



Press Release

For immediate release
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MWRD supports LGBT and disabled small business policy

After nearly a year of comprehensive research, analysis and inclusive discussion among various stakeholders, the Metropolitan Water Reclamation District of Greater Chicago (MWRD) Board of Commissioners approved two new policies that will promote opportunities for small business enterprises owned and operated by both members of the LGBT community and persons with disabilities.

Under these policies, LGBT business enterprises (LGBTBE) and business enterprises owned and

operated by persons with disabilities (BEPD) will have the opportunity to attend MWRD vendor fairs, events, meetings and other activities that foster business opportunities.

“Today’s action by the MWRD Board of Commissioners marks a continuation of MWRD policies toward inclusion and opportunity,” said MWRD Commissioner Marcelino Garcia. “We are not only establishing new LGBTBE and BEPD policies, but we’re also setting up the framework for data collection to en-



New policy developed by the MWRD Board of Commissioners will allow new contract opportunities for LGBT and disabled small business owners working to help the MWRD protect the water environment.

MWRD supports LGBT and disabled small business policy *(continued)*

sure we can build a solid policy that creates future generations of opportunity for small business owners looking to join us in protecting our water environment.”

For decades, the MWRD has expanded and amended business opportunities for small and disadvantaged business owners. The LGBTBE and BEPD policies are now included in established MWRD policy that assists small business enterprises that are owned and operated by minorities, women, and veterans. The policy outlines that the MWRD will collect outreach and data to learn more about LGBTBEs and BEPDs in the MWRD’s service area, which covers 882 square miles of Cook County and serves 10 million people daily, including 5.25 million residents. The MWRD will also explore an appropriate certification process for LGBTBE and BEPD vendors.

“As a public agency, the Metropolitan Water Reclamation District has an obligation to ensure equity and fairness in all of its operations, including procurement,” said MWRD Commissioner Debra Shore. “This policy will improve outreach to the LGBT business community, and it will give us the information we need to ensure that all businesses have a chance to compete on a level playing field.”

In February, the MWRD Board of Commissioners and staff held a study session to invite the business community and members of the public to voice their input into crafting inclusive policy.

“The LGBT Chamber of Commerce of Illinois is incredibly proud of the leadership shown by President Kari Steele and the Metropolitan Water Reclamation District,” said Jerome’ Holston, director of the LGBT Chamber of Commerce of Illinois, who attended the MWRD study session in February. “With this simple yet significant move, the MWRD has expanded access to business opportunities to both LGBTQ+ and disabled owned businesses, ensuring that even more marginalized communities have chances to compete for MWRD spending.”

“We are proud to advance these new inclusive policies that give small business owners new opportunity in a difficult economic climate,” said President Kari K. Steele. “The MWRD has a long history of engaging small business owners to participate and share in our work to maintain a clean water environment.”

“The passing of this policy is historical not just in nature but in spiritual understanding as well. The understanding not just that as a community we have been ignored, ostracized and abused at so many levels we had become accustomed to being on the offense as soon as we walk into the room, even harder inside the board room,” said Roxanna Daniel, President and CEO, Taj Development Company, Inc.

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Recovering Resources, Transforming Water

Established in 1889, the MWRD (www.mwrld.org) is an award winning, special purpose government agency responsible for wastewater treatment and stormwater management in Cook County, Illinois.