

Portland Public Schools Equity in Public Purchasing and Contracting: Changing the History

By Bruce Poinsette
Of *The Skanner News*

Lee Fleming has been with Portland Public Schools (PPS) since May 2011. Prior to that, he spent three years as an analyst for the State Procurement Office. During his time there he dealt with MWESB concerns as part of a mandate from the Governor's office. One aspect of that was reporting to the Governor's advocate on MWESB information. Fleming says being involved in the statutes and rules pertaining to public purchasing policy prepared him for what he's doing today.

PPS introduced its Equity in Public Purchasing and Contracting Policy in July. Fleming says the district-wide vision is to be more purposeful about inclusion.

He says PPS wants to ensure it's reaching out to local communities. "Minority-owned firms,



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women-owned firms, emerging small businesses. Everyone has equal access, equal opportunity to compete for work and opportunities in the district," Fleming says.

Fleming says the goal is to improve the district's history, which he says in the past has admittedly been poor in terms of deal-

ing with minority and small business firms; in fact the new purchasing policy is part of the district's rollout of a larger Racial Equity in Education policy.

At this time, Fleming says it's still in "extreme draft mode" so specific target percentages and goals for minority business inclusion are to be determined. However, when awarding contracts, he says the district provides solicitation documents so there is no guesswork involved for inquiring firms.

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"For me, to be part of this work is very rewarding," he says. "I'm exposed to a lot of information that's going to benefit the district as a whole but more importantly our students, who are our future."

Free Workshop to Help Small Businesses Understand, Achieve Bond Requirements, Oct. 4

Small businesses often face the daunting task of being "bondable." When it comes to working on government contracts in the transportation industry, being bonded is often a requirement. Now, a free six-week workshop will help small business owners in Oregon and southwest Washington find out just what it takes to become bonded and how to expand their existing bonding capacity. The free, 3-hour evening courses begin Oct. 4 at the Oregon Association of Minority Entrepreneurs Center, 4134 N. Vancouver Ave. in Portland.

The Oregon Department of Transportation requested the workshop after learning of its successful pilot in Chicago, Dallas and Atlanta in 2010. The Bonding Education Program (BEP), a partnership between the U.S. Department of Transportation/Office of Small and Disadvantaged Business Utilization, the Surety & Fidelity Association of America, and a host of local stakeholders, consists of educational workshops and bond readiness sessions.

The educational component

offers an introductory session and five comprehensive workshops, each providing information related to improving a small contractor's operations – with a goal of making it easier to be bonded or to increase bonding capacity. A final workshop focuses on networking and next steps.

The bond readiness component consists of one-on-one interactions with surety bond producers, underwriters and other professionals who work with the contractors on a case-by-case basis in assembling the materials necessary for a complete bond application and in addressing any omissions and/or deficiencies that might deter the successful underwriting of a bond.

The classes qualify for Construction Contractors Board license continuing education for Commercial and Residential contractors under the "elective" category. See the Construction Contractors Board Education page for additional information.

For questions, contact Lily Keeffe, U.S. DOT/Northwest Small Business Transportation Resource Center, 425-248-4222 or lkeefe@snoedc.org.

Leslie, daughter of Dianne,
Anheuser-Busch employee

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Now, more than ever
It's hard to believe my baby is so grown up. Seems like yesterday we were baking cookies and talking the afternoon away. We would talk about everything — school, boys, peer pressure, underage drinking. She hung on every word I said. Now she's a young woman with a mind of her own. But one thing hasn't changed — she still wants to know what I think. It's nice to know my opinion matters... now, more than ever.



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Mentor-Protégé Program participants: Vijay Doodhar, 3D Infusion; Alando Simpson, City of Roses Disposal and Recycling Inc.; Tayna Wylder, Star Construction Services, LLC.

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