



LATINX HERITAGE MONTH BUSINESS ROUNDTABLE

September 27, 2022

PROGRAM

WELCOMING REMARKS

President Kari K. Steele
Chairman of Finance Marcelino Garcia
Commissioner Eira Corral Sepúlveda

PRESENTATIONS

How to do Business with the MWRD
Darlene LoCascio, *Director of Procurement & Materials Management*

Diversity in Consulting and Construction Contracts
Dr. Regina Berry, *Diversity Administrator*

Current and Upcoming Contracting Opportunities
Dr. Catherine O'Connor, *Director of Engineering*

PANELISTS

Chairman of Finance Marcelino Garcia
Commissioner Eira Corral Sepúlveda
Sandi Llano, *President, Sandi Llano & Associates and Vice President of Hispanic American Construction Industry Association Board*
Julian Rueda, P.E., *President, Geo Services, Inc.*
Roberto R. Velazquez, *President, Semper Fi Land, Inc.*
Brenda Wheeler, *President, Jason Mechanical*



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COMMISSIONER BIOGRAPHIES



President Kari K. Steele was elected in November, 2012 to her first term as a Commissioner at the Metropolitan Water Reclamation District of Greater Chicago (MWRD) and re-elected in 2018 for a second term. In January 2019 she was elected President of the Board of Commissioners.

President Steele is a chemist, an environmentalist and a community leader. She has more than 11 years of experience working as a chemist. She worked at both the Jardine Water Purification Plant as a water chemist and at the MWRD as a water sampler and lab technician. President Steele has a Pre-med degree in Chemistry from Xavier University of Louisiana.



Chairman of Finance Marcelino Garcia joined the Board in December 2018 and was elected Finance Chair in February, 2021. Commissioner Garcia also served as Co-Chair of the Steering Committee that led MWRD to pass its newest Strategic Plan, passed in June, 2021. An attorney by training, he has spent years helping people address their legal difficulties through his public interest law work. He also works arduously to bring resources to communities to ensure their economic and health development. At MWRD, his work has focused on ensuring everyone has an opportunity to help the MWRD protect the region's water resources.

Marcelino earned his J.D. from Northwestern University and his Bachelor's Degree from Dartmouth College.



Commissioner Eira L. Corral Sepúlveda is the first Latina elected to the Metropolitan Water Reclamation District of Greater Chicago Board of Commissioners. She was inaugurated in 2020 for her first term.

Commissioner Corral Sepúlveda first held office when she was elected as the Clerk of Hanover Park and is a strong advocate for local community engagement and representation. With 12 years of experience in public service and municipal government, she has promoted civic engagement at the local, state and national levels.

BIOGRAPHIES



Regina Berry is the Diversity Administrator for the Metropolitan Water Reclamation District of Greater Chicago. She has 30 years of governmental experience in various capacities including accounting, social services, labor, and currently affirmative action and diversity.

Dr. Berry serves as an elected board member of the American Contract Compliance Association (ACCA), which is a nonprofit national organization dedicated to ensuring equitable employment and contracting practices within public and private sectors. Dr. Berry serves on the executive board of Hope for a Better Tomorrow, a non-profit organization working to eliminate poverty, reduce violence, diminish illiteracy, and challenge social inequities. Dr. Berry has received numerous awards including the President's Volunteer Service Award (President Obama), Egretha Supplier Diversity Award, HACIA Government Service Award, and the Legacy Award for Excellence in Diversity and Inclusion.



Sandi Llano, President of Sandi Llano & Associates, (SLA) has more than 42 years of experience in the field of Supplier Diversity Programs, which includes Community Outreach, D/M/W/S/VBE Certification, Contract Compliance as well as Workforce. Prior to starting her own consulting firm, Sandi served as Metra's DBE Director from 1984 thru 2010, where she wrote and implemented DBE policy for both federally and non-federally funded contracts.

Currently, SLA is working with Colette Holt & Associates on the Illinois Department of Transportation DBE Disparity Study, as well as the Illinois Tollway D/M/WBE/BEP Disparity Studies, Austin Power Partners on O'Hare 21, the Illinois Hispanic Chamber of Commerce on the Illinois Tollway's Technical Assistance Program, as well as assisting many D/M/W/S/VBEs with matters relating to certification, fulfilling a Commercially Useful Function while working on contracts, navigating the public sectors' procurement process, and relationship building.

Sandi is currently serving as Vice President of the Hispanic American Construction Industry Association (HACIA) Board of Directors.



Darlene LoCascio is the MWRD's Director of Procurement and Materials Management. She joined the MWRD in 1994 after working several years at the Chicago Park District and the City of Chicago. She supervises 63 staff members and is responsible for procuring all materials and services that are used in the MWRD's day to day operations. The Purchasing Act outlines the duties and responsibilities of the Director in the various areas of purchasing supplies and services, requesting and receiving bids, determining control and operation of the storerooms, disposing of obsolete, surplus, and unusable materials, and verifying quality and testing of materials.

She is the MWRD's first female director of Procurement and Materials Management.

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Catherine O'Connor is the Director of Engineering for the MWRD and is responsible for overseeing the planning, design and construction of projects prioritized in the Capital Improvement Program and projects in the Stormwater Management Program. The Engineering Department administers the county-wide Watershed Management Ordinance and regulates the construction and maintenance of local sewers which are tributary to the MWRD's intercepting sewers. Catherine is involved in the efforts to manage stormwater to build a resilient community and efforts to transform MWRD operations from waste treatment to resource recovery operations.

Catherine is a licensed professional engineer in the state of Illinois and has earned a Doctoral degree in Environmental Engineering from Illinois Institute of Technology.



Julian Rueda was born and raised in Colombia to a family that helped forge the industrial base of the country. These first hand experiences gave Julian valuable lessons in management, leadership, business and personal relationship development. Julian attended the University of Illinois Champaign-Urbana, where he graduated with a Masters in Geotechnical and Transportation Engineering.

While working as an independent consultant, helping both American and Latin American businesses, Julian decided to start his own company. Geo Services, Inc. was born with a goal to become the best on the merits of its engineering services and they now stand as the most prosperous Hispanic owned engineering firm in Illinois. Geo Services, Inc. provides all aspects of geotechnical, environmental, and civil engineering services with its own equipment and government-approved laboratory. They have also expanded to provide construction inspection and materials testing services results.



Robert Velazquez is a Veteran of the U.S. Marine Corps, having served as an Infantryman during Operation Iraqi Freedom. Semper Fi Land Services started out as a small neighborhood landscaping service and grew rapidly. Their mission is founded on the principles of the Marine Corps and is committed to being a growth organization. Semper Fi Land Services have expanded to include design, construction, and maintenance for residential, commercial, and public clients. A more recent expansion brings ecological restoration into the fold, with specialty work in public natural landscapes as well as commercial, municipal, and residential areas where natural landscapes exist or are part of a land plan. Robert has grown his business to 35 full-time employees and has earned six local, state and federal business certifications.

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Brenda Wheeler was hired by Jason Mechanical Corp as a part time bookkeeper in 1998 and over the next several years Brenda learned the daily operations of the mechanical industry from the office to the field. In 2010 Brenda was promoted to Vice President and in 2012 the owner offered to sell the company to Brenda. In 2014 she was appointed acting President and eventually bought the company and became President in 2017.

In 2018 Jason Mechanical Corporation was nationally certified as a Women Owned Small Business, Women's Business Enterprise and a Minority Owned Business by the Women's Business Enterprise National Council (WBENC) and the National Minority Supplier Development Council (NMSDC).