

Maryland Commission for Women

Meeting Minutes
Thursday, May 18, 2023
5 p.m.

Virtual Meeting

Commissioners Attending:

Andrea Bottner
Judith Emmel
Essita Duncan
Kathryn M. Fiddler
Maggi G. Gaines
Kristi Halford
Kaprece James
Patricia McHugh Lambert
Lauren M. Lambert
Christine Lee
Jenny Peña Dias
Carole Jaar Sepe
Maxine Griffin Somerville, 1st Vice Chair
Evelyne S. Steward
Lenita Walker
Monica Watkins
Tamara E. Wilson

Commissioners Absent:

Tawanda A. Bailey, Chair
Tammy Bresnahan
Deborah Cartee
Beth Anne Dorman – 2nd Vice Chair
Eugenia B. Henry
Brenda J. McChriston
Roberta Pardo
Yun Jung Yang

Staff Attending:

Judith Vaughan-Prather, Executive Director
Tammy Wise, Management Associate

I. Call to Order.....**First Vice Chair Somerville**

Chair Bailey was traveling and was unable to access the meeting portal this evening. First Vice Chair Somerville convened the meeting, having established a quorum and called the meeting to order at 5:04 p.m. She began by reading a quote from Maryland’s Lt. Governor Aruna Miller, as inspiration for tonight’s meeting:

“I spent my entire life trying to fit into a space that wasn’t created for me. It isn’t about fitting into a space that other people have created for you. It’s about creating your own space and disrupting the status quo.”

A. Approval of Agenda

Vice Chair Somerville welcomed the commissioners in attendance. She called for approval of the agenda for tonight’s meeting. Commissioner L. Lambert moved approval of the agenda. Commissioner Halford seconded the motion which passed unanimously.

B. Approval of Minutes

Vice Chair Somerville called for approval of the minutes of the April 20, 2023 Commission meeting. Commission Halford moved approval of the minutes as submitted. Commission Bottner seconded the motion which passed with one abstention.

II. Executive Committee Report

A. Introduction of New Commissioner

The Commission welcomed Maggi Gaines who was appointed to fill the formerly vacant position on the Commission. Those in attendance introduced themselves to one another.

B. CFW Roundtable

Each year, the MCW convenes a meeting of the county/city Commissions for Women (CFWs) across the state to discuss their initiatives, strategies and challenges. This year, Maryland's First Lady Dawn Moore will bring greetings to the meeting which is scheduled for June 1 at 5 p.m. and will be held virtually so that commissioners from across the state can participate. Lt. Governor Aruna Miller will present remarks as well. Ruth Howard, former chair of the Baltimore County CFW and now a member of the Board of the National Association of Commissions for Women, will talk about NACW as well. There are 17 local CFWs in the state, so far six have responded, registering a total of 27 commissioners, plus six members of the MCW. It is anticipated that many more will also attend.

C. Meeting with DHS Secretary López

The MCW officers were scheduled to present a briefing on the Commission's work on June 8, but that date must be changed. MCW staff is working with the Secretary's staff to find a new date.

D. July Meeting Date and Location

The results of the poll of the current and future Commissioners are that the best date for the most Commissioners is July 13 and the preferred location among the current Commissioners is the Community Center in Fulton. However, a meeting there cannot start before 4 p.m. and the set up and technology access may not be as convenient as the Towson location. The Executive Committee will take this into consideration and will decide where to hold this in-person annual planning meeting.

E. New Commissioner Orientation Session

The six newly appointed Commissioners have been invited to a virtual orientation session to be held on June 23 at 10 a.m.

F. Proposed Bylaws Amendment

The Commission's Bylaws previously spelled out attendance requirements in addition to those provided in the Commissions enabling legislation. The legislation provides that any Commissioner missing more than 50% of the meetings in any 12-month period has resigned. The Bylaws provided a limitation on the number of times a Commissioner may participate virtually and the number of commissioners who may attend virtually any one meeting. During the pandemic, all Commission meetings were virtual, and the Commission removed those provisions from the Bylaws. However, now that the Commission has resumed in-person meetings, currently alternating with virtual meetings, the Executive Committee recommends that some provisions regarding virtual attendance at in-person meetings are necessary.

Draft amendments to the Bylaws were sent to the Commissioners in advance of this meeting, for discussion today and a vote at the June Commission meeting.

The basic changes proposed were that a commissioner may virtually attend meetings scheduled as in-person meetings no more than once a year, and that no more than three Commissioners may virtually attend any one meeting designated as in-person.

Considerable discussion followed, including Commissioner P. Lambert suggesting that the amendments include a provision that the MCW officers may excuse a commissioner from these requirements under certain justifiable circumstances. Commissioner Wilson noted that serving on a Governor-appointed board such as the Commission for Women requires a commitment to attend the meetings. It was also noted that it seems unfair to those commissioners who may travel long distances to attend an in-person meeting when others decide they cannot make that commitment. There are also wasted time and expenses involved in the logistics of setting up in-person meetings if many commissioners choose not to attend in-person.

Commissioner Lee noted that the 5 p.m. starting time makes it difficult for people whose work day may not end until 5 to attend and suggested that a later starting time be considered.

Vice Chair Somerville promised to take all these comments back to the Executive Committee for further discussion and a decision may be made at the June meeting.

III. Unfinished Business

A. Maryland's Top 100 Women Award Ceremony

Commissioner McChriston was honored as one of Maryland's Top 100 Women by The Daily Record at a ceremony and reception at the Lyric Theater in Baltimore on May 8. Executive Director Vaughan-Prather was also selected for this honor, and this being the third time for her, she was inducted in the Top 100 Women's Circle of Excellence. Commissioners Bailey, Somerville, Halford, P. Lambert and Yang all attended, along with Special Assistant to the DHS Secretary Angelique Salazar, MCW Management Associate Wise, and the Women's Law Center of Maryland's Executive Director Michelle Siri. Executive Director Vaughan-Prather thanked the Commissioners for their support, especially Commissioner P. Lambert who submitted her nomination and Commissioner Yang who wrote one of her letters of recommendation. Commissioner P. Lambert noted that the Commission should make sure that more of its very accomplished members are nominated for this honor each year.

IV. New Business

No new business was brought before the Commission.

V. Committee Reports

A. Advocacy and Collaboration Taskforce (ACT).....Wilson

The MCW sent letters to the seven counties that still have not established a CFW. Commissioner P. Lambert lives in Carroll County, and Commissioner Beth Anne Dorman lives in Talbot County. They were copied with the letters to those Counties and have agreed to pursue this initiative in their counties. Commissioner P. Lambert said she will make it her goal to have a Carroll County CFW established by Labor Day!

B. Policy and Legislation (PAL) Committee..... Halford

Commissioner Halford explained the work of the PAL Committee this past year.

C. ARC Committee.....L. Lambert

Commissioner Lambert thanked everyone on her committee for all their hard work this year, especially Commissioner Walker who coordinated the Hall of Fame and Commissioner Lee who coordinated the Young Women Leaders Awards. She thanked Commissioners Steward and Yang for bringing the flowers and corsages for the ceremony in March at the Governor’s mansion, and gave special thanks to Commissioner Henry whose generosity make the scholastic awards possible, and the entire Commission for its support of this year’s event.

VI. Liaison Reports

A. The Foundation for the Maryland Commission for Women (TFMCW)

No report.

B. Maryland Women’s Heritage Center

No report.

C. Women Moving Forward Conference

No report.

D. Maternal Mortality Review Stakeholders Group.....Peña Dias

The Group is meeting on a regular basis and has been very active. Its next meeting is scheduled for June 26.

E. UMD Safe Center.....Somerville

No report

F. Maryland Semiquincentennial (MD 250) Commission.....Emmel

This Commission is still in the transition stage working toward new leadership.

G. National Association of Commissions for Women.....Somerville/Vaughan-Prather

No report.

VII. Staff ReportVaughan-Prather

A. Support for Other CFWs

At the request of an NACW Board member, a meeting has been scheduled with the Executive Director of the Pennsylvania state CFW to discuss effective strategies for staffing CFWs.

B. Health and Issue Alerts

So far this year, the Commission has distributed 42 Health or Issue Alerts, and by the end of this month will have distributed six in May.

VIII. Announcements

A. June Executive Committee Meeting: Thursday, June 8, 2023 at 4:30 p.m.

B. June MCW Meeting: Thursday, June 15, 2023 at 5 p.m. (In-Person)

This will be the final meeting for several of our Commissioners, so there will be time to appreciate all that they have contributed – some of them have served as many as eight years!

C. Invitation to the Dragon Boat Festival

Commissioner Henry could not attend this evening’s meeting because she is making arrangements for the annual DC Dragon Boat Festival this weekend. She invites all the Commissioners to join her for this fun, festive and free event all day on Saturday, May 20. More information will be sent to the Commissioners via email tomorrow.

IX. Adjournment

No further business being brought before the Commission, First Vice Chair Somerville thanked the Commissioners for all their work and wished them a very good weekend. Commissioner Wilson moved adjournment, seconded by Commissioner Steward. The meeting was adjourned at 6:01 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted: June 9, 2023

By: Judith Vaughan-Prather, Executive Director

Approved: