MEMORANDUM

TO: Mayor and Council Members
FROM: Rudy Garza, Assistant City Manager
DATE: September 21, 2009
SUBJECT: Glen Bell Solar Panel Installation Project

The City Council Agenda for September 24th includes an action item to authorize a construction contract for the Glen Bell Solar Panel Installation Project. The Glen Bell Service Center is a maintenance and warehouse facility used by the Austin Water Utility (AWU) and the project supports Austin Energy’s (AE) commitment to renewable energy as outlined in the Austin Climate Protection Plan.

As part of the bidding process, documents were distributed to a number of contractors and the contract will be awarded to a local firm. Due to the unique character of this project, no subcontracting opportunities were identified; therefore no goals were established for the solicitation. Many solar projects do not utilize subcontractors and require specialized and certified crews. The installation is a small portion of the entire contract, the majority of which is for purchasing the panels. Currently, there are no MBE/WBE certified vendors that provide solar panel installations or panel sales.

AE and Small and Minority Business Resources (SMBR) are implementing strategies to enhance the participation of small, minority and woman-owned businesses in future green and renewable energy contracts both as prime contractors or subcontractors. This includes: increasing public awareness of these types of opportunities through outreach programs and collaboration; identifying relevant codes; and assisting MBEs/WBEs in preparing for and building capacity in this field through workshops and training. As an example, AE is pursuing a partnership with Gemini Solar Development to offer training for solar panel installations for minority and women-owned businesses once the 30MW Solar Plant is built.

City staff will continue to provide needed access to education and resources so that MBEs/WBEs become more competitive in the Green and Renewable Energy Industries. Please let me know if you have any questions or require additional information. Thank you.

cc: Marc A. Ott, City Manager
    Roger Duncan, Director, Austin Energy
    Steve Elkins, Director, Small & Minority Business Resources
    Mike Trimble, Director, Contract and Land Management