms. Mandeville stated she recognized this is a huge goal and that the desire is to double the vendor pool because they are hoping to do some more creative things in the state to improve goal attainment. She explained that while this is very aggressive, they are hoping they can leverage reciprocity to help increase their vendor pool as well as relying heavily on their relationship with the council and recognition partners doing outreach events and programming. Ms. Mandeville said they want to make it a good faith effort in trying so that's what they are doing. She agreed there could be more measurement around it and added that the team may have led with this charge before 6 months.

Chair Roberts stated that the law has been in place a year and they just got things signed. She affirmed that even if they gave it a year, she still believes it is unrealistic to create a hardship. Chair Roberts noted that she has seen the Certification program grow with all the outreach from Ms. Lopez. She noted that increasing certification has always been a BEP Council goal because



they understand that part of having more people certified is how they get more increased goals with the State of Illinois.

Chair Roberts explained they have to look at the areas in which the Cook County and City of Chicago vendors are certified and stated she does not believe they have a reciprocity if what is said in the law was it is a shorter faster process. Chair Roberts outlined that the City of Chicago and Cook County have a real reciprocity and that their law is a little bit different. She emphasized that when they look at this, they should create realistic goals and look at the time it took them to get 2,000 people certified. She cited that they have always reached out to the county, but a lot of times people don't want to certify with the State because they do not put goals on their contracts and don't pay on time. Chair Roberts affirmed they need to take this into consideration and not assume they will all just come over to BEP. She said they should put reasonable attainable goals on certification and wants to see a realistic plan from Mr. Gutierrez on how they can achieve that 4,000 in 6 months, in every quarter. Chair Roberts stated she personally does not see that happening by the end of the year, in 3 months, adding she is not a pessimistic person, she is very optimistic because she has seen Mr. Gutierrez's and Ms. Lopez's work when it comes to certification, she just doesn't see it happening especially in these challenging times.

Member Matthews stated she agreed with Chair Roberts totally, especially now given that there are technical difficulties and Mr. Gutierrez has his staff initiating the actual form to get them in the process. She said that in and of itself should say that those goals cannot be attained. Member Matthews commented that another thing that bothers her is, she knows it is in law and understands the necessity of it because she has been pushing for things as everyone else has to make the program more attractive and get more vendors, but this has the potential from the perception of it to be looked at as discriminatory for the rest of the state. Member Delano interjected exactly. Member Matthews explained that they are in the city and it looks xenophobic. She noted that a program was offered several months ago to assist in that perception that was real and could also help in terms of the state. Member Matthews noted there are 102 counties. She said there are pockets throughout the state who also have folks (who qualify) and they have been excluded. Member Matthews declared there needs to be things being done for the rest of the state concurrently, so they don't look so discriminatory.

Member Delano pointed out they need clarification as to what their role is in rolling out some of these plans. She stated they were informed after the fact about Fast Track certification which she doesn't have a problem with, but she was under the impression that a lot of those things would be brought to the attention of the board. She added that she is concerned as Member Matthews had said that they are focusing on Cook County and the City of Chicago when they actually have a whole State they are accountable to. Member Delano stated that thirdly that if they are going to get these goals she would appreciate if they had a breakdown of what the proposed number of companies will be because there is a huge movement about minority businesses actually getting contracts. Member Delano said they are going through all this certification but then the question is what happens after they get certified, so they actually get contracts and is the system really working. She pointed out that there are some fundamental issues they still need to discuss in the



full Council meeting and rather than focusing solely on bureaucratic measures all the time, noting that she has written a letter to the Director and Ms. Mandeville who is on the phone, they need to start addressing some of the nitty-gritty issues.. “you got me certified, but I don’t’ get any contracts”. Member Delano declared there is so much out there that they need to address. She said she appreciates all these efforts with certification because at least they are very thorough but stated there is a wider aspect they have to deal with which she hopes they will in the meeting. Member Delano said the final thing is that they have a lot of external companies getting certified and taking business from our residents. She asked what are they doing to address those issues? She pointed out that there are so many loopholes and hopes they have the discussion later.

Chair Roberts stated she loved all of their comments and questions. She requested Ms. Acosta send all of the questions they posed today so she could have them as part of their response for the October 26th Council meeting to address them as part of her report as being all of their concerns. Chair Roberts asserted that they do not want to set up the Certification division for failure that they don’t accomplish this goal. She agreed they should have goals because things that can be measured can be achieved. Chair Roberts thanked Ms. Mandeville for expressing her concerns. She stated they want to ensure that when they put this program in place and get people certified that they are looking at the whole bigger picture.

Member Ivory added that he just wanted to echo what everyone has said. He said he is an advocate for diversity and spend. He stated that quite frankly, setting a goal that is unattainable creates a degree of frustration in an environment where they are already frustrated is not appropriate in his opinion, so he echoes the comments of the council. He said he does think they need to spend as much energy in reference to participation of their goals. Member Ivory attested what difference does it make if you get 5,000 people, 10,000 people certified if they are not going to win any contracts? He said he looks at the numbers and they are dismal when it comes to participation of African American, women and Hispanics. He stated they have work to do and he echoes the comments of the council.

Chair Roberts requested that Ms. Mandeville provide them a copy of the plan to attain these certification goals and spell it out because they can’t reach a goal just because a law is put into place and noted that it has taken years to enforce the compliance side. She additionally requested the plan include how once the goals are achieved firms will be assisted in obtaining contracts because at the end of the day it’s about getting more people certified so they can have access to contracts. Chair Roberts asked that the plan be ready at least two weeks before the Council meeting. Ms. Mandeville agreed.

VI. Public /Vendor Testimony

Chair Roberts asked if there was public/vendor testimony. There was none.

VII. Adjournment

Member Eng moved to adjourn. Member Matthews seconded. Meeting adjourned at 12:05 pm.