

Maybe amended bill is better than nothing, say some concerning enabling legislation

By DAVID R. RANKIN
Chronicle Staff Writer

They're not pleased, say black leaders of a bill that was narrowly passed by a committee of the state House of Representatives last week after two controversial amendments. But maybe even a watered-down version is better than nothing.

The bill, which, if passed, would allow the Board of Aldermen to set minority participation goals on city contracts, was amended to contain a 10-percent cap on the goals the aldermen can set and to only apply to the construction of a proposed new coliseum and downtown development projects.

State House Rep. Annie Brown Kennedy, the bill's co-sponsor, said last week that even though the bill has been altered, "This (bill) is better than nothing."

Southeast Ward Alderman Larry W. Womble said he is concerned about minority participation on city contracts and is now "waiting to see if the state House of Representatives will do the right thing" by dropping the 10-percent cap and the projects amendment. "If the amendment (limiting the bill to downtown and the coliseum) is taken off the bill, the 10-percent cap should succeed," he said.

Northeast Ward Alderman Vivian H. Burke said that the bill is not getting support from the city's private sector.

"If the private sector would support the bill, we could have a much better bill," she said.

But Burke said getting the amended bill may be better than getting no bill at all. Burke also said that the bill didn't get full support from the Board of Aldermen.

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— Vivian H. Burke

West Ward Alderman Robert S. Northington Jr. and Southwest Ward Alderman Lynne Harpe opposed the legislation when the aldermen voted on the legislation locally. South Ward Alderman Ernestine Wilson abstained. The only white on the board to side with the four black aldermen for the enabling legislation was Northwest Ward Alderman Martha S. Wood, whose deciding vote allowed the aldermen to seek the state legislation.

Burke said since the proposal didn't have

the entire board's blessings the bill "will have a hard road to follow."

East Ward Alderman Virginia K. Newell said the current low participation by minorities on city contracts is a "slap in the face" to blacks in the community, and that the proposed legislation is not getting much local support. "There should be some local voices supporting the aldermen," she said.

Alderman Virginia K. Newell said the legislation is a sensitive issue to local blacks and, if the bill fails "...it could polarize the city."

She said blacks should let the news media and city officials know that minority companies should get their fair share of city business.

Patrick Hairston, president of the local chapter of the NAACP, said the amendments were "unfair" and send a message to blacks that they are not really free.

But Hairston also said local minority-owned businesses have enough work in the black community. "They must do quality work," he said.

Hairston said blacks have to start looking out for themselves.

North Ward Alderman Larry D. Little was not available for comment by press time.

Hunt

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ly. "I saw him yesterday. He told me to hold my head up. He said he was gonna be in the front of the line during the march."

As for Judge Judson DeRamus' denial of a motion to have Hunt released into Little's custody April 30, Hunt said he had been hopeful but realistic.

"I was looking for it," he said of the denial, "but I was disappointed. They should have released me 'cause I'm innocent."

Hunt usually smiles when he talks, but now he watches himself. Smiling, he says, has sometimes been his undoing.

For instance, he once was depicted on videotape by a local television station grinning as he was escorted from court.

"I hadn't intended on smiling," Hunt said. "I didn't see the camera and one of the guards cracked a joke and I turned around and smiled."

The public sees him smiling on television while a news anchor talks about a brutal murder, Hunt said, and people think he

doesn't care.

Hunt remains isolated in what they call "The Hole" at the Forsyth County Jail. He continues to read a lot, including Huey P. Newton, Malcolm X and Maya Angelou.

He also reads letters from friends, three of which he says have recently come from his former girlfriend, Margaret Crawford, who is expected to be a key witness in the case for the prosecution.

"I still like her," he said, "but just for friends."

Hunt said he is pleased that cameras will be allowed in the courtroom. "That way," he said, "everybody can see what is happening."

And he said he wishes the police would find the man who actually killed Deborah Sykes, who was raped, sodomized and repeatedly stabbed by her assailant.

"That's what I don't understand -- why they're not looking for him," Hunt said, using his arms and hands for emphasis.

"They're steady trying to convict me for something I didn't do."

Hunt, who has not finished high school, sometimes struggles to make a point. The words don't seem to come. "I'd like to be more comfortable talking," he said. But he said he is working on that, compiling a list of new words he comes across while reading to broaden his vocabulary.

He has broadened his knowledge of the Bible, too, especially the Psalms, which he

reads and memorizes.

He recited the 23rd Psalm, which he said is his favorite:

"The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want.

"He maketh me to lie down in green pastures; he leadeth me beside the still waters.

"He restoreth my soul; he leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for his name's sake.

"Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff comfort me."

Stith

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not a "brain."

"I hate studying," he says. "Please don't paint me as a brain and a bookworm. I'm just a common, everyday person."

Stith will, however, admit to being a YUPPIE, or, in his case a BUPPIE -- the black version of a YUPPIE.

"We are all pushing for the American dream," says Stith, who is reportedly paid \$38,500 a year. "Everybody wants to be successful. I'm striving towards success."

Although Stith seems to be primed for a political career, he says politics is not for him.

"I'm a bad politician," he says. "I'm a businessman."

Stith's assistant reminds him during the interview that they need to get back to Raleigh. After the reporter pleads for just one more question, Stith agrees.

What does the governor's 21-year-old minority affairs representative do for fun?

"Wash dishes," says Stith, flashing one of his innocent, school-boy smiles. "I do not have much fun.

"I realize that I have to make sacrifices now for the future. And I feel what I'm doing is worth the sacrifice.

"But, seriously, I try to always get away and get a quiet moment to myself."

Trade Fair

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Department of Commerce.

The seminars were coordinated by Frieda Williams, economic development coordinator for the city.

Wilkins said the trade fair gave local minority business owners the opportunity to learn how the big corporations "made it big."

"Small businessmen also discussed the problems of being in business with other small businessmen," he said.

Wilkins said the trade fair was a networking mechanism that allowed people to get together,

exchange ideas and information and take what they learned back to their own businesses.

Goods and services were displayed on the convention center's lower level on Thursday afternoon. Later Thursday evening, \$2,500 in gifts and prizes were awarded to trade fair participants.

But that wasn't all. Thomas Stith III, special assistant to the governor, spoke at a Thursday luncheon, and jazz vocalist Eve Cornelius provided entertainment during the trade fair ball Friday night.

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