

San Francisco African American Chamber of Commerce and America's Cup Event Authority Meet in Preparation for Opportunities for African American Businesses

By Carla Thomas

The San Francisco African American Chamber of Commerce recently hosted a meeting with the event planners of the up-coming America's Cup. Moderated by the Chamber's Secretary, Brigitte R, LeBlanc of LeBlanc and Associates, the discussion included, Regina Dick-Endrizzi, Executive Director of the Small Business Assistance Center, and two representatives of the America's Cup Event Authority (ACEA), Ariel Ungerleider, Community Outreach Manager and Ron Coverson, Executive Director of Human Resources.

Coverson, referred to the meeting as a "tremendous opportunity," for the local community to benefit from the high profile event, which is set to bring in \$1 billion dollars worth of commerce to San Francisco in preparation for the event and during the festivities over the next 2 years.

Coverson who is responsible for drafting the work force development plan is looking forward to building the America's Cup organization plan in a way that offer opportunity for entrepreneurs and reflects the diverse culture of the city. "We are very excited about the potential and what we can do with a real economic stimulus to the city.

"We want to put together a comprehensive vision with tangible goals and a framework to form relationships with small businesses and or larger transportation and hospitality industry companies to create portals of opportunity."

Ungerleider explained bringing the Cup to the bay area will enable observers to view the race from various areas of the city, parks, private properties, as the bay is "a natural amphitheater." She also noted that America's Cup is the world's third largest sporting event.

Ungerleider discussed the ACEA's creation of eleven implementation plans, such as transportation, trafficking, marketing, advertising, public safety, zero waster, youth involvement, park and operations plan, in addition to the work force development plan.

While working with Regina Dick-Endrizzi of the San Francisco County's Small Business Division, the event authority will ensure local job creation through direct and indirect interaction with the America's Cup.

"By creating the vision with the city's vision, the labor laws and the spirit of trying to create an incredible opportunity for local businesses this will be a win-win for everyone," said Coverson.

LeBlanc also pointed out the many needs that the event will create, such as docents and a shuttle service from various areas of the city, particularly the Third Street Corridor.

"Having a Masters in Tourism Administration, I see the opportunity to engage and educate the community in hopes that the American Cup Events Team and Authority know the importance of utilizing the diverse African American professional services City wide. The small business community and residents are not begging for contracts and jobs we are qualified and will not be left out of the process. Being a native San Franciscan from Bayview Hunters Point, I expect this event to leave an economic development footprint that will attract events like this for years to come."

Matt Thomas, President of World Connect Inc., is an expert on tourism, having consulted internationally and served on the San Francisco Convention and Tourism Board.

"The lack of African American's working in San Francisco's hotels has become so blatant that Local 2, the Union that represents hotel workers in San Francisco has issued an MOU to hotels insisting that they aggressively outreach to the African American community. Thomas also discussed the Chamber's creation of Visit San Francisco in order to raise awareness of the contribution that travel and tourism can and should make to the black community in addition to attracting the annual \$40 billion African American meeting and convention market to San Francisco.

According to Thomas, San Francisco is voted the #1 destination spot by Conde Nast Traveler Magazine for nearly 20 years and that traveler spending exceeds \$7 billion annually for the area. visitors spend \$21 million dollars a day and that tourism contributes to nearly \$2 billion of local payroll. "An aggressive outreach campaign needs to be implemented by the City of San

Francisco, since African Americans make up less than 2% of this work force and visitors' dollars generate over \$473 million in taxes."

Visit San Francisco is the SFAACC answer to helping African Americans to become gainfully employed in San Francisco hotels, restaurants and all segments of the tourism industry.

"San Francisco worked very hard to secure the 34th America's Cup finals in 2013 and this historic event is an excellent opportunity to engage African Americans in the tourism industry opportunities," said Thomas. "The SFAACC is committed to the inclusion of African Americans with the America's Cup and the entire tourism industry in the city of San Francisco and these meetings will assist us in reaching our goals," said, Fred Jordan, SFAACC President. For more information contact visit our website at www.sfaacc.org and or call the office at 415-749-6400.