



BOARD/COMMISSION RECOMMENDATION

ASIAN AMERICAN QUALITY OF LIFE ADVISORY COMMISSION

Recommendation Number: 20160216-005a: Recommendation for City Council to Accept the NERA Disparity Study Findings

WHEREAS, the Final Draft of the Disparity Study, which began in 2014 and completed in December of 2015, was provided to the Asian American Quality of Life Advisory Commission (AAQoL) for review after a presentation by the study consultant to the Economic Opportunity Committee in its 2016 January regular meeting; and

WHEREAS, The 751-page study report, encompassing business data in five Texas counties, has found significant market-based disparities across all industries in terms of wages, business owner earnings, and business formation rate; and

WHEREAS, The report lists nearly 20 pages of anecdotal testimonies from MWBE (Minority- and Women-owned) business owners regarding their experiences working with city prime contractors (page 319-335) often depicting a discriminatory environment including workplace harassment, nonpayment, and exclusion; and

WHEREAS, The report contains also close of 20 pages of feedback from business owners on the city's MWBE Procurement Program, its implementation and processes (page 351-373).

WHEREAS, While many respondents credited the program for its irreplaceable role to ensure MWBE participation in city projects, they also voiced some of their concerns including: 1) lack of goals and low goals, 2) slow certification process, lack of communications, and inconsistencies, 3) poor or no action to assist MWBEs when there is a violation or to mediate disputes, 4) rehiring those primes who have nonpayment issues with their MWBE subs 5) customer services seemingly geared towards helping the primes rather than the MWBE firms, 6) problems of using front companies; 7) lack of technology to streamline program implementation and data management; and

WHEREAS, the study is scheduled to post as an agenda item in the Council's Feb. 26th meeting for Council to accept in order for the program to continue;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, That AAQoL Advisory Commission calls upon the Austin City Council to take the following actions to ensure the continuation and better actuation of the program:

- 1) To vote to accept the study; and
- 2) To direct city staff to improve program policies and implementations based on the feedback recorded in the study and by working closely with the MWBE communities, including the minority Quality of Life Advisory Commissions.

Date of Approval: February 16, 2016

Record of the vote: (9-0 vote with Aletta Banks, Janki DePalma, Kirk Yoshida abstained)

Attest:

