

Goals set for diversity in hiring for Worcester ballpark project

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WORCESTER — In advance of the start of work on the ballpark project next year, the Worcester Redevelopment Authority board has approved a policy that commits every contractor to workforce diversity and good-faith efforts to meet hiring goals it has set.

The goals include having 25 percent of work hours going to Worcester residents, 15.3 percent to people of color and indigenous people, and 6.9 percent to women.

The policy would apply to every contractor at every tier of the project.

Michael E. Traynor, the WRA's chief executive officer, said he hopes to include the policy language as part of the request for qualifications that will soon be issued for the hiring of a construction manager at-risk for the ballpark project.

WRA board member David Minasian, who is business manager for Local 336, New England Regional Council of Carpenters, pushed for the workforce diversity policy.

He said while the city already has a responsible contractor policy that lays out workforce diversity goals for public construction projects, he did not feel it is in line with best practices used by various state agencies.

The city's policy sets a combined hiring goal of 20 percent for people of color, women and people from low-income communities.

But lumping those groups together, Mr. Minasian said, makes it more difficult for women to get hired for public projects in Worcester. He said women will

stand a much better chance by having a separate goal set for women.

State agencies such as the University of Massachusetts Building Authority and state Division of Capital Asset Management and Maintenance have separate workforce hiring goals that are the same as what will be in the WRA's policy. The state agencies use hiring percentages based on a study of disparities that DCAMM did several years ago.

Mr. Traynor said the city is undertaking its own disparity study, and, depending on the results, the workforce goals in the WRA policy could be revisited.

The ballpark, to be known as Polar Park, will be the home of the Worcester Red Sox, the top minor league team of the Boston Red Sox, starting in the 2021 season. The ballpark is part of an overall \$240 million redevelopment of the Canal District/Kelley Square area.

While the estimated construction cost of the ballpark itself has been pegged at \$86 million to \$90 million, the overall cost of the project has been estimated at \$100.8 million. That includes off-site land acquisition and other improvement costs that are related to the ballpark project.

Construction of the ballpark is scheduled to begin in July and be completed in March 2021.

The city's owner project manager, Skanska USA Building Inc., and architect D'Agostino Izzo Quirk Architects have already been hired for the minor league ballpark project. The next step involves the hiring of a construction manager at-risk, which is expected to occur early next year.