

Houston Small Business Advisory Committee

Small Business and Local Government Assistance Section

Texas Commission on Environmental Quality

Wednesday, December 16, 2009, 10:00 AM – 12:00 PM

Houston-Galveston Area Council (HGAC) bldg, Conference Room C, 3555 Timmons Ln, Houston, Tx

www.sblga.info

Minutes

Priorities

- Provide input on TCEQ rules and policies that impact small businesses.
- Strengthen partnerships with local elected officials.

Welcome and Introductions

The meeting was called to order at 10:15 AM by Co-Chair Jack Holmes. Each of the 22 participants introduced themselves and the business/organization they represented.

Action Items

- Clarence Gray briefly discussed minutes from the September 16, 2009 meeting and stated that no action items were outstanding
- Send to the SBAC a link to the MS4 storm water survey
- Send the SBAC a link to the EPA listsev
- Contact and set up a presentation by the Houston Regional Monitoring (HRM) group at a future SBAC meeting

Special Guest – Donna Phillips, Director, TCEQ Coastal Area

Donna Phillips announced the changes in the Commissioners' leadership with the appointment of Carlos Rubenstein as a new commissioner along with Chairman Bryan Shaw and Commissioner Buddy Garcia. She also noted the creation of the Office of Water and changes to fees charged by this program. Other issues of relevance to the Houston Region are the Sunset Review Process, droughts that affect water right holders, and air permits especially "flexible" permits. She also stated that there were no specific initiatives affecting small businesses but encouraged members to be actively engaged during the Sunset Review process on any issue they wish to address.

Local Program Update

Local program partners provided brief comments regarding their current and future initiatives.

City of Pasadena - Sarah Metzger

Sarah Metzger stated that the City of Pasadena will continue its process of conducting drive-by investigations documenting deficiencies at businesses and sending letters to the businesses as a means of gaining environmental compliance.

City of Houston's Public Health and Engineering and Storm Water Management - Guy Williams and Dorene Hancock

The City is working with the Clean Rivers Program to monitor about 135 sites for pollution problems. Storm water inspections of businesses/industries that are required to gain coverage under the Multi-Sector General Permit will continue with no anticipated changes.

Harris County Public Health Environmental Services (HCPHES) - Marilyn Christian

HCPHES is in the process of hiring a new Director. There are newly enforceable salvage yard rules that will result in business having to obtain a permit and pay a \$500 fee effectively January 1, 2010.

Austin/Central Update – *Brian Christian, Director, Small Business Environmental Assistance Division*

Brian Christian expressed his appreciation for the work of the Houston SBAC and its leaders J. Kelly Mowry and Jack Holmes. He updated the committee on the Sunset Review and ensured members that all SBACs will be apprised of all relevant issues as they are developed. The review process will culminate in a Sunset Bill considered during the 2011 session of the Texas Legislature. Compliance History may be one issue that is examined. SBEA is also monitoring a number of federal issues. These include possible changes to the ozone standard (from 75 ppb to a lower standard). Consequences could include redesignation of areas around the State and a closer look at area sources for reductions. Another issue being monitored is federal regulation of so-called greenhouse gases. The EPA has issued federal rules for reporting, and an endangerment finding that could lead to permitting and other regulations under the Federal Clean Air Act (FCAA). The State opposes the regulations of greenhouse gases under the FCAA. Even though EPA has stated that it is looking for ways to reduce adverse impacts on small businesses from its threshold settings, effects are not yet known. Additionally, EPA will be proposing a storm water survey that results from a study that concluded current storm water regulations are ineffective. Christian also mentioned that the Commissioners' work session will go on the road in January 2010. The session will be held on January 22, 2010 in Galveston, Texas (check the website for specific location). Also, he recommended that members view a presentation by the TCEQ's Chief Engineer (Susana Hildebrand) on air quality statewide.

Metzger mentioned an excellent air emissions presentation she attended recently which showed significant reduction in air pollution in the Houston area.

The group began to make comment about the wonderful new changes to our website and how much easier it is to find items, issues, policies, resources, and rules. Co-Chair Holmes mentioned an additional resource for small business in the form of a listserv. Body Text

Closing Comments

Meeting ended with a Christmas celebration of food and fellowship

Next Meeting

Wednesday, March 10, 2010, 10:00 AM – 12:00 PM

Houston-Galveston Area Council (HGAC) bldg, Conference Room C, 3555 Timmons Ln, Houston, Tx