

State representative files legislation for minority contractors

Collins continues the work he started with Forry towards equity in devel. projects

Karen Morales | 4/25/2018, 1 p.m. | Bay State Banner

State Rep. Nick Collins has filed an amendment to the House of Representatives Committee on Ways and Means budget proposal that would require all state agencies to ensure participation of minority and women-owned businesses in all phases of development projects involving state property.

The measure is modeled after Massachusetts Port Authority's bidding process for the \$550 million Omni Hotel project on the South Boston waterfront, with minority and women-owned enterprises comprising 30 percent of the design and construction teams. The hotel's construction is currently underway and is expected to be completed in 2021.

Exemplary model

The project's high rate of inclusion was the result of legislation filed in 2014 by Collins and former state Sen. Linda Dorcea Forry that focused on the hotel project's minority participation and access by businesses owned by people of color and women in management, oversight, design and construction.

"This is a great opportunity to build on the successful demonstration of this model and incorporate it into all buildings on state-owned land," said Collins in a press statement on his newly proposed amendment. "This legislation is a statement that Massachusetts is serious about diversity and inclusion from construction to ownership, and I think it will strengthen the bidding process."

Rep. Russell Holmes told the Banner that he, along with the rest of the Black and Latino Caucus, supports Collins' amendment, which is co-sponsored by Rep. Evandro Carvalho and Rep. Andres Vargas.

"We've been advocating for inclusive development for all state projects, not just Massport ones," said Holmes. "We want folks who apply for any new development to have the equity piece, not just with workers but people who own the project, as well."

According to Holmes, under the new language, the criteria for winning a development project bid would be one-third weighted by equity inclusion, one-third by performance ability and one-third by finances.

“It’s a heavy lift for all projects but I say, “Why not?”” regardless of what those projects are — because they should be reflective of the Commonwealth.”

The amendment, titled “Amendment #1309 to H4400 Diverse and Inclusive Marketing Plans,” states, “Each state authority shall establish an affirmative marketing program to ensure the fair participation of minority-owned and women-owned businesses for capital facility projects and the disposition of real property,” and “The affirmative marketing program shall establish participation goals.”

According to the measure, minority-owned business refers to enterprises that are at least 51 percent owned by persons with a permanent residence in the United States who are American Indian, black, African American, Cape Verdean, western hemisphere Hispanic, Aleut, Eskimo or Asian.