

KC Black Chamber of Commerce concerned about lack of diversity in KCI proposal

By: Cynthia Newsome

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KANSAS CITY, Mo. — The Kansas City Black Chamber of Commerce plans an open forum Wednesday on the KCI proposal and minority businesses.

The focus of the meeting Wednesday will be on how the proposed KCI project will impact minority businesses. The forum is free and anyone can come. It will be held Wednesday at 6 p.m. at the Bruce R. Watkins Cultural and Heritage Center.

Kelvin Perkins, President of the Black Chamber of Commerce of Greater Kansas City, said he supports the plan to convert KCI into a single-terminal, more modern airport. However, Perry is concerned that the developer, Edgemoor, is not promising to hire enough minorities and minority-owned businesses.

“We have always supported modernization project itself. Do not support this very weak minority participation plan that has been put forth by Edgemoor,” said Perry.

The Kansas City Black Chamber of Commerce wants minority businesses to be guaranteed 33 percent of construction jobs and 33 percent of architecture and engineering jobs.

Edgemoor Minority business hiring goal is 20 percent minority for construction and 17 percent minority for architecture and engineering jobs.

Edgemoor’s pledge is lower than the KC Black Chamber would like — but higher than Kansas City’s requirement from City Hall of 13 percent minority hiring for construction jobs and 12 percent minority hiring for architecture and engineering jobs.

Edgemoor executives explained that their track-record with Clark Construction for hiring minority-owned businesses should ease any concerns.

“Clark (Construction) built The National Museum for African-American Culture and History. Our goal was 40 percent and we achieved 60 percent minority hiring. At LAX we built a central utility plant where the goal was 20 percent and we achieved 26 percent. We have a great track record of setting goals with our clients and then exceeding them,” said Geoffrey Stricker, Managing Director, Edgemoor.

Edgemoor is also bringing its free minority training and mentoring programs to Kansas City. Minorities who want to enter the construction industry for the first time will get training. Existing minority businesses who want to excel in the construction industry will also get valuable training on how to manage and grow their businesses.