

The Post News Online » Blog Archive » SF Black Business Leaders Meet Mayor Lee

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From left to right: Back row: Harlan L. Kelly, Jr. Assistant General Manager, Infrastructure, SFPUC, Mathew Ajiake, President, Sonika Corporation, Myles Stevens, AIA, Stevens & Associates, James McGhee, President, JLM Management Group, Robert Sims, President, Park SFO, Fred Jordan, Principal, Fac.E. Jordan Associates, City Purchaser, Naomi Kelly; Center row: San Francisco Mayor Edwin Lee, Dr. Toye' Moses, Executive Director, San Francisco South East Community Facility Commission, Annette Shelton, President, Hand to Hand Marketing; Front row: Carla Thomas - Post Journalist / Partner, Hannah's on the Bay, Dr. Caesar Churchwell, Principal, Churchwell & Co., Gregory Johnson, General Manager, Marcus

Bookstore-SF, Brigitte LeBlanc, President, LeBlanc and Associates.

By Carla Thomas

In an effort to create business opportunities for black businesses and halt the outmigration of blacks in San Francisco, The San Francisco African American Chamber of Commerce recently met with San Francisco Mayor Edwin Lee to address the plight of African American businesses during August-Black Business Month.

Fred Jordan, Chamber President and Principal of F.E. Jordan Associates, said that there is a need for the Mayor and the city officials to have more than just an understanding of the problem of the outmigration of blacks from the city. Jordan appealed to Mayor Lee to consider his wealth of background of the issue stemming from his tenure a Human Rights Commissioner. He said that because of a lack of contracts and jobs the Black San Francisco population has dwindled from 18% to less than 6% today.

"If you don't have contracts, you don't have jobs and you can't stay in the city. We believe this is one of the most prejudiced cities in the United States. We are shut out everywhere and have less than 1% of the economic benefits everywhere. We have got to stop this bleeding and turn this outmigration around."

While proposing out-of-the-box solutions, Jordan also proposed the creation of a pre-qualified list for all departments to utilize. His plan would require a company that receives a contract to go to the bottom of the list to allow other companies to rotate for upcoming opportunities. He said this approach is "practiced in 32 states."

In 2009, Jordan created the UDBE (Under Utilized Disadvantaged Business Enterprise) program with the Director of Caltrans. The UDBE is a race conscious goal setting program to integrate African Americans, Native Americans and S. Pacific Islanders into the Agency's annual \$4 billion budget. "Over time many of these programs get watered down and include everyone and once again, African American businesses get over looked," he said. But if the mayor is aggressive, I think we can turn things around in this city."

Mayor Lee told the group that he would to issue a directive to his department heads to focus on African American businesses that were in compliance with the city requirements. Lee said that he would encourage his contracting officers to make sure that African Americans had a fair opportunity be inclusive on city contracts and business opportunities and still remain consistent with all applicable laws. "I will issue a bulletin declaring it in honor of Black Business Month and urging them to please take a look at all the San Francisco certified and pre-approved vendors, highlighting all the African American businesses ready and willing to do business in every category and hold all

departments accountable. I will ask them to pay special attention to all the under-utilized businesses and require all the contracting offices in the city to pay attention right now,” said Mayor Lee.

The meeting was attended by chamber board members, Brigette LeBlanc of LeBlanc and Associates, Dr. Caesar Churchwell, DDS, Principal, Churchwell & Co., Myles Stevens, AIA, Stevens & Associates, James McGhee, JLM Management, Gregory Johnson, General Manager of SF Marcus Bookstore, Mathew Ajiake, President of Sonika Corporation, Robert Simms, Esq., President, Park SFO Dr. Toye’ Moses, Executive Director, San Francisco South East Community Facility Commission.

Harlan Kelly, Jr., SFPUC, Assistant General Manager, Infrastructure, and City Purchaser Naomi Kelly also attended in support of the chamber.

Entrepreneur Dr. Annette Shelton of Hand-to-Hand Marketing also asked the Mayor include the category of contracts in the range of \$25,000 or less.

“I found this to be a very productive meeting,” said LeBlanc. “This meeting was a long time coming, but we are building momentum,” said Dr. Churchwell.

The San Francisco African American Chamber of Commerce in cooperation with Merrill Lynch recently produced the Small Business Survival Guide. For copies, visit Marcus Bookstores or www.sfaacc.org.