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Meriden falls short of PLA hiring goals on high school projects

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By Dan Brechlin Record-Journal staff

MERIDEN — Hiring goals set for two high school renovation projects under an agreement between the city and labor unions are not being met.

The City Council approved a project labor agreement two years ago for the renovation projects at Maloney and Platt high schools. The agreement set goals that 30 percent of the total hours on each project would be worked by city residents, 10 percent by minorities, 5 percent by women, and 5 percent by veterans. Also included in the agreement is a provision stipulating that hiring be done through union referrals, which some argued it discouraged participation by non-union contractors.

Less than 18 percent of the total hours worked on the \$107.5 million Maloney project have involved city residents. Since the Maloney project began in June 2013, officials have struggled to meet hiring goals other than the goal set for minority hiring. Minorities have worked slightly more than 15 percent of the hours on the Maloney project, exceeding the goal of 10 percent. But women have only worked 1.92 percent of the total hours and hours worked by veterans represent 1.33 percent of the total. The data, the most recent available, covers the period between last June through March 22. The 17.71 percent of hours worked by local laborers does represent an increase of about 1.1 percent over last month, although School Building Committee members have been skeptical as to whether or not the goal can be reached.

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At Platt, the numbers are slightly more encouraging with 22 percent of the hours worked by local residents, 18 percent by minorities, 1 percent by women and 3 percent by veterans. The data tracks the project from its start date in October through April. The 22 percent is a decrease of about 1 percent from last month's report.

The numbers were detailed in a recent report given to the School Building Committee. The number of hours worked by each subcategory are also listed, in addition to a breakdown of hours by each contracting firm associated with the project. According to the project labor agreement, the percentages are determined by the hours worked, not by the number of people working on the job site.

For the Maloney project, 78,254.75 hours have been logged in total, mostly by electrical, masonry, landscaping, and steel contractors. Similarly, most of the local worker hours logged have been through those trades, except for masonry.

"There are five or six trades who have no Meriden residents available," said city Purchasing Officer Wilma Petro.

David Cravanzola, project manager for Platt, said there are very few masons available to work that are from Meriden.

"Certainly one area affected was the masons," Cravanzola said, referring to the Platt project.

"In the month of April, almost 4,000 hours were logged, but because of availability, only 4 percent were local."

In total, masons accounted for more than half of the hours logged on the Platt project in April.

With the projects expected to last a total of four years, the numbers can vary.

Job fairs have been held, allowing local people to get training through unions and those hired were then expected to be among the first in line for employment on the high school projects.

Because the percentages are only goals, the trade unions are not legally bound to reach the benchmarks.

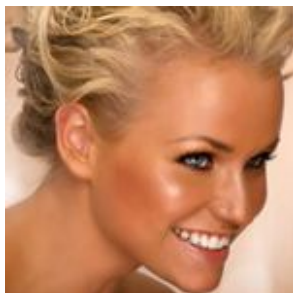
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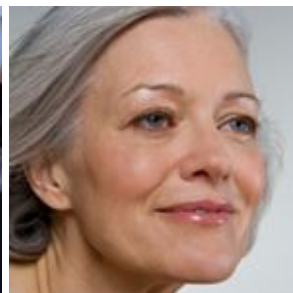
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