

Houston Small Business Advisory Committee Minutes

June 18, 2008

Fiscal Year 2008 Priorities

Provide input on TCEQ rules and policies to represent small businesses and strengthen partnerships with local elected officials.

Welcome and Introductions

Co-chair, Jack Holmes, welcomed members and guest and presided over the meeting. The meeting was called to order at 10:15 AM. Each of the participant introduced themselves and business/organization they represented.

Review Actions Items from March 19, 2008 Meeting

Action items

1. Email Commissioner work session date/times to members (completed);
2. Determine the point/percentage value of enhancement programs (EMS, ISO 14000) Discussed issue in relation to “confidentiality” of SBEA activities i.e. site visits which would be breached if offered as an enhancement in enforcement case(s). Handout provided (explain penalty enhancement process);
3. Produce an article for the Small Business Advocate explaining the programs and benefits offered by the Small Business Development Centers (SBDC)
Article written and is under review by SBDC staff. Article planned for October-December issue of the Advocate newsletter.

Special Guest- State Representative Gary Elkins

Representative Elkins spoke about several tax issues focusing on how property taxes are computed based on valuation. He cited several negative effects when property valuation is the major factor. His view of small businesses was very positive as the State’s economy continues to growth. Tax reform in general will be an issue when legislators meet again in January 2009. No mention of any other “hot issues” for the upcoming legislative session.

Subcommittee Report

Environmental Crimes Legislation, Jack Holmes,

Report on discussion and outcome from June 6, 2008 sub-committee meeting. Re: re-introducing this issue in next legislative session (January 2009). No actions or recommendations presented.

Subcommittee will continue to review this issue and provide periodic update to the SBAC.

Local Program Update

The City of Pasadena (Ms Luz Locke) provided an update to the group. Currently, the City has identified a number of auto salvage businesses which are targeted for compliance review. The businesses will receive letters, and on-site visits. A second major outreach project is aimed at facilities with grease traps i.e. restaurants to insure these devices are being operated properly. Harris County Public Health and Environmental Services (HCPHES) (Marilyn Christian) stated that the county is watching closely the operations of metal recyclers. Regulations within the City of Houston requiring strict accountability for items received is forcing this type business to now

operate in the County. The Assistant TCEQ Regional Director (Marsha Hill) stated that the Region does not have any targeted initiatives at this time. She mentioned the Petroleum Storage Tank (PST) Program is looking harder at the construction/installation side of UST's to insure future integrity.

Austin Update:

Joy Schultz, Team Leader, SBLGA. Ms Schultz provided a brief overview of current and planned activities of the Small Business and Local Government Assistance staff including C2 visits and number of businesses receiving certificates. She announced the selection of the new Executive Director (Mark Vickery), Deputy Executive Director (Carlos Rubinstein), and Assistant Deputy Executive Director (Zak Covar). She stated that discussions continue on the Houston-Galveston State Implementation Plan (SIP) revisions. The Governor's office is in the process of selecting a new appointment to the Compliance Advisory Panel (CAP). There is a list of finalist and selection is expected very soon.

Recap Action Items and Closing Remarks:

Given by Co-Chair, The Houston SBAC will continue to track compliance history and enforcement related rules.

See www.sblga.info to find a full list of compliance tools or <http://www.tceq.state.tx.us/assistance/sblga/sbac.html> for membership lists, meeting dates and directions.

Next SBAC Meeting: December 17, 2008