

# Southside Economic Development District

September 9, 2024

Transcription of Meeting Audio

**MR. LITTLE:**

Southside. Notice is hereby given that the September meeting on the Southside Economic Board of Commissioners for the South Side Economic Development District will be held at the Powell Recreation, Powell Avenue Community Center on Monday, September 9, 2024, at 4 pm roll call.

**MR WRIGHT:**

Mr. Little is present; Mr. Jones is present; Mr. Wright is present; Miss Reed is absent; Attorney Smith is present; Mr. Dhaliwal is absent; Mr. Gooden is absent. Mr. Mr. Chairman., We have a quorum. Mr. Dhaliwal sent for notice that this is not our regular meeting day, and he's out of town till Wednesday. This is the first meeting he has missed in over a year. This is not our normal meeting date.

**MR. LITTLE:**

Invocation, pastor Wright.

**MR. WRIGHT**

Lord, we thank you for the day, thank you for health and strength. We ask that you bless what we do and say that it will be good and acceptable in thy sight; in Jesus' name, we pray, amen.

**MR. LITTLE:**

The board will consider the the confirmation of the July 15, 2024 SEDD –

**MR. WRIGHT:**

I suppose right. Mr. Chairman, I move that we adopt minutes from July 15<sup>TH</sup>

**MR. JONES:**

Second.

**MR. LITTLE:**

It's been motion and second...

**MR. WRIGHT**

Mr. Little, aye; Mr. Jones, aye; Smith, aye; Wright, aye

**MR. LITTLE:**

On the President's Report. I'm just going to touch on a couple of things. Number one, we, we were, of course, we were trying to make some, some headway on additional funding. Council member Muhammad and I have a, had a meeting with Mayor Ellis and we're making some headway on that. Of course, we, you know, it's the priority of of Miss Woods and Bishop and Miss Muhammad and, of course, Mr. Harvey and make sure we get the Tif. So I think, I think that that will come along.

Ah, We're, we have an item with the ah, with is it in the report somewhere, with the ah building on Arizona Street. We were, we thought we would be finished for the building, but however, ah we ran into a couple of different things. So, hopefully, the next in the next meeting, we will be, ah, meeting in the Arizona Street building. Ah, Ah, We're once we get through a meeting with all of the council people and various things, we will, we will then line out the various committees and but we want to do it a little bit differently this time. We want to make sure our community our priorities in this session going forth, line up with the City Council priorities and the mayor's priorities, rather than us taking on an approach that we just will go out and and say, Well, we're going to be doing one thing and and the city's doing another thing. So one of the things that we want to do is make sure that whatever we're doing in terms of South Side initiatives, make sure that they sync and they line up with the vision that, ah, the city is doing. And so rather than going to a full scale report, I'm going to kind of consolidate that and leave it right here. I want to welcome Miss Smith, who is Bishop McFarland's appointment from District Four. Miss Smith, you want to say something? Tell us a little bit about yourself.

**ATTY. SMITH:**

Good evening, everyone. My name is Sarah Smith, born and raised in Monroe, attended Neville High School and then went to Louisiana Tech, and I got my law degree from Southern University. All of my family is here in Monroe is home. When given the opportunity to go away and do other things, I wanted to come back and give to my home and the place that raised me. So I'm happy to be on the board and to contribute in any way that I can, and I'm glad to know you guys here, and I'm available for any questions anytime.

**MR. LITTLE:**

So So Miss Smith will be serving on the DBE committee, and hopefully she'll be one of the leaders on the DBE committee, and we were supposed to have a, what, a 15 minute conversation. And y'all know how my conversation goes, they last a little bit longer than that. Yeah. So, so anyway, it is what it is.

So. So we'll move on. Action Item number five, the Treasurer will make his report on the financial status, SEDD for a 20 for the 2023- 2024 audit preparations and the expenditures related to the Dream Center renovations.

**MR. WRIGHT:**

Mr. Chairman, the the audit, we have confirmed the firm of Rosie Harper to the do our audit. As you know, we don't have enough funds to make a full audit, but we do have a, ah, compilation report, and she will be doing that shortly.

We would like to note, as of July 31 we have received \$32,198.47 from the hotel motel receipts. And in July, income from the hotels was \$4,924 so it's just this fiscal year starting in May 1, we've collected 32,000. It doesn't usually collect much money each month. It's usually, ah, somewhere in around eight or \$9,000 a month. And in the summertime, it used to be four, and they pick it up in the fall. Its expenses, our expenses have been since the fiscal this fiscal year, \$112,005. 64 of the expenses we spent \$21,240, for TBA architects and design and designing the the South Side, Dream schematics and, ah, the plans visuals. We spent \$5,484.79 for insurance on the Dream Center and to renovations of the Dream Center. So far, we spent \$77,339.98 cents for the Dream Center renovations. And this is the, is the financial expenditures as we as where we are at this point. Mr. Chairman, this is Treasurer's report. I moved the adoption of the report.

**MR. LITTLE:**

One question, how much money we spent on salaries?

**MR. WRIGHT:**

Salaries, none.

**MR. LITTLE:**

OK.

**MR. WRIGHT:**

Big screen TVs, none. Car Rentals, none. And slot and slush funds, none

**MR. LITTLE:**

All right, any questions? Audience?

**MR. WRIGHT:**

Mr. Chairman I move the adoption of the report.

**ATTY. SMITH:**

Second.

**MR. LITTLE:**

It's been motioned. Seconded. Did I hear a second.

**ATTY SMITH:**

I did.

**MR. WRIGHT:**

Mr. Jones, aye; Mr. Wright, aye; Miss Smith, aye; Mr. Little, aye. Motion carries, Mr. Chairman.

**MR. LITTLE:**

You got it up under report, but it should be an action item Ms. Kenya Roberson, the president of the North Louisiana Black Chamber of Commerce, will address the Board in concerning the sponsorship of chamber activities. Before she come and address the board, one of the things that I think is very important to me is that we have this collaboration with various different organizations, and, ah, we kind of got stalled before this, but they are doing wonderful things in the community in terms of trying to lift minority businesses and various other things. So Mr. Roberson.

**MS. ROBERSON:**

Okay. Uhm, I'm sure just about everybody know me. My name is Kenya Robinson. I am the Executive Director of the Northeast Louisiana Black Chamber of Commerce. We service 13 parishes, so it's pretty much Ouachita all the way up right before you get to Shreveport and then down Union, Morehouse; all in those areas, East Carroll, West Carroll, Tensas, Richland, all of those parishes.

As you all know, crime has been at an all time high. Uhm, In my other profession. I have been with the Honorable Judge Larry D Jefferson for 26 years, and, uhm, in every day, uhm, I'm just seeing more so now our young persons more than our adults, who are actually being tried now as adults. And I'm not sure if you all know that the laws have extremely changed this year, and it is getting ready to be quite serious when it comes to after they plea, uhm, the amount of time that they actually have to do, uhm, if you're familiar with their kind of jargon, on paper or straight time, good time, all of that, all of that is changing now and so on last year, the Chamber did a criminal law seminar, and it we had on the panel we had judge Alvin sharp, we had Judge Aisha Clark, we had Attorney Mennon Campbell, we had Attorney Keith Quinn, we had attorney Devin Jones, we had attorney Breshatta Davis. We also had Attorney Charles Jones, and I'm missing three others right off the top of my head.

The way that the criminal law seminar was structured, we had the, uhm, judges on one side so you could hear from them, what they see and how they are actually, ah, sentencing and the guidelines, and then you had from an attorney or an IDB perspective, which is, uhm, someone who cannot afford, uhm, a paid attorney, then you can have a court appointed attorney; so, uhm, education is real serious right now when it comes to our juveniles as well as our adults within the community, I think we lack, uhm, communication and education in terms of the new laws. Now, I do know that there are some organizations that have been putting out the information, but it has not been put into a forum or a way that persons can come in and ask questions.

Uhm, we will also be diving into child support, uhm, custody, uhm, wills, uhm, successions, all of those types of questions that maybe you have some information.

Because, you know, when persons die, we see a lot of GoPhone needs, and we see a lot of persons needing help with burial assistance, versus some things could have been done prior to and then we wouldn't have to be fed.

So, with all of that being said, we are getting ready to have a criminal law seminar, and we will have, uhm, 20 persons on the panel this time. We will have judges as well as attorneys, and we will also have bail bondsmen on the panel this time as well, because everybody goes to a bail bondsman to bail their people out of jail unless they are RR'd on their own recognizance, meaning the judge allows them not to post a bond. So, I am asking, I know that you all do have an area to where you focus on crime, and I am asking that you all partner and assist us with the criminal law seminar. And then the question becomes, well, what does that partnership look like? We would ask that you assist us with marketing, the, uhm, the publication of the seminar, as well as assist with the venue for the seminar, and pretty much, that's what we're asking for. Uhm, you don't have to cut a check to us. Uhm, we are asking that you all help us in that way. And if you can, we will be greatly appreciative for that. That's all.

**MR. WRIGHT:**

Is there a dollar amount to it?

**MS. ROBERSON:**

We said \$500 that would include the publications within the newspapers as well as the venue.

**MR. WRIGHT:**

Where's the, where's the venue?

**MS. ROBERSON:**

We had it last year at the Civic Center, and we're tentatively going to have it there again.

**MR. LITTLE:**

I mean, you, of course, you know, I'm all for it, but the only, the only thing that I would make sure, would also like to see, of course, with the board is to make sure that we have a reach, where we reach like the people that are in Monroe housing, the people that really, really, really need to if we can somehow market it, where it's not just people like us,

**MS. ROBERSON:**

Absolutely. So, let me clarify. I agree with you, and let me say it is not for us. It's not for the people that really know...

**MR. LITTLE:**

Exactly.

**MS. ROBERSON:**

...are in the field every day. It is for, uhm, we I have actually gone to the schools to be in contact with the coaches, to bring the football teams, uh, the basketball teams, for the students, uhm, also community members. And at the football games, we will pass out the information. We will put it on the cars. We will put it on, uhm, social media. We will put it on the radio station. So we are trying to make sure that we appeal to everyone, uhm, to be able to come in and ask questions and to be educated.

**ATTY SMITH:**

Is there a tentative date?

**MS. ROBERSON:**

Yes, October the third, yeah.

**MR. LITTLE:**

And, I mean, yeah, so

**ATTY SMITH:**

are those same presenters, as you mentioned before? Are they going to be present?

**MS. ROBERSON:**

So of so attorney Campbell has confirmed. Judge Sharp has confirmed. Judge Aisha Clark has confirmed. Keith Whitton has confirmed. Breshatta Davis has confirmed, I'm trying to go down my list on my phone. Creed and Creed is not going to be a panelist, but he will be a sponsor. Um, that's who is confirmed as of right now.

**MR. LITTLE:**

Any questions from the audience..

**UNKNOWN:**

What time on that Wednesday?

**MS. ROBERSON:**

At 11 o'clock.

**UNKNOWN:**

At 11 o'clock on Monday or Wednesday?

**MS. ROBERSON:**

Yes. Now let me say something about that, because that came up last week in reference to people who work during the day, they have asked if we would consider

moving into a Saturday. I have not officially changed the date to a Saturday, because I have to make sure that the judges, ah, preferably are going to be able to come on that on their off day, like that. So that's the only reason I haven't moved it. I think it would be a great thing for the community. But as far as for the judges and their schedules, I'm trying to see if they are flexible that way.

**MR. LITTLE:**

Because we talked about, we talked about doing something about this seminar, I can't call the judge's name and but on a rotating basis, but also taking it to the hood, if I can say that, as well as an ongoing thing. Ah, because, you know, oftentimes we do these things in these types of forums, so maybe this can be an ongoing type of thing as well. So I mean, ah, if there is there, if there's no further question, I think this may be a way to get it started, ah, and I think it's more so about getting something like this started. It's something that I would like to see, ah, happening, but I would not like to see it's an annual thing, but more so as we keep it going, ah, type of thing and a partnership that we can develop, ah, going forward.

**MR. WRIGHT:**

Mr. Chairman, you know, in the past, I told you my reservations about, uh, trying to make donations to different various projects that they're not associated with, specific things that are in our mission, and without a without a CEA. And so I would be willing personally to donate to this cause. I would be willing to donate all of the free advertising in the newspaper for this cause. But I don't think I could vote to do this from SEDD, because it would, it would open up a can of worms, of others coming with other worthy projects, which is not necessarily our mission. And I told you that in private, so I'll tell you again.

**MS. ROBERSON:**

Can I ask the question is crime? Do you all have- I thought. And maybe then I may be wrong. I thought that you all did have a provision in reference to crime in you all's..

**MR. WRIGHT:**

but we require CEAs.

**MS. ROBERSON:**

Even though you are not writing a check to the chamber?

**MR. WRIGHT:**

You have to write a check to somebody.

**MS. ROBERSON:**

To the City of Monroe, I guess.

**MR. WRIGHT:**

I'll personally give, but I wouldn't vote for it.

**MS. ROBERSON:**

Okay.

**MR. LITTLE:**

But I think, Commissioner, we could find some..

**MR. WRIGHT:**

We've talked about this for two hours on the phone. My position had changed. I'll donate personally. I'll donate all the free advertising space that's necessary. But I don't think SEDD can start now giving contributions to individuals without a CEA.

**MR. LITTLE:**

But it's a collaboration with the point it's...

**MR. WRIGHT:**

Even the collaboration needs to have a CEA. If we're giving away public monies, there needs to be a CEA.

**MR. LITTLE:**

Okay, but we, couldn't we do it in terms of this? We could put together a corporate endeavor with them about their project.

**MR. WRIGHT:**

That's what I said, without a CEA.

**MR. LITTLE:**

Right, but we can arrange CEA about it. That would fall up. And, I mean, if you want to get something like this going, I think that, I think that this is a worthwhile deal, because it does fall under. I mean, this is an economic initiative. Crime is an economic initiative as well, you know. And I think that you can put together a CEA that will be a worthy cause. I mean, because we with us, not having a director and not having an administrative staff, I think that this would fall under this jurisdiction of being, ah, you could actually take it out of the DBE budget, because these are things that do need to be addressed.

**MR. WRIGHT:**

And should have went to the DBE committee so the DBE committee could have worked that out, and could have made a recommendation. we just don't take it coming the board meeting without having gone through committee first.



**MR. LITTLE:**

Yeah, but I mean but this could come out of state funds. It could come out of...

**MR. WRIGHT:**

It shouldn't come to the board meeting without going to the committee first where it can be completely vetted.

**MR. LITTLE:**

But state funds don't have to come..

**MR. WRIGHT:**

I'm just one person. I'm just one person.

**MR. LITTLE:**

That's fine. So you want to do it.. Say we're doing it from a personal perspective.

**MR. WRIGHT:**

I do mine. My part.

**MR. LITTLE:**

Set up the consistency.

**MR. WRIGHT:**

I can't speak for anybody else.

**MR. LITTLE:**

Let's just Okay, let's move to let's just, let me, let me table this, and then we'll work it out. Is that fine?

**MS. ROBERSON:**

Okay? Can I say something. I don't anyone to think I was mad and just left. I have to be at an open house for Wossman, for five, so don't think I'm leaving because I'm made Okay? (Laughter)

**MR. LITTLE:**

Action Item number seven, the board will confirm..

**MR. WRIGHT:**

It's not dead, it's just...

**MS. ROBERSON:**

I understand, no problem. I got it. I got it.

**MR. LITTLE:**

The board will confirm the appointment of the chair to the Housing Committee for SEDD and that Mrs. Reed, I'm nominating you to the Housing Committee. To be on the Housing committee.

**MR. WRIGHT:**

You are appointing her to be the chair of it or on it?

**MR. LITTLE:**

Yes, well yes, yes. For right now to be the Chair of the Housing I didn't get a chance to talk to your about it though.

**MR. WRIGHT:**

You better find out whether she wants to do that. (Laughter)

**MR. LITTLE:**

But now we don't, we don't official. That doesn't officially have to be second. Okay. Action Item number seven, the board will consider the appointment. I mean, we'll consider the report of the Infrastructure Committee and the recommendation to amend the \$100,000 allocation of the Dream Center by a maximum of \$30,000 to provide the purchase of funding a furnishing purchase and installation of digital technology and architectural plans will also consider the committee recommendation of RCH engineering to prepare a plan that maps out the infrastructure improvements needed to develop residential and commercial properties with the plan to phase in the implementation of the projects, the estimate maybe costs \$30,000. Whose going?

**MR. WRIGHT:**

It's his committee.

**MR. JONES:**

RCH Ron Haisty. He would have been here tonight to address the board, but we did have him to appear at, uh, our committee meeting, and he's laying out an outline of the infrastructure that, ah, we are a couple of months behind. We should have been way in front of this, but we had another infrastructure person business that they wanted to adopt, and we felt, my committee felt, that person wasn't a good fit for the infrastructure and, uh, build. So, we went back to the drawing tables, and we came up with someone else, which is RCH, so right now he's doing some leg work for us, trying to get it in a format where he'll come back and speak to the body of the of the board. He did attend the meeting that she was out of town last time, about two, three weeks ago, but at the time so but that's our committee meeting. Part of it was Miss Reed and Miss Brown and Mr. Glover, Anthony Glover, so it's part of my committee of the infrastructure. So I look forward to having him at our next regular board meeting, and he can give us an outline

to the whole body of the board. So that's where we stand right now on the Infrastructure, ah, the Committee did approve for him to go ahead and go to work on this. So, therefore now its up the the body of the full board.

**MR. LITTLE:**

But now I thought we were talking about, right now building, well,

**MR. JONES:**

I thought you were talking about it; I just gave you the outline of the RCH on the infrastructure.

**MR. WRIGHT:**

The Dream Center. I thought you were talking about the Dream Center.

**MR. JONES:**

The Dream Center. I'll enlighten you on that. The Dream Center is about 98% complete. We only has about 2% and what we call 2% I will say 2%. We got to get the central heating air unit in the big part we closed in the part that we never was using since day one, when the building was purchased. So now that that is closed out, we, ah, we renovated the whole thing from A to Z, and sooner later, you'll be able to come, once we get the lights on, and you'll be able to come there and do a walk through. And I'm pretty sure we're going to the board, gonna have an open house at some point, ah, for the new center.

**MR. LITTLE:**

I want to go over the details of the \$30,000. What, what, the details of the \$30,000?

**MR. JONES:**

The details of the \$30,000 you just outlined, you know, pretty much, ah, furniture and fixtures, the big part of the, the Center for such as Monroe, African American Chamber of Commerce, or the Black Chamber of Commerce, or the NAACP wants to have a, you know, meeting, or a seminar. They'll be able to use, ah, that building for those, those projects, and, ah, we need the update. I think Reverend Wright brought somebody to walk through, to do digital layout on what it take for us to have the screen TVs and the objectives and all that stuff there in the big part of the of the center. So, ah, we'll have somebody else. I don't know how many quotes that we have received from that, but I leave that up to him to do that. So that's part of tables, chairs, furniture, ah, leave that up to you, and who else you want to be part of that.

**MR. WRIGHT:**

Mr. Chairman, also the remember, I think, to bring up Miss Attorney Smith, to bring her up to date, since she just got here, Mrs. Reed. Mrs. Reed already knows, but the concept was with the backup with RCH was that we're trying to develop a, our plan, that

the City Council approved is 47 projects. But those 47 projects are not detailed out and they're not injected into the city's master plan. RCH is being hired as an engineering firm to basically map out South Monroe, to take the city's master plan and then take in the 47 projects that we have in terms of where they will fit, in terms of infrastructure, drainage, drainage, lighting, things of this nature, as to how it would work in so that firm, since the city is not doing it, we just trying to use the little part that we have to try to get it done. That's what the RCH person is supposed to do.

The Dream Center is the old office for SEDD, which is on Arizona Street is now being renovated into a kind of like South Side war room for all the organizations that are going to be trying to work to to build South Monroe. They will have meetings there, workshops there, and their board meetings will be there, kind of a shared complex for all the South Side groups that want to meet. If you got some kind of workshop, some kind of planning group, some kind of youth group that wants to meet that were there, it's being renovated to the point that it's going to have, and this extra \$30,000 is care, is for, for all the internet, internet drop down, screens and things that will make everybody be able to have their meeting there with all the technology that's that's necessary.

So that's where we are now, the overall goal, you know, of the whole program, is to try to to get a, to get a plan on paper, that if we're trying to stop the flow of homeowners leaving South Monroe, going to North Monroe because it's not fit, because it's not there's no homeowners being built. There's no businesses coming there. We don't even have a movie theater, and, you know, in our city, so, so the idea is to at least start with a master plan, and we've been trying to get it done through the city, but we can't. So we've been trying to do it ourselves to try to get it done.

Now the goal is, is to get that done. That's where we are as of right now. Using the resources that we have, we have about \$300,000 we we've committed \$50,000 to each committee to try to get this done. This committee has 50,000 that they using for that our committee is using ours for. The other than her committee will have 50,000 to work on the housing aspect of it. But that's where we are with that.

And to answer your question, that \$30,000 won't,- it's a maximum of \$30,000, but it's not necessarily gonna be \$30,000.

**MR. LITTLE**

but if you can't, if you can, so we can. That's the Infrastructure Committee minutes budget. Let's not talk about that right now. I want to make sure that it's clear that \$30,000 it is an additional amount of money that is being allocated to finish the building..

**MR. WRIGHT:**

Yes.

**MR. LITTLE**

..and where we are. Where we are is an air conditioner and the furnishings of the building, and the building will be 100% complete, except the parking lot is on the front side. correct?

**MR. WRIGHT:**

That's the way I understand it.

**MR. LITTLE:**

Okay, yeah, so that I don't want to talk about the budget, the infrastructure budget now, so y'all understand the DBE committee, the the Housing Committee, the Safe Neighborhoods committee, ah, and and and and and was one other, infrastructure infrastructure all have a budget every year. Okay. So that's what we're saying. And so so we can be really clear, the way SEDD is structured is every commit, every project is assigned to a committee. So, what he was saying Miss Roberson, is that project had not been assigned to a committee. And most, most organizations give their president some leeway to bring things in. But, I guess this organization (laughter), but however, that's neither here nor there.

**MR. JONES:**

Well, \$30,000, as you indicated that, you know, that's some miscellaneous money that we're gonna have to pay for dumpsters. We had a big dumpster. It's been out there for like two and a half months. Got to fulfill that bill. We got to we had to have two new doors, glass doors, that was shot up in the past. Somebody probably tried to break in there. So, we got some miscellaneous things need to be covered with that \$30,000.

**MR. LITTLE:**

So look, if you so, if y'all go to SEDD25 right now, you can see everything that has been spent so far on the building. But I wanted to make sure that they did not think that we had two separate things. We're not talking about that right here because of the way it's actually busted. No, he's the secretary/treasurer not me. I want, you know we got, and we got Councilman Harvey here, and I don't want him digging me at the city council meeting next time I say something about ... (Laughter)

**MR. JONES:**

Well, they both will push together. So when you pushed them both together, I thought out..

**MR. LITTLE:**

I wanted to make sure that of that. So, originally we didn't think we were going to go there, but we got into the back room, and it needed a whole new air conditioner unit. But then we'll be finished with that. Hopefully, the Council, the City Council, will find some money in its heart to help us with the parking lot on the backside. But nevertheless, we'll, we'll get that done. So, is there any court would that? Would anyone like to have

any questions from the audience before we get there? Any questions from commissioners? Can I have a motion?

**MR. WRIGHT:**

Mr. Chairman, I move adoption of item number eight.

**MRS. REED:**

Second.

**MR. LITTLE:**

It' been motioned and second.

**MR. WRIGHT:**

Mrs. Reed.

**MR. LITTLE:**

Mrs. Reed?

**MR. WRIGHT:**

We're down to the vote.

**MRS. REED:**

What's that?

**MR. WRIGHT:**

We're down to the vote. Mrs. Reed, you first, yes. Miss Smith, yes; Mr. Little, aye, Mr. Jones aye, Mr. Wright aye. Motion carries, Mr. Chairman.

**MR. LITTLE:**

O.K. now, how many micro grants do we have to talk about

**MR. WRIGHT:**

Two.

**MR. LITTLE:**

Okay, we have two micro grants. Okay, so, and then I want, okay, the board will consider the report of the safe neighborhood crime reduction and its recommendation for the proposals. Ah, the United minds of joint action. Miss Marie brown and the Life changing of North Louisiana. Miss Dame, Mr. Damian Coleman for the final two, ah, mini grant recipients.

**MR. WRIGHT:**

Mr. Chairman the, the, ah, safe neighborhoods committee met, and the, ah, committee had three applicant applicants, and of the three applicants, the committee recommended these two. Mrs. Brown came and fully explained her how she is planning to operate hers. Mr. COVID did not get a chance to come, but those who were at the committee were familiar with what he was trying to do, and those two have been, ah, recommended they're here if you need to hear from them. Otherwise, the committee has recommended that they be adopted.

**MR. LITTLE:**

Ms Brown, since we made everybody else, if you can give us just a brief..

**MR. WRIGHT:**

She already did it.

**MR. LITTLE:**

She already did it?

**MR. WRIGHT:**

She did it in committee.

**MR. LITTLE:**

Okay, so we did..

**MR. WRIGHT:**

It's Mr. Coleman who didn't do his.

**MR. LITTLE:**

Mr. Coleman?

**MR. COLEMAN:**

Yes, sir.

**MR. LITTLE:**

A brief overview. You don't have to be long, (laughter) because the committee has already approved it.

**Mr. COLEMAN:**

Well, basically, we've been doing crime prevention over the last seven years, we've been in police chief meetings in communities, feeling the citizens, working with individuals, trying to find ways to make our neighborhoods safer, trying to find ways to make our citizens feel safer, advocating for victims of violence, ah, and trying to find more solutions to what's going on with all the crime. Ah, we have several different

activities that we put together, starting with utilizing social media to talk about a lot of problems, to address the community, about a lot of problems, and also engaged in age. We know social media is a very useful tool nowadays. Most people use social media also being in the community, going to groups, holding stop the violence, conferences, protests, talking with families, inviting victims of violence, the families of victims of violence, to these means to speak on behalf of victims and themselves, also working with Monroe Police Department and also what the police department to see if we can get more done in our neighborhoods on the south side, that's trying to get cameras up In certain high crime areas, that's also trying to utilize the community when they're at those cameras, that they can assist us in a lot of different ways, also getting more lighting in high crime areas, and several different initiatives. I don't want to talk too long since Mr. President.

**MR. LITTLE:**

But if you can narrow, narrow, narrow it down, because I'm not, I'm not I'm not understanding, I'm not understanding exactly what you're doing, and then I need your metric as to how you're going to track what you're doing. And I, I kind of know what you're doing, but I kind of know what you're doing, but narrow it down a little bit more so we can get a good understanding specifically.

**MR. COLEMAN:**

As far as tracking goes, everything that we do will be recorded, will be documented, so that we can also, we can present it to you all, and also so that we can study, just in case, our program funded for a longer time, that we can go through those documents, we can see how we can improve the impact that we made and how we can make it better. We looked at demographics throughout the south side. We looked at a lot of statistics dealing with crime, dealing with the murdering, dealing with burglars, and a lot of different other crimes that's being committed. So, I'm not sure exactly what format you're asking for, but I'm trying to give you what I believe..

**MR. WRIGHT:**

Ah, Mr. Chairman the committee. Also, when they, ah, when they discussed this at committee meeting, we're, we're impressed on the fact that this organization, along with, ah, the one that Mr. Mrs. Brown has dealing with grassroots neighborhoods, with the tough neighborhoods, with tough people that don't usually get this kind of- they're not going to come to a seminar..

**MR. LITTLE:**

Okay.

MR. WRIGHT: They they go into the projects. He deals with the projects, and he deals with the folk who are, who are, ah, at risk. Both of those organizations, they specialize in



that that, and since they have a track record of doing it, they didn't have to do too much of selling job for the committee.

**MR. LITTLE:**

Now, what was the metric?

**MR. WRIGHT:**

They are going to count. From what I read and what he put in his report they simply going to count the number of people that they have involved with. They, they've been been encountering with. They're not intending to try to stop all crimes and murders and in three months.

**MR. LITTLE:**

So the metric is about the number of people?

**MR. WRIGHT:**

The number of people.

**MR. LITTLE:**

Okay.

**MR. COLEMAN:**

We have a history of stop the violence and reducing violence, and also, ah, where community feel free. They know us, and they know what we're doing. They know they respect what we're doing, and also, they support...

**MR. LITTLE:**

I just need to officially be on the record. Any questions?

**MRS. BROWN:**

I know already made my presentation, but I did invite some parents here that's going to be in the program. So any of the parents want to say how awesome this program is going to be, and some of the students that's going to be in program we're already working on, and

**PARENT:**

When I got wind that Miss Brown was going to be over the organization, I know that there was a go to person that I could because I always say it's hard to get teens nowadays to stay involved and zone in and, and once they're zoned in. You have to stay committed to them, because kids are so they if they can't see it, can't taste it, can't touch it, they don't believe it. But once you once they know that you are zoned, they're zone in, but they don't want somebody that's today you zoned in then tomorrow you out.

And when I found out Ms Brown was going to be over this organization, I said, I know that she's a she's a go getter. And I always say I want to connect by kids with people that believe in community growth, education, how to better our community as a whole, not just as individuals, as a whole. And that's what made me want to be a part.

**MR. LITTLE:**

Miss Brown briefly, tell us a little bit about it. Briefly, Briefly. So because some people don't, may not know, ah, they weren't in the subcommittee, just briefly.

**MRS. BROWN:**

What we're doing, we're targeting, we're targeting 15 people in the beginning, but if over 15 come, we'll accept them also. So our program is trying to become a teach them how to become a mentor. It's a six week program, and in that program, we're going to be doing things they're going to be getting educated on. Because children tell children what's going on before adults know. So this way, still children being, you know, labeled as rats in the school, telling on each other, they're going to talk to mentors. So if the good thing about this program is we're going to create a tracking system, so we're going to follow these children all the way to their graduate high school, no matter what age they come in at. And also, we're going to deal with the parents also, because when you try to tell a child something, you and the parent don't know about it, you're going to get that friction. So that's why we're going to if it's a personal thing, ah, based on the whole family. So, ah, I reached out to some parents that I know are already doing things in the community. Ms Tribble is already, uh, focusing on young girls and boys. So what better is to pull people in that's from the grassroot that's doing these things, and not keep coming up with programs that we fund them for five minutes and then we go away. So that is our purpose. And, ah, I'm just looking forward to working with the parents, also getting them involved, because they're the ones going to have to keep this going. So, ah, we do have photographs we'll be taking. They'll sign in every time they come to me. So that's going to be our tracking system. Ah, you guys going to provide T shirts for them. So we already have our list of T shirt size. So we leave that with y'all tonight. So we gon' get started tonight an be heard.

**MR. LITTLE:**

Any Questions

**MR. THOMAS:**

I just have a comment Mr. Chairman. I think this is brilliant what these people here are doing because they are -they have based their foundation out in the community where the problem is, and that's the kind of concern I have with the Black Chamber. We don't need the Civic Center. Our people are in the housing areas and the crimes on the south side. We need to whatever we're building on this when, as it relates to project, have them based in that community where the problem is, that way you can reach the people that are there. They're not going to come from South 8th, go to the civic center to hear

here what Judge Sharp, got to say, because they see him too much in court, a lot of them. But my thing is, let's face these problems, and when you do consider your funding, let's try to make sure they're rooted in the community, just where the problem is.

**ATTY. SMITH:**

I have a question. As part of these programs, ah, are there any type of, since y'all know them, and what the underlying root issue is, if you can articulate that I would like to know, but also, does it include, ah, programs like job readiness, resume building to give them other options besides what they're doing? So that's..

**MRS. BROWN:**

Here's where I'm all about. It's best to go and pull in organizations that's out there doing those things too. I'm not trying to, ah, you know, create something where we we know that workforce investment does that, then we share that information, you know, because we can always be, I'll be doing the same thing, and nothing's happening.

**MR. THOMAS:**

Right.

**MRS. BROWN:**

And that has been a problem with Monroe. You know, we all trying to do the same thing. Let me partner with whoever doing things and refer out, because there's not enough money in this program and there's not enough time in this program. So we're going to network. Our goal is to network with organizations that's already doing these things and not trying to just sit up, and I'm talking about financial literacy, and there's an organization that I can bring in to talk about that resume writing, all of that jobs. You got Nova, you got all these organizations. And the problem is we are not working together. That is the issue with Monroe. And I'm only speaking of Monroe, because I only know Monroe, so until we realize, to compile, compartmentalize, ah, what we're doing, we're just doing this for a moment. Six weeks is not a long time to do this. This is why a part of ours is a tracking mechanism. So we're going to have to be trying to find other resources to make sure that we're able to track these children all the way to the end.

**MR. LITTLE:**

If I can, let,let,let me just say this, and then I want to get to Councilman Harvey, because I asked him to come, and I wanted him to have a chance to speak. One of the things that I that they got ahead of us on is we wanted to get the whole board seated, ah, but you can't tell elected officials what to do. We when we were creating the SEDD plan, there was a big ideological difference because, and actually the ideological difference was actually between largely myself and, ah,

**MRS. BROWN:**

Roosevelt

**MR. LITTLE:**

Yeah, because we're economic development and planning district, but however, in our community, we had to address that there was some socioeconomic issues. Okay? And so the safe housing committee, ah, and neighborhood, ah, ah,

**MR. WRIGHT:**

Crime Reduction

**MR. LITTLE:**

.. crime reduction, and crime reduction has a social economic component to it. And so when you look at the plan, you see some social economic issues. So in this you're coming in in the middle of a, a, a program that has that has an award for mini grants that have, ah, components that of,of two,ah, grants that that have metrics in them that are being awarded in the middle of an award period, that are left over From previous meetings that the committee, the commissioners, are not here. That's kind of what it is. Ah, so that that's what it is. So, and, and there's just two that from a previous meeting. So, if I can, can I have a motion?

**MR. WRIGHT:**

Before we make the motion, we might like to note that some of the things that, that you mentioned are, are being handled by some of the other mini grant recipients.

**MR. LITTLE:**

Yeah.

**MR. WRIGHT:**

One here is dealing with drug counseling. I think one of the representatives is here that there she just left, her is dealing with drug counseling. And there's, there's no counseling center in the African American community, and so they're going to do that. Another is dealing with ah, Fred Lewis. Their group is dealing with trying to catch people where they are, and then trying to hook them in with available resources in terms of jobs. Ah, so it is being that's why we were counting on anybody that wanted something done bring it through the committee first so that we can get a full CEA laid out on what's going to be done, instead of just passing out checks. You know, passing out checks to people, ah, that's the concept that we've been using. Our committee is just one of one of four. The others deal with infrastructure and building and business and whatever else. This is just ours. Mr. Chairman, I moved adoption of item number nine.

**MR. LITTLE:**

Second.

**MR. WRIGHT:**

Miss, Miss Smith, aye; Mr. Little, aye; Mr. Jones, aye, Mr. Wright, aye, Miss Reed, aye. This motion carries Mr. Chairman.

**MR. LITTLE:**

O.K. Before we have citizen participation, Mr. Muhammad was supposed to be here, and he just texted me that that he had something come up. Ah, one of the things that I think that we, we, had before is that you know, with SEDD, and, and what I would like during the remaining of my tenureship here is that as not that we look at this as a district three, four and five thing is that we look at it as a whole city thing. Ah, Councilman Harvey and I have talked about several different things, and so when we talk about infrastructure, when we talk about the DBE Program, when we talk about what's going on with the city, I wanted him to, ah, come share what was going on with the city. I we, would I, I really kind of don't know where to, ah, ah start Councilman Harvey, because we talked about talking about so many different things that I'll just kind of give you the floor and let you talk about how we can what's going on with the city, what's going on with infrastructure, how we can, I, ah, make the DBE program work until that the TIF work and all of that stuff, and you, you just do what you do.

**MR. HARVEY:**

Thanks for inviting me..

**MR. LITTLE:**

You see you didn't disturb the meeting.

**MR. HARVEY:**

I'm sorry?

**MR. LITTLE:**

You see – His thing was he would come, but he not going to disturb the meeting.

**MR. HARVEY:**

Yeah, I don't want to start the meeting or throwing attention or anything like that. I mean, ultimately, I want to be an observer. I think I was telling, at least I got told to Tony this recently, I've told Roosevelt, I think too. I mean, for the first time, only five years since, like the pandemic, I'm almost home every day, so I get to actually get out and do some things that I wanted to do that I hadn't been able to really do in the last four or five years. But it's where we are, the city, and you know, the other day. I mean, we benefited from a lot of federal spending that happened in the last handful years, and that's really turned into just major infrastructure pieces, and what that has turned into is a bunch of projects below ground. And those aren't the fun ones, those aren't the ones that are exciting, but they are investments that will ultimately pay off, and ultimately they do

benefit the city as a whole, I think I'm on record saying that, you know, I don't really get hung up because, like, I'll hear the administration say, Hey, we're spending this much money in three and four and five, but these are all system wide projects, and that just the other day, it just benefits the city. So things that I'm watching the things that I care about. You know, I think its not secret that we have a new council, and there's definitely some some conflict there, and hopefully things are going to work their way down. Me, I think that at the end of the day, we all kind of get towards center when all said and done. Because no matter where I live in the city, I can ask everybody in the city to write down the top 10 things they care about, and the list looks the same, but no matter. But depending on what street you live on, it's a different order. And that's really the opportunity is to just make sure that we at least get 60% of it where we're completely aligned. And no matter which side of the town you're on, where what street it is everybody's concerned about crime. That's our biggest opportunity. And ultimately, I hear it here. I hear it everywhere else. I tell you guys, I read all the time, trying to figure out what other cities are doing, trying to figure out where we can hopefully make the difference. And, and you know, trying to reach young people is extremely challenging, and the government's one piece of it, but community groups like this, ultimately, people that just grab long term community are gonna be the difference. That's the thing that I focus on, just as much as anything else. And followed second by that is we don't have sewer capacity in the city. I know the water projects got a whole bunch of attention. But at the end of the day, a lot of people, no matter which side town you're on, because I probably don't get Northside calls about this plenty is just when it rains in this city, it's hard people to flush their toilets. And if you had, like, a big industrial plant that came here and ultimately wanted to be a big water and sewer consumer, we couldn't serve it. So this Texas/Standifer trunk line we talked about on the end is just a big part of that project. I will end with this. I know there's been a lot of attention on you know what the purchasing policy is for the city, but I've, I've shared this before, and I'll, I'll share a public forum here, I believe that purchasing policy is the path to a better DBE rate.

**MR. LITTLE:**

Yep, and that's so...

**MR. HARVEY:**

what I mean by that. So, you know, we go with this, and I'll get into the weeds just for a second, but you'll go hear this project and say, hey, the DBE goal is 15% or something like that. So what they do is they draw a radius, and this is all state level definitions. It's not where the city hopefully has a lot of opportunities with this is, hey, there's X amount of HVAC contractors that are registered as DBEs, and this is the total numbers of contractors. So that's what the target gets set at. But that 250,000 plus projects going to be that 250,000 bubble. That's where you actually get to define what you care about. And if what you care about is a higher participation rate with DBEs, that's where you do it. It's inside that person. And where you know, Kenya and I've had this conversation, Sonya Jacobs and I've had this conversation. It's very challenging to be a state

registered DBE. You have to have this incredible bonding. So if you're not doing these huge projects, it's really you can make the argument, whether or not it makes sense or not. Sonya and Kenya can tell you what that means, because they're ultimately tied closer to the business owner than I am. I'm just going from the feedback that I get that it's just really challenging, isn't worth the work, but the city defines it in a way that is not as onerous. You don't have to have all that bonding, and you still ultimately serve the people you're intending to serve. That purchasing policy, I believe, is the path to that, and that's Doug Harvey's opinion it's worth what you paid for it. But I, I will tell you that I'm actually I actually think that that's one of our opportunities for alignment as a council. I think I believe the administration believes this, and I think that ultimately, that's where you're going to get the participation that I think the community is looking for. I think that purchasing policy hits the path too, because it gets you out of public bid law. When I'm in public bid law, I have to take the lowest bid every time. And so this gives you some pieces put around it. I'll stop at that, because I know I said I can get the weeds and really get the details, but I'll open the forward question, or anybody can talk to me about any of it afterwards.

**MR. LITTLE:**

And you know, k-, kind of what I, k- kind of, what I've said, and I'll say it again, is for us to make this thing work. It's, it's not for it's for us to have which, if you want to call it a collaboration or an agreement, but, or whatever you wanted to say, but it's people like you, I him, her, whatever to say we want to make the city work. You can define it what you want to define it as, but there has to be an inclusion, ah, two groups or two two people cannot live side by side without having opportunities. How those things look, ah, we get an understanding that we need more participation. Ah, we, we, we don't want gangs on this side of the track, but to not have gangs on this side of the track. We need to get them out of this side of the game and get them into the chamber of commerce game. And so that means that we need to have inclusion. Ah, DBEs are hard, and so we know what it needs to happen. So if it means us get in the room and figuring it out, we'll get in the room and figure it out. And so I think he's committed to that. Maybe you know you haven't said it the way that people wanted you to say it from the podium. But I mean, I believe that you are committed to that and said it. Now, any questions for Mr. Harvey? Go ahead.

**MRS. BROWN:**

I think, I mean, I keep hearing DBE, but I think we need to start finding people that can handle the whole contract, and then they issue it out. Because the thing is, you know, you give a 10 million contract and you only got 15% DBE, you know. So there's no balance there at all, you know. Ah, And I know that we can go outside of Monroe to find black owned businesses, because what's happening is, we keep using the word minority. Minority don't necessarily look like me. That is the issue here. Because what's happening is is white men are putting businesses in their mother's name, their grandma name, cousin name, and now you got a minority. So a minority, we have to stop saying

that. Say it, but then ask the question, what part of that minority is black? That is the issue that we have. So the problem is we can't seem to find black folks unless they're going to jail. But other than that, we can't find black folks. So somebody need to be on the search for finding black owned businesses that's in a certain radius, you know, or educating people on what businesses they need to get, you know, so that we can be doing make sure that we're getting our fair share. We got cleaning services here. That's a black owned business right there, so they're ordering cleaning supplies. I don't know if you get business from the city. I'm not even asking that, but what I'm saying is some businesses we need to start focusing on that we can get, ah, African Americans in to make sure that we get our fair share, and not just from the city, from anybody that our tax dollars go to. So that is the Round Table Talk. We need to start having real talk. That's enough of this fake talk. We done talked it for over sixty something years, according to me, just to me. So when are we going to come to the table to have real talk and have real solutions and make this thing happen? Because if I want to help these young people, I gotta go to a white business to say, I need you to give me something to help these children. Why? Because they getting all the city contracts. So I'm not able to go to black owned businesses and get what I can get from White owned businesses, you know? So at some point we need to figure out how to have that conversation, how to have real talk that's going to make our community where we can be self sufficient ourselves.

**MR. JONES:**

To answer I hadn't did business with the city of Monroe in over eight and a half years.

**MRS. BROWN:**

You see, that's wrong.

**MR. JONES:**

I'm right here in Monroe, born and raised here, been here all my life. Ain't planning to go nowhere, planning retire here, and, ah, went to elementary school here, went to junior high here, high school here, and so I went to college down the street.

**MRS. BROWN:**

So, this is real talk. How do we I can't go to him and say, Hey, fund my organization. But see, because we say we don't want to support ourselves, we can't support ourselves. We're not getting any of the pie.

**MR. WRIGHT:**

I, I think too, in response to what Councilman Harvey said concerning the, the ah, allowing the city to be able to do it without bids, and said, That's the, that's the that's the path toward getting the 15% DBE, well, they've been doing for a year Councilman Harvey, seems like all you need to be able to do is to show all the contracts that you've done in the last year and show how many black folks have been, have benefited from all



those contracts you've already passed out in the last year. And then that was the other story. All we gotta do is just say, look, we've got 15 contracts. And look, here we did. We did way more than 15% we did. We did 30% we did 35% that sale the story and the conversation would end.

**MR. HARVEY:**

I'll share that because I will say, here's how I envision. So why do I support it? So I just use that 15% number. Let's say I use HVAC contractors example. I think we know that more than 15% of that HVAC contractors in this city are minority businesses. They're at 15% of the ones that are registered in state, mobile, DBE. So what I think that the opportunity is for the purchasing policy. It's not as it's not as described as I would like to see it today, but I don't think it can get there. But Council support, and ultimately, I'll listen to any idea when there's something else to replace it, it has to be building something so, so we say that real number is 45% so what the difference is, because, like, bonding capacity, or going through that process, because ultimately more people become eligible then, so you then you have different targets. If you say you're doing a 15% chance, I'm going to give one. If that's all over, us going to land, because we still have to follow, you know, lowest responsibility, things like that scope and all that kind of stuff. And I said, I want to get really in the weeds, but I think my personal opinion, that is the path. Because if I had Sonya Jacobs sitting here, she would at least agree with me that in this part is that it's very challenging to be registered as a state level DBE and so I think the city of Monroe is one - that's how does Baton Rouge and New Orleans get the numbers that they have pretty easy. This is their, this is exactly how they do it.

**MR. LITTLE:**

Shreveport has a fair share program that requires you have a be in the office. But all, I all I'm saying is, is at some point, just like Mr. Harvey showed up today, at some point we're going to get to a point that we've had a bad relationship for 19 years. We maybe had bad relationships for the last four years. We got a new wife, a new husband, or whatever, and now the the relationship gonna have to get consummated. (Laughter) At some point we gonna have to say how we gonna do this. Okay? (Laughter) And when two people get in the room (laughter) and when two people get in a room (laughter) because we can't talk about the old folks who used to be in the room, well.

**AUDIENCE:**

Laughter. Giggles. About mumbles about "consummated."

**MR. WRIGHT:**

(Laughter) Mr. Chairman I move we adjourn.

**MRS. STEVENSON:**

I Went to St. Matthews Church last night. And they took the opportunity to mention that SEDD was funding their celebrating recovery program. I want to let you know that they are asking and then they did add another day to their therapy.

**MR. LITTLE:**

Hey, look, that's a good program. Miss Woods was going to bring a report in council, but not, not this time. Okay.

**MRS. DOUGLAS:**

So definitely, we're going into details about the black Monroe Chamber of Commerce, it is very important that we make sure everybody participates and receive the mini grants just like everyone else. There was some more questions to answer this young man that was asked to her, to this brother, about his program, and it was pretty clear, from what I heard and I did she I would like to see how she can articulate on how this will help our areas that we're servicing with our mini grants, our....

**MR. LITTLE:**

Okay. Motion to adjourn.

**MR. WRIGHT:**

We already did that.

**MR. LITTLE:**

Thank You.

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Tony Little, President



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Roosevelt Wright, Jr.  
Secretary/Treasurer

