

San Francisco Chronicle: Oakland's WNBA bid led by former WNBA star to front bloc of powerful women

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Reports of Oakland's death as a home for major-league sports franchises may have been greatly exaggerated.

An Oakland group of Black businesspeople is seeking to land a WNBA expansion franchise. The group, African American Sports and Entertainment Group (AASEG), is assembling a bloc of powerful, high-profile women to lead the team.

On Thursday, AASEG held a video news conference to introduce the leader of that power bloc, former WNBA All-Star Alana Beard, and provide updates on the organization's progress.

Beard played 15 years in the WNBA and was a four-time All-Star and two-time Defensive Player of the Year. She has not yet been given an official title, but will head the team's ownership group.

Now that AASEG has a respected leader for its basketball team, and it has a place to play (Oakland Coliseum Arena), and it claims to have sound financial backing, now all it needs is a WNBA franchise.

The 12-team WNBA reportedly is studying expansion, and AASEG has been pounding on the door for the past year, presenting its case for Oakland.

"They (league officials) have been receptive, very respectful and very helpful ... every step of the way," said Ray Bobbitt, one of AASEG's founders and leaders. "We are in direct communication at the highest level in the league."

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Bobbitt said the league has indicated that any expansion team(s) would require an 18-month run-up, from acceptance into the league to joining the action.

Beard gives the Oakland group street cred *and* boardroom cred in its pursuit of a franchise. When she retired from basketball in early 2020, Beard moved from Washington, D.C., to the Bay Area to explore a career in the world of venture capital. In July she contacted Bobbitt to express her interest in AASEG's WNBA dreams, and in short order she signed on to lead the charge.

[Click here to read more about this story detailing Bailey Glasser's Jade Smith-Williams work on this matter.](#)

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