

**OFFICE OF THE CITY COUNCIL**

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**JACKSONVILLE SMALL & EMERGING BUSINESS SPECIAL COMMITTEE**

**Hybrid Virtual/In-Person Meeting Minutes**

**September 29, 2021**

**1:00 p.m.**

**Location:** Lynwood Roberts Room

**In attendance:** Council Members Ju’Coby Pittman (Chair), Terrance Freeman, Garrett Dennis (early departure 1:40 pm)

**Also**: Greg Pease, Chief of Procurement Division; Dinah Mason and Sheliah Brown, JSEB; Lawsikia Hodges – Office of General Counsel; Colleen Hampsey – Council Research

**Meeting Convened**: 1:15 pm.

Chairwoman Pittman welcomed the group and called for introductions. This was the first meeting since the committee was continued by the council president in July 2021, and since the JSEB committee report was issued in February 2021. The current JSEB program has been in place since 2004, with several modifications over the years, and was developed in conjunction with three previous disparity studies (1990, 2002, 2013) and federal case law.

The Jacksonville Small and Emerging Business Special Committee was established in 2020 to review the JSEB program and identify any successes and challenges that the program may have. Based on that JSEB Special Committee review, between August 2020 and February 2021, several modifications were recommended to improve JSEB operations. In July 2021, CP Newby opted to continue the JSEB Special Committee to recommend amendments to the JSEB program if necessary, and to assess the previously made recommended modifications, including the program goals, training, access to capital, bonding, certification requirements, maximum threshold amounts and the limitation on the number of program participation years.

Dinah Mason, JSEB Administrator, said they conducted a detailed review of 318 JSEB files, and that they are currently reviewing the JSEB application, revamping the website, looking to add a training room on site, and developing a course that assists JSEBs with the City procurement software (1Cloud). Ms. Mason updated the committee as to the steps taken based on the three main recommendations made previously.

1. It was recommended that a new diversity study be conducted and the process for that has begun with the consultants, Mason Tillman Associates, coordinating with the Office of General Counsel on the questions and format.
2. A tiered procurement structure was recommended based on company revenue, so similarly sized groups compete against one another in the bidding process, and companies may graduate when they become profitable/successful enough. ‘Micro’ groups for projects with bids less than $250,000; ‘Mid’ groups to bid on projects between $250,000 and $500,000; The parameters for the third tier are under development until after the diversity study.
3. Capacity issues were discussed for both JSEB companies to be self-sustaining and for the JSEB office to handle their workload. A more robust JSEB continuing education program has been developed and is in the rollout phase. To address JSEB capacity, a new part time position was approved in this fiscal year budget.

Sheliah Brown, JSEB Education Coordinator, spoke about the curriculum in the continuing education program. The JSEB Continuing Education Program is designed to foster effective educational training and professional development for JSEB Vendors with varying skillsets and professional services. The curriculum is comprised of three educational tracks: Executive Program (Includes Cohort) intended for experienced and advanced level JSEB Vendors, Craft-Based (May include Cohort) intended for entry level and mid-level JSEB Vendors, and Professional Development (Includes on-going training opportunities) intended for all level JSEB Vendors who are interested in sharpening their skill set.

CM Dennis talked about time constraints and how some JSEBs are too busy working to take course modules, but continuing education is required and a part of the process to make companies stronger/more successful.

Ms. Brown mentioned collaboration with UNF on training software, and with the Chamber (Jax Bridges) on assistance for new companies who haven’t existed long enough to be a JSEB yet. CM Pittman extended appreciation for the responsiveness to the initial committee recommendations. CVP Freeman commented on the hard work by JSEB staff to make the recommended modifications.

Ms. Mason mentioned a marketing push, with JSEB billboards throughout the city. CM Pittman asked if the current staff could handle a large influx to the workload, and it was stated that the staff is stretched thin and that the new approved position will help. Mr. Pease said that as the program grows larger, the JSEB staff will have to expand accordingly and that the Administration is in support of JSEB’s success. CVP Freeman asked if internal hiring among current City employees would be a good idea, to move qualified folks from other departments to JSEB. Ms. Mason said that poaching from other departments is frowned upon for obvious reasons. CM Pittman said that she would like a report every two months on JSEB progress and that the committee will meet again in the next month or two to get an update on the progress of the diversity study.

With no other comments from the committee, Chair Pittman adjourned the meeting.

**Meeting adjourned:** 2:27 p.m.

Minutes: Colleen Hampsey, Council Research

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