General Construction and Management, Sustainable Urban Development, Eco-Construction and Management

Eco-Urban Pioneers Public Testimony to the NHBOA Finance Committee
September 12, 2022

Dear Members of the NHBOA Finance Committee,

Eco-Urban Pioneers (EUP) would like to thank you for holding this Public Hearing on REQUEST TO THE BOARD OF ALDERS TO REVIEW AND INVESTIGATE THE POLICIES AND PROCEDURES RELATED TO THE AWARDING CONTRACTS AT THE BOARD OF EDUCATION.

For the past eight-years, EUP is extremely proud to have employed hundreds of residents, primarily from underserved communities and to have provided clean schools with zero shutdowns due to cleaning over the last tumultuous years to include cleaning through the Pandemic. A snapshot of our contract history with the NHBOE is as follows:

- September 2014, Eco-Urban Pioneers started out cleaning three schools – New Haven Academy, ESUMS, and Reggie Mayo Elementary.
- June 2016, we entered into an agreement with ABM and jointed bid and successfully won the custodial contract where we cleaned 12 schools, thus fulfilling the MBE and local company requirement.
- June 2018, we bid on and successfully won the custodial contract to clean all then 52 schools. Because EUP is a certified MBE and local, the award fulfilled all minority and small city business requirements.
- June 2018, we created an association with Giordano Construction and Eco-Urban Pioneers. We jointly bid to build Strong School later renamed Obama Academy on the SCSU Campus. EUP, operated as a construction manager, workshop development for MBE, WBE, HBE, and workforce for New Haven Residence.
- July 2019, EUP contract renewal was approved to continue custodial contract.
- July 2020, EUP contract renewal was approved to continue custodial contract.
- July 2021, EUP contract renewal was approved to continue custodial contract.
- June 2022, EUP was request by the NHBOE to work on an extended contract for July and August.

As a small and ambitious locally owned and Black owned company, Eco-Urban Pioneers was able to meet the hiring demands of the New Haven Community, consistently maintain and meet our payroll demands, maintained good standing with SEIU 32BJ, and preform our contract with quality service. As a New Haven based company, we take the community and taxpayers money seriously and that is why when Mr. Pinto, the former NHBOE CFO approached us about taking a $500,000 hit during Covid, even though we kept our EUP 32BJ workers employed and paid at our expense – we complied. EUP saved the BOE $500,000. Then in 2020 when Mr. Pinto, the former COO, asked to renegotiate our contract for that year and give back 1.5%, half our contracted increase, EUP agreed.

During COVID when the school needed to be reopened. On the request of the NHBOE we hired and trained staff for 25 positions. For nearly (7) months we carried a payroll of approximately 210 workers with union fees in the amount of roughly $1.2 million dollars. This amount also included lapsed payment for the regular contract because there was no new purchase order number. We did not stop the extra hours because we weren’t being paid, because we see our relationship with the BOE, the students, our staff and the New Haven Community as a valued partnership in providing safe clean schools for New Haven Students, teachers and staff.

The City of New Haven and NHBOE share a unique relationship with awarding power and managing controls over these contracts. I ask the NHBOA to intervene in this process to ensure that the “Will of the People” and the needs of New Haven Voters are being met. In addition, to also verify that the policies and ordinances that have been ratified by law to protect minority and New Haven based businesses are adhered to. If we are for promoting and developing New Haven Minority Own Business and New Haven Based Business, surely the recent and current actions of the NHBOE to include the Mayor are in direct opposition in addressing New Haven’s battle with economic inequality, systematic racism and generational wealth.

Respectfully Submitted
Shafiq Abdussabur, Owner Eco-Urban Pioneers

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