

**COMMITTEE ON SWEATFREE PURCHASES MEETING  
JANUARY 27, 2010, 5:00p.m., CST**

**GUEST SPEAKER, BJORN CLAESON**

**Bjorn Skorpen Claeson**, Ph.D., Executive Director of SweatFree Communities, was lead organizer of PICA's Bangor Clean Clothes Campaign, a national model for community-based anti-sweatshop activism, from 1996 to 2005. Under Mr. Claeson's leadership the Campaign was a founding member of SweatFree Communities. Mr. Claeson became SweatFree Communities' first staff person in July 2003. Mr. Claeson is the recipient of the Maine Initiatives Social Landscape Artist Award 2006 and the Dirigo Social Movement Leader Award in 2004.

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**A. Introduction.**

Bjorn Claeson thanked the committee for the invitation and indicated that this committee is the 6<sup>th</sup> of its kind, and at some point should consider networking with these other entities. These are Los Angeles, San Francisco, Portland, Maine, New Jersey.

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**B. Background and Activities of Sweatfree Purchasing Consortium**

- The consortium's mission statement is to end public purchasing from sweatshops and help its members to make sweatfree purchases more effectively than any single entity could accomplish on its own.
  - Serve as a coordinating body and resource center for cities, states and organizations that share the same goal. Its intent is to be the forum for collaboration and sharing of information.
  - The consortium still operates as a program of the Sweatfree Communities, which is a non-profit and non-governmental organization, under the direction of an interim steering committee that includes both purchasing and government officials and labor rights experts. The Consortium intends to organize as a non-profit, membership based corporation by the fall of 2010.
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**C. Membership**

- 3 states (ME, NY, PA) and 5 cities (Austin, Ashland (Oregon), Milwaukee, Portland, San Francisco) have joined, with 1 other state application in process.
    - There are many cities and regions in Canada and Europe that have established the same goals of sweatfree procurement. Most are recognizing the same challenges in enforcement as US cities and some are experimenting with collaborative forms of enforcement.
  - Benefits of joining Consortium:

Citizen states that have sweatfree policies have found that acting as a single entity does not afford them the leverage or access to information that they need to enforce their policies. By combining forces, they can combine strength and accomplish what they cannot by working alone.
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- Tangible Benefits:
    1. Access to monitoring resources and factory information at a much reduced cost .
      - In the US - working on a partnership with US Dept. of Labor (USDL) to coordinate worker outreach education and factory investigations in the US; pulled together a list of 70 factories in the US that produce for 3 consortium members; coordinate with USDL to get info out to workers in those factories and follow up on complaint investigations.
      - For overseas factories, use a cooperative contract for independent factory monitoring awarded by the State of PA through a competitive procurement .
      - Access to a number of different databases such as: 1) Better Factories Database contains monitoring reports on factories around the world and 2) US General Services Administration will soon launch a contract violations database of US factories.
      - Create a joint database based on information supplied by its members.
      - Designate certain sweatfree items in the database for purchase through contracts with piggyback provisions.
    2. Assist with prescreening of vendors and information and policy implementation.
    3. Achieve greater impact through collaboration and joint policy of enforcement.
      - City of Madison has met all requirements for membership with the Consortium and needs only to appoint a liaison to the Consortium (could be anyone engaged in Procurement, labor compliance or sweatfree committee activities.)
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#### D. Discussion

- Rosenblum inquired as to the Dept. of Labor's capacity to identify factories overseas that comply with the consortium's wage and inspection requirements for procurement purposes and also requested further detail on the newly established contract for independent monitoring.  
 Claeson indicated that in Puerto Rico, most of the garment production is for federal government vs. state and local. State of PA has newly awarded the contract for independent sweatfree monitoring services with Center for Reflection Education and Action, Inc. DBA CREA Inc. The contract can be used for monitoring in any garment producing region in the world and not just for complaint driven investigations, but also for proactive work, worker education, outreach, etc. Having learned of the identity of selected contractor, Rosenblum commented of his high regard for CREA and added that he had previously written a critically constructive piece that appeared on Center for Media and Democracy regarding the company's investigative work.
- Rhodes-Conway focused on whether the database of factories and/or items approved by the Consortium, through its monitoring activities for compliance with standards of practice, will be regarded as an approved list, to which purchasing by cities and states will be shifted.  
 Claeson replied that this list will not serve to mandate purchasing from this list, but rather, to provide it as resource. The idea would be to work proactively with factories in a way that will benefit workers and result in garments made in accordance with acceptable codes of conduct.
- Bottari – Is the Consortium advocating for cities/states to review their regulations to expand beyond garments, to include e.g. medical instruments, etc?

Claeson stated that the focus of the Consortium will be on garments, but added that some

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entities are exploring to include other products in their regulations. Examples: San Francisco is looking to cover electronics in their policy and the City of Milwaukee's ordinance applies to any goods over a certain dollar limit, but has different standards for implementation and enforcement for products not considered garments.

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**E. Recommendations for Next Steps**

1. Further define the City's fair wage requirement as stated in MGO 4.25, Sec. (4) (b) 1, Wages and Benefits. Refer to City of [Milwaukee's Non-poverty Wage Table](#) (Exhibit 1), which uses a formula that is based on US non-poverty wage of a family of three as defined by Dept. of Health and Human Services and for other countries, use wages that have comparable purchasing power for context.
  2. Further define evidentiary standards for verifying information submitted by vendors as well as clarify language to be used for awarding contracts in the face of conflicting information. Can a contract be awarded if there is evidence of labor violations and what standards are in place to prove a violation? What are considered credible sources? Example: City of Milwaukee's experience re: delays in awarding a contract due to contradictory information submitted by vendor as well as information available and uncovered during the process.
    - Bottari commented on the vagueness of the City ordinance in identifying specific measures and options (sanctions, reject award, etc.) to address violations. Rosenblum added that the language only addresses measures when contracts are already in place. When asked about the City's experience in this regard, Whitehead responded that the City's enforcement policy is complaint driven and since Purchasing has not received any complaints, no investigations have been initiated.
  3. Designate a liaison for the Committee to participate in the Consortium's activities (anyone engaged in Procurement, labor compliance or sweatfree committee activities.)
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