



# EMPOWERMENT ZONE ADVISORY BOARD

City of El Paso – Community and Human Development Department – Empowerment Zone Grant (EZ)

## BOARD MEETING MINUTES

CITY OF EL PASO, 2 CIVIC CENTER PLAZA, 2<sup>nd</sup> FLOOR CONFERENCE ROOM (Across City Council Chambers)  
EL PASO, TEXAS  
AUGUST 24, 2009  
5:30 p.m.

The Empowerment Zone Advisory Board met in regular session at the above place and date. Meeting was called to order at 5:35 p.m. Sally J. Andrade was present and presiding.

The following Advisory Board members answered roll call:

Trinidad Acevedo,  
Sally J. Andrade (Chair),  
Daniel Ortiz,  
Edith Zuvanich (Vice-Chair)

Absent:  
Soledad Muñiz  
Norma Tena  
Carlos Veloz

Staff present:  
Isela Robison (Empowerment Zone Grant Coordinator),  
Carolyn Yañez (Project Compliance Specialist),  
Priscilla Arellano (Recording Secretary)

### 1. Advisory Board Members' Introductions

Each Board member introduced themselves.

### 2. Call for General Public Comments

None

### 3. Approval of August 12, 2009 Minutes

Motion made by Edith Zuvanich, seconded by Trinidad Acevedo, and unanimously carried to **APPROVE** minutes.

AYES: Trinidad Acevedo, Sally J. Andrade, Daniel Ortiz, Edith Zuvanich  
NAYS: None  
ABSENT: Soledad Muñiz, Norma Tena, Carlos Veloz

4. Staff Update: Request for Proposal (RFP) Process

5. Discussion and Action on the Greater El Paso Chamber of Commerce's Appeal for FY 2010 Empowerment Zone Grant Funds under the Small Business Technical Assistance Funding Category

Appeal from the Greater El Paso Chamber of Commerce requested to be read for the record by Ms. Andrade.

August 17, 2009

Ms. Isela Robison  
El Paso Empowerment Zone Coordinator  
Community Development  
City of El Paso  
2 Civic Center Plaza  
El Paso, TX 79901

Re: Empowerment Zone Grant for Technical Assistance

Dear Ms. Robison,

We first want to thank you for all of the hard work that you and staff undertook in your effort to engage the many community organizations on behalf of the Empowerment Zone and this grant proposal.

Needless to say, our Business Development team was deeply disappointed and quite frankly, surprised when they were informed this past Wednesday night, that although our score placed us solidly in second position, we were denied part of the award. Despite the recommendations by you and your EZ team to award the contract to The Greater Chamber of Commerce, the final recommendation of the panel was to award to the third place submission.

Part of our difficulty in accepting this outcome is reflected in the following criteria that we submitted as part of our proposal:

The Greater Chamber's proposal had the highest community impact including:

- Outreach to 350 individuals/businesses
- Surveying of 350 businesses/individuals in the EZ
- 150 EZ clients served
- Continuity of service, support, and evaluation that the Chamber will provide to the clients after the EZ-way program is completed.

The Chamber's access to unique pool of resources that we can connect the client to, including:

- The only Business Individual Development Account savings program (2:1 savings ratio) and;
- Group training by credentialed experts at a discounted price
- The Chamber's history and expertise in providing technical support demonstrated through the:
  - Facilitation of \$153.2 million through the One Stop Business Resource Center;
  - the Disbursement of \$150,000 in Empowerment Zone grants; and
  - Leveraging of \$2.3 million to the Dedicated Commuter Lane.

The Chamber is leveraging 67% of the funding request (\$232,546) of in-kind support. This represents 40% of total project cost.

The uniqueness of the bilingual inter-agency team-approach incorporates the expertise of 8 agencies within the One Stop Business Resource Center. The Chamber's application is the strongest one in this category.

The Chamber is the only agency that would effectively serve Census Tract 39.03 (Kennedy Area) due to transportation issues encountered by that population having to travel to other areas of the empowerment zone. (This point was made by City staff to the board during the meeting)

Perhaps the most troubling aspects of the recommendations of the selection committee are some of the personal comments made by Ms. Andrade seemingly to justify the recommendation itself. The

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request for proposal requires the submitter to address assistance to the clients to develop business plans. Yet, the committee dismissed the importance of this criterion stating that many of these small business owners don't speak English so how could we help them write a business plan. Isn't that alone a contradiction of the stipulated requirement? Another statement that was made was that our name, "The Greater El Paso Chamber of Commerce", will be intimidating to the target client audience. And finally, her comment to Mr. Ortiz, not for him to worry about the Greater Chamber because we will survive this loss, is particularly troubling. What is the point of assigning a scoring process if the committee intended to ignore the scores and select based on personal preferences? The Greater Chamber's strength and capability should be considered an asset to the selection process, not a detriment and certainly not a justifiable reason to ignore the committee's own evaluation of our capabilities.

We recommend that the Empowerment Zone also review and consider potential conflicts of interest for the following reasons: One of the board members (Ms Zuvanich) is a client of the SBDC, one of our partners in the submission. Should she have been recused from the selection process? At least one of the other submitters is leveraging funding from the City of El Paso.

It is for these reasons that we respectfully request the Empowerment Zone selection committee formally reconsider its recommendations for the grant awards.

Sincerely,

Richard E. Dayoub  
President and CEO

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In regards to the conflict of interest question noted in the appeal letter, City staff informed the EZ Advisory Board there was no conflict of interest.

In considering the Greater El Paso Chamber of Commerce appeal, the Advisory Board reviewed the impact on the existing proposed funding recommendations if the Greater El Paso Chamber of Commerce proposal was funded. The Advisory Board heard public comments regarding this agenda item.

Motion made by Trinidad Acevedo and seconded by Edith Zuvanich to **DENY** the appeal from the Greater El Paso Chamber of Commerce for the recommended funding

AYES: Trinidad Acevedo, Sally J. Andrade, Edith Zuvanich

NAYS: Daniel Ortiz

ABSENT: Soledad Muñiz, Norma Tena, Carlos Veloz

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6. Discussion and Action on EZ Advisory Board Recommendations regarding the Empowerment Zone 2009 Request for Proposal Awards

During the last Advisory Board meeting held on August 12<sup>th</sup>, the Advisory Board directed City staff to speak to the agencies being funded under the Small Business Incubator and revisit recommended funding in order to eliminate budget overage of \$63,776. City staff recommends the following budget amendments:

El Paso Hispanic Chamber of Commerce	\$150,000.00
Project Vida	\$ 97,290.00
El Puente	\$615,679.00
La Fe	\$507,031.00
Excel	\$330,000.00
YWCA	\$450,000.00

Motion made by Edith Zuvanich and seconded by Trinidad Acevedo to **APPROVE** the amended recommendations and budget with a 0 percent balance budget.

AYES: Trinidad Acevedo, Sally J. Andrade, Daniel Ortiz, Edith Zuvanich

NAYS: None

ABSENT: Soledad Muñiz, Norma Tena, Carlos Veloz

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7. Discussion by EZ Advisory Board regarding its Empowerment Zone funding award recommendation presentation at City Council meeting

The Advisory Board and City staff discussed the City Council Meeting being held on September 1, 2009. City Council will take action on a final EZ Budget.

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8. Call for Public Comments on Agenda Items  
The following people commented on Agenda Items:

Joseph Conway	Miguel Teran	Guillermo Glenn
Delia Chavez	Rocio Vallejo	Homero Galicia
Laura Sanchez	Ana Kassfy	Melodya Salaices
Bill Schlesinger	Richard E. Dayoub	Lorena Andrade
Cindy Davidson	Amy O'Rourke	Jorge Cano
Mohammad Kassfy	Mrs. Sami (Ana) J. Kassfy	

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9. Scheduling next meeting

The next scheduled meeting is for September 23, 2009

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10. Adjournment

Motion made by Trinidad Acevedo, seconded by Daniel Ortiz, and unanimously carried to adjourn meeting at 8:07 p.m.

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