

METROPOLITAN

MBE's challenge Urban League record

by Lanita Duke

GRASSROOT NEWS, N.W.—A conflict has emerged between the Urban League of Portland and some minority contractors over minority business participation in the Urban Plaza now under construction.

Contractor James Berry, director of the N.E. Business Center, said he was shocked and surprised that the Urban League did not award the contract to a Black general contractor. Don Silvey of Silco Construction is the general or prime contractor for the project.

"When a Black general contractor gets a job, then Black people will get jobs. A majority contractor will do business as usual."

Berry and four other contractors met with Urban League's director, Freddie Petett, two weeks ago to express their dissatisfaction with the way the contract was handled. "The general contract was not bidden out. Silco was just chosen."

But Carol J. Lentz, vice-president

of Finance and Administration for the League, said that because of time and budget constraints, the job was not advertised.

"It was competitive but it was just not advertised. We had to have a general contractor prior to submitting our proposal to obtain the funds to build."

Located on the corner of N. Williams Avenue and Russell Street, the Urban Plaza will be a one-stop resource center for the community and centralize the Urban League's branch offices under one roof.

The building's owner, H. Philip Eder, received \$800,000 through the Portland Development Commission's Investor Rehabilitation Loan program and a Federal Housing and Urban Development Section 312 rehabilitation loan.

Warren Wong of PDC and Lentz both rebuffed the notion of low-minority participation.

"Silco Construction went out of their way to ensure maximum minority and women participation. The City's guideline is 10 percent.

The project has 21 percent and that is substantial on any project," Wong said.

He also said a careful review of the bidding process will unravel the steps the League and PDC took to ensure MBE and WBE participation.

Lentz said the League was considering Silco Construction and MRH Enterprises, a MBE firm, as the general contractor. "We felt Silco could do the job quicker and within our budget." She also added that new hires have been Blacks and Hispanics.

"We sent out letters to every minority contractor on the list. We had a pre-bid meeting with MBE's and WBE's to explain the process and our budget. I don't know how much more we could have done."

Lentz said they received many sub-bids from MBE's who surpassed their budget level. "We went back and tried to negotiate a new price."

Wong said many MBE's cancelled one another out by bidding on the same types of jobs. "We had 10 ap-

plying to do the same type of work." He said minorities were over represented in the labor-intensive field. "Painting, masonry, janitorial, trucking and landscaping."

Wong and Lentz said they expected MBE/WBE participation to reach 40 percent when the architect (Unthank Seder Poticha) sub-contracts and new hires are counted.

Berry said he was not aware of the pre-bid meeting and had problems with minority contractors being bid down.

Bruce Broussard, publisher of *American Contractor*, a monthly newspaper for WBE's and MBE's, said he was disappointed with these percentages.

"It could have been a phoenix for Oregon. There were enough Blacks to have done that whole project. It bothers me that we have an organization that champions Black causes talking about quotas. With all those Blacks in that area hurting for jobs, you can't help but be disappointed."



Tyrone Hines, coordinator for the North/Northeast Portland Cooperative Literacy Project, works with a tutor in explaining background material to be used in the individualized instruction.

Volunteer teachers sought

Tyrone Hines is the new coordinator for the North/Northeast Portland Cooperative Literacy Project located at the Portland Community College Cascade Campus.

A waiting list of adults who want to learn how to read faces Hines as he begins the program planning for the new North/Northeast Portland Cooperative Literacy Project (N/NEPCLP). He will be directed by a board consisting of PCC, B. Dalton Books, Ockley Green Community School, Oregon Department of Education, Oregon State University and Oregon Literacy, Inc.

"Our purpose is to meet the needs of nonreading adults in the area, which includes the functionally illiterate," Hines explained. "Many have already had a certain amount of failure in traditional school settings, so it is important to design learning specifically for their needs."

Classes will basically use individual tutors with the different

A resident of Northeast Portland himself, Hines originally came from Schenectady, New York but moved to the Portland area to attend the University of Portland in 1975. He has been a teacher in the Portland Public Schools and a part-time instructor for PCC.

Hines actively serves in a number of community organizations himself, including board seats on the Open Meadow Learning Center, Eliot Energy House and the Northeast Community Energy Project.

"My first short range goal will be to find volunteers who have at least a high school education or GED and provide training sessions for them," Hines explained. By winter of 1985, he plans to have 100 new tutors added to the project.

Contact Hines at the Cascade Campus or Dorothy Brehm at the PCC Sylvania Campus for more details about the tutor workshop.

Minority apprenticeships open

Five \$1,500 grants for student research apprentice positions at the Oregon Health Sciences University are available this summer for minority students currently enrolled in high school.

The grants are for positions with the university's School of Medicine and School of Dentistry and are funded by the federal Department of Health and Human Services. The student research apprentice positions are intended to provide the students with meaningful experience in various aspects of health-related research with the expectation that they may decide to pursue a career in related areas.

To apply, students need to send an up-to-date high school transcript and a letter describing their interest in exploring biomedical research as

a career. Students applying should have had biology or chemistry related classes in order to benefit from the program. All minority high school students are eligible for this program including graduating seniors.

Applications should be mailed by April 15 to Dr. J. Peter Bentley, professor of biochemistry, School of Medicine, Oregon Health Sciences University, 3181 S.W. Sam Jackson Park Road, Portland Oregon 97201.

For more information about the summer minority high school student research apprentice program at OHSU, contact Dr. Bentley at 225-8414 or Dr. C.K. Claycomb, professor of biochemistry, School of Dentistry, at 225-8774, at 225-8774.

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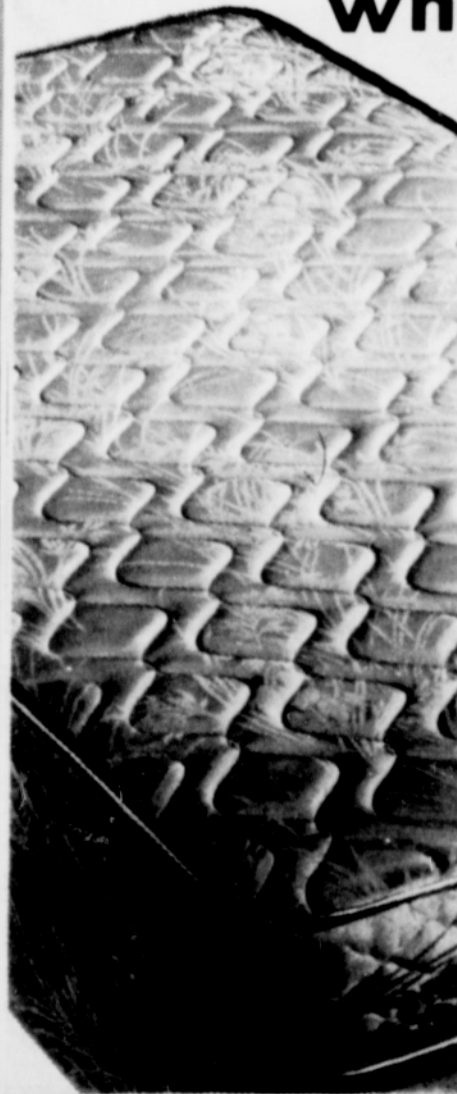
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