

## Recap of the East Town Business Partnership Business Forum

*Women Leading in the Marketplace*

January 21, 2021, 11:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.

Via Zoom Conference

([https://zoom.us/rec/share/Qbh7SX7Ruh4BPqMtfPYEjL\\_x6d-sSyL7ZjT2nnlhAg8ezDjEviwxSMKAmRFBD6j.vn0IHjHiY-AE\\_CZY](https://zoom.us/rec/share/Qbh7SX7Ruh4BPqMtfPYEjL_x6d-sSyL7ZjT2nnlhAg8ezDjEviwxSMKAmRFBD6j.vn0IHjHiY-AE_CZY), Passcode: VnA170#L)

### I. Welcome and Announcements

ETBP President Carina Aleckson welcomed everyone, introduced herself, and advised they've been meeting virtually since last spring. And to bring back some of the things she enjoys about in person forums, e.g., the opportunity to network, she explained that Executive Director Dan Collison will first place us into small breakout rooms for 5 minutes to meet and greet each other.

Upon returning to the main group, Collison said he's excited to have these four women as our panelists and in our community, and reminded everyone the business forums are monthly, traditionally on the third Thursday of each month, but they've pivoted to an hour at 11 a.m. Because he's the Executive Director of the ETBP and Director of Downtown Partnerships for the Minneapolis Downtown Council, the two organizations partner in marketing these business forums and co-host 4 of the 10 held each year.

February's will be another East Town-focused forum in which they'll be highlighting what they're calling *Safety Net Innovators Tackling Poverty and Homelessness*. The East Town area, which includes the Elliot Park and Downtown East neighborhoods, is a powerful contributor to the social uplift and safety network of Minneapolis and beyond, and they'll be taking a deep dive into strategies and policy solutions with Rinal Ray, CEO of People Serving People (<https://www.peopleservingpeople.org/resources/media/ceo-transition/> and <https://www.linkedin.com/in/rinalray/>); Deborah Moses, CEO/Executive Director of House of Charity (<https://www.houseofcharity.org/stories/moses-new-executive-director> and <https://www.linkedin.com/in/deborah-moses-dpa-mph-054b0620/>) which has merged with St. Stephen's Human Services (<http://millcitytimes.com/news/stronger-together-the-house-of-charity-and-st-stephens-human.html>); and Laurie Ohmann, Executive VP and COO of Catholic Charities of St. Paul and Minneapolis (<https://www.cctwincities.org/our-organization/our-people/leadership/> and <https://www.linkedin.com/in/laurie-ohmann-7563445/>).

Collison is working with the MDC on the March forum that will be keeping in the theme of nonprofit leadership; more information to follow. Then he announced:

- Boludo is opening a second location in the former McKinney Roe space (<http://millcitytimes.com/news/small-business-spotlight-boludo.html> and <https://www.startribune.com/boludo-a-top-destination-for-pizza-and-empanadas-is-expanding-to-east-town/600005121/>).
- The Greenery Mpls Plant Shop & Mercantile (<https://www.thegreenerympls.com/> and <https://www.facebook.com/thegreenerympls/>) has opened in the former Faribault Woolen Mill space at 1029 Washington Avenue South.
- The Normandy Kitchen & Bar (<http://www.normandykitchen.com/>) is back open with thoughtful, COVID-safe measures.
- He produced a short documentary with Cyndy Harrison and her mother Supenn called *Sawatdee Minnesota: Legacy and Innovation in Thai Food* (<https://easttownmpls.org/video-gallery/>).
- There's an SBA Business Smart Series to *Ready, Set, Go* your business. Register for:
  - Module 1 on February 11, 1 p.m., at <https://www.eventbrite.com/e/sba-business-smart-series-ready-tickets-135537403021>.
  - Module 2 on February 18, 1 p.m., at <https://www.eventbrite.com/e/sba-business-smart-series-set-tickets-135548129103>.
  - Module 3 on February 15, 1 p.m., at <https://www.eventbrite.com/e/sba-business-smart-series-go-tickets-135549671717>.
- The Mill City Farmers Market continues with its Winter Market, the next being on Saturday, February 13th; pre-orders are encouraged (<https://millcityfarmersmarket.org/visit/>).
- The Farmers Markets of MPLS, a collaborative of farmers markets in the city, hosts clothing drives at winter farmers markets (<https://farmersmarketsofmpls.org/winter-markets/>).

- For what's happening in our neighborhood associations within the East Town district:
  - Visit the Downtown Minneapolis Neighborhood Association's newly refreshed website at <https://www.thedmna.org/> for Board and Land Use Committee meeting dates.
  - Visit the Elliot Park Neighborhood, Inc.'s website at <https://www.elliottpark.org/> for Board, BLUH (Building, Land Use and Housing), and Community Safety Committee meeting dates.
- Hennepin County and the Minneapolis Regional Chamber have launched Elevate Business HC (<https://www.elevatebusinesshc.com/home>), a public-private initiative offering pro bono services designed to support businesses in Hennepin County impacted by COVID.
- For help in navigating City Hall with your business questions, visit the Minneapolis Business Portal at <https://business.minneapolismn.gov/> which is designed to connect entrepreneurs and small business owners to the information and resources needed to plan, launch and grow a business.

You can also visit the Small Business Team at <http://www2.minneapolismn.gov/cped/ba/SmallBusinessTeam/index.htm> or 612-673-2499 (BIZZ). They are partnering with Hennepin County on relief for small businesses including restaurants and event venues (<https://www.hennepin.us/economic-development/programs/Emergency-relief>).

## II. Women Leading in the Marketplace

Having reached the century mark of the passage of the 19th Amendment ([https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nineteenth\\_Amendment\\_to\\_the\\_United\\_States\\_Constitution](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nineteenth_Amendment_to_the_United_States_Constitution)), Collison thought it was important to reflect on how far we've progressed, not just on the basic right of citizens to vote, especially women who comprise half of the human race, but also on how we're transforming the marketplace with women leaders, knowing that statistically organizations that have women leaders outperform those that don't (<https://hbr.org/2019/02/research-when-gender-diversity-makes-firms-more-productive> and <https://www.cnbc.com/2018/03/02/why-companies-with-female-managers-make-more-money.html>). As we reach for better and best practices, we still have a long way to go, so that's why we're marking this historic moment and bringing forward women leaders from different sectors who will share their personal and professional perspectives.

For those who wish to dig a little deeper, he uploaded McKinsey & Company's Women in the Workplace study (<https://www.mckinsey.com/featured-insights/diversity-and-inclusion/women-in-the-workplace>) released in 2020; they surveyed 317 companies and 40,000 people, 45 of which included in-depth interviews [also read <https://www.mckinsey.com/about-us/new-at-mckinsey-blog/the-women-behind-women-in-the-workplace>]. Research is showing us that company profits and share performance can be close to 50% higher when women are well represented at the top percent of the company. Yes, there are economic reasons, setbacks, structural issues, different kinds of resistances, barriers, and ceilings, but what he's interested in now with the panelists is for us to think about this across cultural and intersecting ideas, including race, which is something they're seeking to work on in the marketplace.

Thereafter, he introduced the following powerhouse panelists:

**Hedy Lemar Walls**, Chief Social Responsibility Officer, Greater Twin Cities YMCA

([https://www.ymcnorth.org/about/leadership/hedy\\_lemar\\_walls](https://www.ymcnorth.org/about/leadership/hedy_lemar_walls)), said she's a Baton Rouge, Louisiana native, born during the civil rights era. Her educational background in high school was home economics, typing, shorthand; girls were encouraged to take those type of classes. Moving into college, she quickly discovered where the money was because she was interested in making money more than anything else, and if she got a college degree, she would be able to get a great job and make money. She found out it was not in teaching, so she got a business degree and quickly realized, she doesn't know if it was more as a female or even a person of color, she could not get a high paying job in Baton Rouge. Her mother encouraged her to go to graduate school and get into teaching, and because of that, she was accepted into the University of Minnesota's educational program. After one class, she realized she did not want to be a teacher. She decided to go into the MBA program, graduated with an accounting degree and had multiple opportunities to work. Her first big job was as an auditor in an all-white-male department at Norwest Bank, now Wells Fargo, in the heart of downtown Minneapolis. She was the first female and BIPOC hired in that position. Soon thereafter, they hired a younger single white female, Walls was married with two children, what a disaster! The men who were all married with stay-at-home wives had no sympathy or empathy, so that was the era back then. We've come a long way since then, and she's proud to say things have changed. Now when she turns on sports, she's not looking at all men; when she looks at construction, there are females who have their own construction business; STEM (science, technology, engineering, and mathematics) has been promoted

in K-12 and college, so now we have research that says we need more females in those areas. Thinking more recently, the big change that just happened yesterday (<https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2021/jan/20/kamala-harris-sworn-in-vice-president>), yes, women can go into these incredible roles without having to dress like a man.

**Ellie Krug**, writer, lawyer, owner of Human Inspiration Works (<https://elliekrug.com/> and <https://www.linkedin.com/in/ellen-ellie-krug-90894947/>), said in terms of being a professional woman, she brings a unique set of eyes to the table because she's transgender. She didn't transition until she was 52 years old, now she's 64, and in the 12 years since she transitioned, she's learned so much about how the world is so different for women compared to the world for men, as minor as the way men speak over women. That's something she had no idea about, but it happens quite a bit. One of the things she's far more aware of now because she went from the top of the pyramid where she presented as an attack dog lawyer in Cedar Rapids, Iowa, with great privilege and no hurdle she couldn't jump, to being part of two marginalized groups, transgender and female. In terms of womanhood, the very first thing that makes a difference is the color of your skin. The world is way different and easier for white color women compared to women of other skin colors, countries of origin, countries of birth. If we're going to have this conversation today, particularly after the historic day of yesterday (<https://www.wsj.com/articles/kamala-harris-sworn-in-as-first-female-vice-president-with-wide-portfolio-11611165684>), make sure that we start by understanding when we talk about women there are all kinds of different communities of women with different challenges and different privileges.

**Amanda Koonjeharry**, Director of Public Policy, Citizen's League (<https://citizensleague.org/amanda-koonjeharry/> and <https://www.linkedin.com/in/amanda-koonjeharry-5750a062/>), said as Collins mentioned, they're in the Policy Fellowship together ([https://www.hhh.umn.edu/sites/hhh.umn.edu/files/2021-01/2020%E2%80%9321\\_Policy\\_Fellows\\_Headshots\\_Bios.pdf](https://www.hhh.umn.edu/sites/hhh.umn.edu/files/2021-01/2020%E2%80%9321_Policy_Fellows_Headshots_Bios.pdf)) and it's been a pleasure getting to know him. When she thinks about her career path and journey, the word that comes to mind is authenticity. Her family is from Guyana, South America, they're West Indian from a Caribbean culture, and she brings that up because it's fundamental to her story, who she is, how she shows up at the workplace, and moves through the world as a human. When she thinks about gender dynamics, there's a lot there she's had to push against in her life and through her career. A lot of her work and how she conducts her work is rooted in her personal experiences and, unfortunately, experiences of trauma and pain (<https://www.womenspress.com/amanda-koonjeharry-dancing-out-of-the-dark/>), but more importantly she has resilience, a desire to give back and fight for justice and suffering. Because of some of these experiences, she knew at a young age she wanted to serve her community. In her culture, going into social work and public policy, which is her background, were not seen as desirable areas of study; however, a valid profession would be a doctor, lawyer, or engineer. Since starting her career it was a fight because she didn't have that support or network in her community to pursue social work. A lot of first-generation women coming from backgrounds with immigrant parents or different cultural identities are running into this clash and trying to fight for what they believe in and pursue the things they think are important to them. Through her career she bounced around and did a lot of different things, a lot of which was routed directly on the ground with children and families on some tough issues on everything from domestic violence, sex trafficking, to homelessness, people experiencing poverty, etc. She's done many different things during grad school prior to finding her way at Hennepin County, but she thinks this story about how she met Hennepin County Administrator David Hough and navigated her way through the bureaucratic organization highlights the authentic and generational pieces and change she's seen in women leading in the marketplace.

**Mary Post**, CEO, American Academy of Neurology (<https://www.aan.com/PressRoom/Home/PressRelease/3761> and <https://www.linkedin.com/in/mary-post-mba-cae-4988b214/>) began by connecting with Hedy Lemar Walls' experience in home economics; she also had that experience in high school. It was expected and only the girls could do it and the boys did shop. The girls weren't allowed in shop and the boys weren't allowed in home economics. She grew up in southwestern Minnesota in a small farming community with a population of 1,400. Values and roles of women in the family, society, and workplace were very traditional. Women were in the kitchen raising the family, supporting the husband as they're out there making their earnings, so working through those subtle barriers of expectations and demonstrating that as women we can be highly educated leaders in business while keeping the home running was challenging. She's an example of just the reverse of how she grew up. Her husband was the homemaker and manager at home while she was advancing her education and career. That was a big difference in her family and for her parents to connect with in terms of their expectations. She has almost 30 years of experience in the nonprofit medical specialty association industry helping physicians provide high quality patient centered care. Her professional journey began with the AAN in 1992 and continued through 2008 when she left to lead the American Board of Anesthesiology in Raleigh, North Carolina. After 12 years there, in April 2020, she returned to AAN to serve as the CEO so she's a bit of a boomerang. She's been fortunate in her career; she's had other women leaders champion her professional development and serve as her role model and mentors. She recognizes that gift because it's not always the experience for many women. Women make up 50% of the population, but not 50% of business leadership and that's why she feels so fortunate to have women role models help her prepare,

thrive, and grow as a leader, and break down some of those expectations and barriers we are taught to think just exist. Because there are challenges we face in the workplace, it's important that we have those role models and resources that support us coming through the ranks, develop our leadership style, increase our influence and voice at the table, help us learn how to be good negotiators, and develop some of those sustainable long-term performance skills we need to break those ceilings. One of her role models was Cathy Rydell (<https://www.aan.com/AAN-Resources/Details/about-the-aan/aan-ceo-cathy-rydell-announces-retirement-after-20-years/>) who served as the CEO for 21 years and was a believer in developing other leaders. She gave Post confidence and taught her how to have that voice in an otherwise primarily male dominated physician led organization. There were very few women physicians in neurology especially in leadership roles. The first woman president at AAN was Dr. Sandra Olson from 2003-2005 (<https://www.aan.com/PressRoom/home/PressRelease/38>), and she was another female leader who was inspiring and an example for Post on how to finesse and influence in a heavily male physician lead culture. Good progress is being made. Today, residency programs and training is increasing numbers of women in neurology, percentages of women involved in their leadership is growing, and they're increasingly promoting gender friendly work practices, so as an organization they continue to enhance leadership education opportunities for women, and in particular, the Women Leading in Neurology program (<https://www.aan.com/conferences-community/leadership-programs/women-leading-in-neurology/>) designed to help mid-career women tackle these gender disparities head on and advance to higher levels of leadership within the academy and within their profession.

Thereafter, the panelists responded in turn to questions posed by Collison.

### III. Closing Remarks.

Collison encouraged everyone to send words of gratitude to the four leaders; he'll continue to follow their work as leaders in our community. He thanked everyone who was a part of this meeting for their time and investment in the East Town area, which included the Executive Coordinator Christie Rock Hantge, and the Board of Directors which is a phenomenal array of women and men leaders.

### IV. Zoom Attendees

Martha Archer, Mill City Farmers Market  
Ellie Benson, Elliot Park Neighborhood, Inc.  
Rick Crispino, Bridgewater Lofts  
Karen Dyck, Marketing & Business Development Consultant  
Jessie Ehreth, American Academy of Neurology  
Chris Fleck, Ambassadors For Business  
Alison Gordon, Mortenson  
Vanessa Haight, Elliot Park Neighborhood, Inc  
Christie Rock Hantge, ETBP Staff  
Cyndy Harrison, Sawatdee Thai Restaurant  
Renee Hawthorne, Steelcase  
Daniel Jacobson, Pixelwerx  
Gena Janetka, Allied Parking  
Chris Johnson, Federal Reserve Bank of Minneapolis  
Gina Kennedy, Thrivent Financial  
Julia Lauwagie, Minnesota Adult & Teen Challenge  
Grete Lavrenz, Carmichael Lynch Relate  
BrieAnna Lee, Children's Minnesota Hospital  
Brian Maupin, Allied Parking  
Paul Mellblom, MSR Design  
Wendy Merila, Valleyfair Family Amusement Park  
Silas Morgan, Third Path Capital  
Heather Olson, Soladay Olson  
Douglas Pearson  
Roger Raina, National Item Processing  
Aimee Robertson, North Central University  
Leah Rosenow, Valleyfair Family Amusement Park  
Carletta Sweet, Downtown Minneapolis Neighborhood Association  
Al Swintek, CenterPoint Energy

Michelle Uher, American Academy of Neurology  
Marybeth Weisberg, Minneapolis Downtown Council  
Linda Wojcik, Excelen Center for Bone & Joint Research and Education