



Minutes

Minutes of the DBE Expansion Committee of the Southside Economic Development District, which is in Legal and Regular Session in the ULM Campus Stubbs Hall Room 117, 700 University Avenue, 71201, Thursday, July 20, 2023,

Roll Call and Declaration of Quorum

Present were: Tony Little, chairman, and Roosevelt Wright, Jr. Absent was Mr. Preston Hopkins

Advisory committee members present were: Rev. Elijah Brass, III; Robert Jordan; and Jackie Slacks.

Also in attendance were Mrs. Sonya Jacobs, consultant, members of her staff, as well as Councilwoman Juanita Woods, SEDD board member Tyrone Goodin, Mandrian Douglas, Verbon Muhammad, and Marie Brown.

There was a quorum.

An invocation was offered by Reverend Brass.

Grant Writer's Report

Dr. Dorothy Nairne, SEDD grant writer, met with the committee by Zoom. She said she expected to hear a decision about the Dreams Grant Application next month. She introduced two pending grant applications:

A grant will install solar panels in a range of communities, including rural areas and mobile homes. The total amount available is \$25 million, but the amount granted would depend upon the number of houses in our target area. This grant would be through the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA).

Support long-term, comprehensive economic development and job creation in places with a high prime-age (25 to 54 years) employment gap. Phase I: \$500,000–\$750,000 would be for planning.

If our plan is approved and selected, Phase II investments will be between \$20 and \$40 million. This grant would be through the U.S. Department of Economic Development Administration (EDA).

Introduction of Trufund Financial Services

Mrs. Sonya Jacobs, SEDD consultant, introduced Veronica Reyes, marketing manager, and Ronshawn Williams, business development officer, both of Trufund Financial Services.

Williams and Reyes were present by Zoom and explained how Trufund, based out of New York, is expanding its market into Louisiana. The company is a Community Development Financial Institution specifically designed to provide capital and financial services to low-income communities and individuals through a variety of financial services, including loans, investments, and technical assistance.

Trufund wants to partner with Economic Development entities in North Louisiana to assist businesses with loans and overcome barriers to commercial and real estate ownership.

Update on JDS Consultants

Mrs. Jacobs said JDS is working to help small businesses get a System of Award Management Number, also known as a "Sam's" number, that is required to receive any federal funds. She said JDS is also planning a weeklong "Black Wealth Expo" in September in which businesses who need help getting a Sam's number and registering as a certified DBE with the state can come to her office at ULM and get help. In addition, any other help that Black businesses need to get certified and registered will be given at the Expo.

Moreover, she said JDS consultants met with the procurement officer and attorney for the Ouachita Parish Police about increasing procurements with minorities. She said she learned that the Jury has 21 departments through which procurements can be made, including barber shops. JDS received assurances that the Police Jury desires to involve minority businesses in procurements.

There was a general discussion about DBEs and helping minorities get more funding from local governments. Chairman Tony Little summed up the problem when he said whether or not minorities receive their fair share of procurements depends on the political will of those in office. If the mayor of the city wants it to happen, it will happen; if he does not, it won't happen. "The mayor runs the city," Mr. Little said.

After two hours and four minutes, the meeting was adjourned.