

AGENDA



GR Forward GOAL 4 ALLIANCE

Members:

Ace Marasigan • Alex Caceres • Ana Jose • Attah Obande • Brandy McCallum • Brianna Vasquez de Pereira • Caylie Peet • Farida Islam • Jason McClearen • Jorge Gonzalez • Kara Wood • Kareem Scales • Kristian Grant • Mark Breon • Omar Cuevas • Scott Stenstrom • Tim Mroz

October 15, 2019

3:00p – 4:00p

29 Pearl Street, NW Suite #1

1. Call to Order
2. Approval of September 17, 2019 Meeting Minutes*
3. Business Corridor Banners – Melvin Eledge, DGRI Operations Manager
4. Monroe North Activation
5. Downtown Open House Event Discussion
6. Other Business
7. Public Comment
8. Next Meeting – November 19, 2019
9. Adjournment

***Denotes Action Item**



Goal 4 Alliance

September 17, 2019

1. Call to order: Omar Cuevas called the meeting to order at 3:09 pm

Members Present: Attah Obande, Alex Caceres, Omar Cuevas, Kareem Scales, Ana Jose, Brianna Vasquez de Pereira, Jorge Gonzalez, and Jonathan Klooster

Members Absent: Ace Marasigan, Brandy McCallum, Jason McClearen, Caylie Peet, Scott Stenstrom, Mark Breon, Kristian Grant, Tim Mroz, and Farida Islam

Others Present: Alysha Lach White (Little Space Studio), Kyama Kitavi and Amanda Sloan (DGRI Staff)

2. Approval of Minutes

Mr. Obande, supported by Mr. Caceres, motioned to approve August 17, 2019 Meeting Minutes. None opposed. Motion approved.

3. Purchasing/Contracting Policy Discussion

Mr. Kitavi stated we will continue our conversation today on implementing a purchasing policy that is inclusive to diverse organizations. DGRI doesn't always control the bidding process but we know that we want to be intentional to diversify our vendors or suppliers. We would like to have a brief discussion on what the City does in terms of the bidding process and learn more about their Micro-Local Policy. Mr. Kitavi introduced Patti Caudill, Diversity and Inclusion Manager at the City. Ms. Caudill stated in 2006 the City launched an Equal Business Opportunity program to encourage the utilization of women, veteran, and disabled owned construction and professional goods and services industries. There had been a set aside program for years in the construction area but admitted even today it has been a struggle to incorporate minority owned small businesses into goods and services purchasing. This program provides a 5% bid discount on purchases or services above \$10,000. The City does allow other discounts for dozens of programs including workforce diversity, utilizing micro-local business or participation in Adopt-A-Stream. These discounts can be stacked but are capped right now at 5%. Ms. Caudill stated her department is looking for ways to increase that cap specifically for diverse and inclusive businesses and starting to delve into the supplier

diversity program. She stated the City would love to partner with the DDA and DGRI to enhance what all our organizations are doing.

Mr. Cuevas stated in order to be approved as a vendor there is a process, which in itself could be a barrier, and asked what the process is to become a Micro-Local designation. Ms. Caudill stated there are 4 requirements to becoming a Micro-Local vendor: the vendor must be in business for a minimum of 2 years (potentially this will be changed to a minimum of one year), be 25% of SBA standard for that business type, register on SAM (federal) list and maintain a net worth lower than \$250,000 (excluding residence). She stated the process is not as difficult as it seems, and we can walk you through the process of becoming a vendor with the City to keep this from being a barrier. Ms. Jose stated one concern she has is minority owned businesses are often not given a fair chance to participate in the bidding process because there isn't enough time to submit a bid. She asked what the City is doing to provide the appropriate information with enough time for these businesses to submit a competitive bid. Ms. Caudill stated on any bid over \$10,000 there is minimum of 30 days for businesses to submit. If you are signed up as a vendor, you receive that notification with at least 30 days to respond. An opportunity does exist for the City to address the process for projects under \$10,000. Mr. Klooster asked for clarification on the difference in these processes. Ms. Caudill stated a professional services contract over \$10,000, for example, would require bid documents to be filled out which then go to the City Commissioner for approval. The current process for any bid lower than \$10,000 is completely dependent on each department. The City is working on a developing a consistent process for all departments though all bids do currently require 3 quotes, regardless of the amount.

Mr. Cuevas asked if there would be an opportunity to assist the City by filling out applications to complete a pipeline of vendors. Ms. Caudill agreed and stated there are people that struggle with completing documentation. Mr. Kitavi stated on the purchasing side it is fairly simple to register, though the process is more significant to prepare contractors for bidding. He stated the City partnered with GRCC and White Water to host a session for contractors on upcoming river work in order to start to prepare them for the bidding process. Ms. Caudill stated we are preparing for the many river opportunities with both construction and entrepreneurial growth. The key component being how we, as an organization, are being intentional about how we spend our money. She stated the medical marijuana industry will soon have opportunity for growth in both construction and transportation and we would love to ensure woman and minority owned businesses in our region capture some of these opportunities. Mr. Kitavi asked if we were considering bids in a project with the City, could we ask our contractors or businesses if they are eligible for a Micro-Local or other discount? Ms. Caudill stated absolutely and suggested encouraging all potentially eligible businesses to apply for this designation. We are at a tipping point with the City being much more focused in multiple departments on ensuring equity. Mr. Obande stated our process for filling contracts under \$10,000 provides the biggest opportunity for minority owned businesses. Having a systematic approach and consistency throughout departments would allow more equity.

Ms. Caudill agreed and stated the purchasing agent for each department provides a procurement forecasting list for all potential purchases. She offered to share this with the group if it would help vendors/contractors to prepare. Mr. Kitavi stated he also has a list of major contracts that DGRI participated in during 2018 and a forecast for this year to look for common threads. As far as what this all means for our official policy, he is not certain but will provide a summary of all these conversations. Regardless of our policy, we will rely on the intentionality of the purchasers to be inclusive. It may be helpful to start tracking purchases under \$10,000 to see where those funds are being spent. Ms. Caudill stated her department is happy to work with DGRI in providing this transparency.

4. S. Division Construction and Businesses Discussion

Mr. Kitavi stated one of the priorities for this year includes support for businesses already existing downtown. Businesses on Monroe Center have vocalized the need for a space to discuss strategies and seek support. Therefore, DGRI has hosted meetings with these businesses to help them organize a business association. They will soon vote on a board and now have regularly scheduled meetings. One of the major concerns that has arisen is the construction on S. Division Ave (south of Cherry and North of Wealthy). When there was major construction on the north side of town, most restaurants and businesses were not be patronized because there was an assumption that they were closed. Mr. Kitavi presented a short (funny) informational video which was used to notify the public in 2018 that businesses were in fact open and give direction for how to navigate the construction. Mr. Kitavi suggested sharing this with the Heartside Downtown Business Association as an idea to market businesses on Division. This type of marketing along with appropriate signage may help change the negative perceptions of this area and address concerns from these businesses. Ms. Vasquez de Pereira suggested adding subtitles to be more inclusive. Mr. Obande asked how this was shared. Mr. Kitavi stated primarily through social media.

5. ESO Updates

Mr. Gonzales stated tonight at 5:30 pm Carbon Stories will be hosting a Creative Entrepreneurship Panel Discussion at 1202 Bridge Street. Mr. Caceres asked the group to invite any business owners to this event as it will be a great opportunity to network.

Mr. Obande stated Spring GR classes started about two weeks ago. Approximately 70 students are enrolled in the program with graduation scheduled for December 6th.

Mr. Klooster thanked the group in advance to participating in strategic plan focus groups that the City is facilitating.

Ms. Jose stated the Hispanic Chamber is providing a financial training class that will start next month.

Mr. Cuevas stated on October 15th the GR Chamber will host a “Meet the Buyer” event for West Michigan Minority Contractors. Consumers Energy will go through the process of registering to become an allied partner. Electricians and HVAC contractors installing energy efficient utilities would be eligible for a revenue share of 10% (split between the customer and the contractor). As of right now in West Michigan there is only one minority partner in that allied partnership. Also, tomorrow the GR Chamber’s work café will open to non-members for a one-day opportunity to experience the space.

6. Discussion:

Mr. Cuevas congratulated the team on a successful Business Expo. Mr. Kitavi stated surveys will go out next week to participants and a more detailed recap will be provided in the future. He stated the Retail Opportunity Map that was created for this event lists vacant spaces downtown as a starting point to explore potential shop locations. This is a living document that will be updated and improved upon regularly. Mr. Kitavi also shared the new DGRI Small Business Grants palm card that provides details on the Downtown Enhancement Grant, Activate This Place Grant, and the Retail Innovation Grant.

7. Next Meeting- October 14th

8. Public Comment:

Alisha Lach White stated she and other Heartside business owners would like to develop a plan to navigate construction on S. Division Avenue. She stated as a business owner in the Harris Building and a member of Heartside Downtown Business Association, she has witnessed a lot of business turnover but does her part in collaboration with neighbors, other businesses and social services to encourage new business in the area and asked that she be utilized as a resource.

9. Adjournment:

Jorge Gonzalez adjourned the meeting at 3:55pm.

Minutes taken by:

Amanda Sloan

Administrative Assistant

Downtown Grand Rapids Inc.

MONROE NORTH PARK

555 Monroe Ave. NW, Grand Rapids, MI 49503



Shipping Container



Bleachers



Pop-up Retail Shop