

Maryland Commission for Women

Meeting Minutes

Thursday, November 20, 2014

5:00 - 7:00 p.m.

45 Calvert Street, Annapolis, MD

In attendance:

Commissioners:

Dr. Kathleen White, Chair
Pat Cornish
Nicole Drew
Anita Riley
Toni Sandridge
Roseanna Vogt
Diane Williams

Staff:

Judith Vaughan-Prather, Executive Director
Crystal Young, Program Manager

Commissioners Absent:

Lee Bachu, Vice Chair
Wandra Ashley-Williams, Secretary
Dr. Homayara Aziz
Sylvia Butler
Lillian Cruz
Susan Elgin
Lorna Forde
Helen Holton
Michele Hughes
Velvet Johnson
Varsha Mathur
Ginger Miller
Betsy Ramirez
Debbie Risper
Cara Tenenbaum

Guests:

Secretary Edward C. Chow, Jr, Maryland Department of Veterans Affairs
Commissioner Karen Smith, Governor's Commission on Veterans Affairs

I. Call to Order/Approval of Minutes.....Dr. Kathleen White

Dr. White called the meeting to order at 5:31 p.m. She noted that there was not a quorum, so she could not call for approval of the minutes of the October 16 meeting.

II. Presentation.....Secretary Edward C. Chow Maryland Department of Veterans Affairs

Secretary Chow began his remarks by thanking the MCW for providing him the opportunity to discuss the work of his department especially as it relates to women veterans. The Department of Veterans Affairs supports five commissions:

- Charlotte Hall (Veteran's Home) Commission
- War Memorial Commission
- Governor's Commission on Veterans Affairs
- Military Monument Commission
- Women in Military Service Monument Commission

Among his many accomplishments, the Secretary is proud of his work to bring ethnic, gender and age diversity to these five commissions and to the staff and contractors of the department so that they are now more reflective of the community they serve.

Other work of specific concern to women includes provisions that veteran's spouses may now be buried in the five military cemeteries administered by Veterans Affairs. The Charlotte Hall Veterans Home has one of the few women directors of a veteran's home anywhere in the country and is now a four-star rated facility. It is adding a 16-bed wing for women veterans who prefer single-sex housing, and spouses of veterans are now eligible for care at Charlotte Hall which provides both assisted living and nursing care. Volunteer hours donated there have increased from about 12,000 per year to over 23,000 per year. Women veterans used to represent only one percent of the populations served by the Department, but they are now close to 18 percent.

Secretary Chow said that there is a need to make this information known so that veterans and their families will access the services for which they are eligible. He asked that the MCW partner with the Department of Veterans Affairs in this effort.

Dr. White thanked Secretary Chow for his service to our nation, for his hard work as the Secretary of Veterans Affairs and for his informative and compelling presentation this evening. She said that the MCW would look forward to the opportunity to partner with Veterans Affairs in its outreach efforts. Secretary Chow agreed to have his staff send the MCW links or other information that the MCW could either post on its website or share with its distribution lists to help reach women veterans in our state.

III. Chair's Report Dr. Kathleen White

A. November 7th Local Commission Roundtable Meeting

Twenty-nine individuals representing nine of the 16 Commissions for Women across the state of Maryland attended the meeting at the Miller Senate Office Building in Annapolis. The purpose of the meeting was to share information on plans and strategies. A panel discussion offered some of Maryland's most prominent advocates for women's issues. The Friends of the MCW sponsored breakfast at the meeting. The feedback from the participants has been very positive, with attendees saying they appreciated learning more about the MCW activities, and discussing strategies for working together. Several expressed interest in meeting on a regular basis.

B. MLAW Conference

Dr. White, Commissioner Ashley-Williams and Executive Director Vaughan-Prather attended the excellent fall conference of the Maryland Legislative Agenda for Women on Saturday, November 15 in Ellicott City. The program was very well organized and informative. Michaele Cohen, MLAW Chair, shared not only the MLAW vision but also specific legislative proposals. Delegate Kathleen Dumais and Senator Catherine Pugh were featured speakers. Dr. White asked the staff to send the MLAW legislative proposals to the commissioners. At the fall MLAW conference legislative proposals are presented for possible inclusion in the legislative agenda. The proposals will be sent to the MLAW membership to vote on which pieces of

legislation to include in the agenda. MLAW then holds a reception on a weeknight in January to introduce the MLAW agenda to the legislators. The agenda will also be featured prominently at the January 25 Women's Legislative Briefing coordinated by the Montgomery County Commission for Women.

C. December 11 MCW Meeting

Dr. White proposed that the MCW's December meeting be held at the new MCW office in Rockville, possibly as an open house to which other CFWs in the state would be invited, with a "pot luck" dinner, possibly with the MCW meeting at 5 and a networking reception at 6. She asked the staff to survey the commissioners to ascertain their support for this proposal, asking whether each commissioner will be able to attend and whether she is willing and able to bring a dish to share.

D. Proposed Symposium

Dr. White proposed that the MCW sponsor a symposium on either April 22 or 23, focusing on women's issues. Presenters would be invited, and some initial outreach has already been extended to Senator Pugh. Dr. White will establish a committee to put together the plan to be presented in full at the December 11 meeting.

IV. Unfinished Business

Commissioner Appointments

There are three vacant positions on the MCW and there are three commissioners whose terms expired in June of 2014. A number of highly qualified candidates have applied for appointment to the MCW but the Governor's Appointments Office is not moving on appointments right now.

Commissioner Williams asked how the candidates are reviewed and who makes recommendations for appointment. The Appointments Office sends the resumes of the candidates to the Executive Director who forwards the applications to the Chair and Vice Chair. The Chair makes the decision of whether to recommend candidates for appointment. Commissioner Williams asked if a committee should be established to assist with recruitment and recommendation. Dr. White dismissed the proposal, citing her commitment to broadening the geographic diversity on the commission.

V. New Business

A. Proposed Women's Unity Walk

Vice Chair Bachu couldn't attend tonight's meeting but she is interested in organizing a women's walk in Annapolis, probably in March, as a way of unifying women around women's issues.

B. Proposed White House Conference on Women

Vice Chair Bachu is at the White House this evening where she chairs a committee on woman and faith and wants to bring the MCW onboard. She is looking into the possibility of the MCW meeting with the President to discuss women's issues in Maryland.

VI. Committee Reports

A. Education and Outreach

Committee Chair Ginger Miller is absent, no report.

1. Women of Tomorrow Awards Program

Committee Co-chairs Lorna Forde and Debbie Risper are both absent, no report.

2. Hall of Fame.....Crystal Young for Varsha Mathur

The “tag line” for the 2015 Maryland Women’s Hall of Fame event will be “Ordinary Women, Extraordinary Lives.” The planning committee is still setting up the Selection Committee which reviews all the nominations, but it is almost complete. The deadline for nominations is tomorrow, November 21, but there may need to be extended. Dr. White said that she will make the decision whether to extend the due date. The proposed date for the induction ceremony and reception is March 19, depending of course, on the availability of the Governor. Dr. White directed staff to be sure that the printing of the program and the food for the reception are ordered appropriately and that sufficient funds are available. Crystal Young reported that registration is administered through Eventbrite.com. A fee is charged for attending the reception. The Friends of the MCW have traditionally covered the cost of the reception and then are reimbursed by the registration fees. Dr. White asked the committee to prepare:

- A projected budget for the event including the cost of the reception
- A proposal for the anticipated audience size

B. Legislation and Public Policy

Committee Chair Velvet Johnson could not attend this evening, but committee member Drew said that her report would have focused on the MLAW Conference which has already been discussed earlier in tonight’s meeting.

C. Public Relations and Communications

Committee Chair Lillian Cruz could not attend tonight’s meeting, but she sent a written report of her committee’s work through committee member Nicole Drew:

MCW website

The commissioner and officer list has been updated as well as the individual bios and appropriate pictures. There have been some technical difficulties with viewing the new changes on our website. If you sent an updated bio and picture to Judith and it is not reflected, please let her know asap. (*Commissioner Sandridge noted that commissioners may need to remove “cookies” on their computers which could be directing their computer to the old pages of the website and keeping them from seeing the current pages.*)

To list resources for women in the State of Maryland, we will post the Maryland Community Services Locator (www.mdcsl.org) on our website for constituents to access. This will be far easier to manage and provide the most up to date information.

The committee also made minor changes with respect to contact information, dated information/events, and recent announcements to the homepage.

Communications Procedures

If a commissioner would like to make a suggestion for our website, please send your recommendations to the communications committee and we will work with MCW staff/DHR technical staff to address it.

With respect to press releases, the communications committee is not responsible for officially issuing and circulating releases to the media. This responsibility lies with the DHR's press shop. If you have an idea for a press release for a particular event or day of commemoration, please contact MCW staff directly and they will forward it to DHR for review and release.

The communications committee briefly discussed drafting and implementing an MCW communications plan, but this will need to be explored further.

Social Media

The committee did touch upon this during our phone conference call in October. Unfortunately, we have not had the opportunity to discuss this further and will plan to do so in the coming weeks. We would like to strategize the best social media platforms best to communicate the MCW agenda.

D. Health and Wellness

Committee Chair Dr. Aziz is out of the country and unable to attend, no report.

E. Maryland Women's Heritage Center

Committee Chair Helen Holton is out of town and unable to attend, no report.

F. Ad Hoc Committee on the Bylaws

Committee Chair Diane Williams distributed a written report of her committee's work so far:

The Ad Hoc Committee was specifically requested to review the Bylaws for any modifications necessary related to:

- Commissioner Appointments Procedures
- Meeting Attendance Procedure
- Demographics
- The number of Commissioners
- Procedures for call-in participation in MCW meetings
- Jurisdictional representation

The current MCW bylaws have language that repeats the MCW's enabling legislation. This language should be removed from the bylaws as having it there creates the impression that these provisions are within the MCW's purview to change, and they are not. The Commission cannot change or override state law. The Bylaws should refer to those aspects of the MCW's operations that are within its authority to

control. In addition, Commissioner Roseanna Vogt noted that there are some provisions of the current MCW Bylaws that may not be consistent with the Maryland Open Meetings Act.

The law that establishes the MCW (Maryland Code, Article – Human Services, §2-401 - §2—408, specifically §2-403) provides that:

- There are 25 members of the MCW
- The commissioners are appointed by the Governor with consent of the Senate
- Of the 25 members, 12 shall be appointed from among applicants who have been nominated and recommended for appointment by organizations... whose interests relate to the status of women, and 13 shall be appointed from among applicants applying on their own behalf.
- To the extent practicable, the Governor shall ensure geographic diversity among the membership of the Commission.
- A commissioner who fails to attend at least 50% of the regularly scheduled meetings of the Commission during any 12-month period shall be considered to have resigned.

Therefore, the issues of appointment procedures, jurisdictional representation, attendance requirements, and the number of commissioners are established by state law, may not be altered by the Commission and should not be included in the MCW's bylaws.

However, the Committee may still develop proposals for:

- Procedures for recruiting and recommending candidates for appointment by the Governor
- Rules or procedures governing the use of conference calling for attending MCW meetings.
- Voting procedures consistent with the Open Meetings Act
- Any other operational issues not specifically governed by state law or DHR policies

The Committee agreed that its next steps will be:

- Review information about the [Maryland Open Meetings Act](#) and the [Maryland Open Meetings Compliance Board](#) as they may apply to the MCW Bylaws.
- Identify those sections of the current Bylaws that are restatements of state law.
- Review the Bylaws to identify language that should be removed and to recommend any changes or additions to the provisions in light of the Open Meetings Act
- Review the practices of other state boards and commissions regarding attendance via conference call, and make recommendations to the MCW, especially regarding
 - Is call-in attendance practical for MCW meetings?
 - If so, what kinds of procedures need to be in place? For example:
 - Under what circumstances may a commissioner attend via phone?
 - How many times per year may a commissioner attend via phone?

- What kind of requirements should be in place for phone attendance (may not be operating a motor vehicle at the time, must be in a quiet place and devoting 100% of attention to the meeting, etc.)?
 - How far in advance must phone attendance be requested?
 - How many commissioners may attend via phone at the same meeting?
 - Should “scype” be permitted, required? Is this even possible?
- The Committee will develop recommendations for MCW input into the appointments process.
 - The Committee will examine other provisions in the current Bylaws to determine if there are other recommendations to be submitted to the full commission for discussion and approval.

The next committee meeting is tentatively scheduled within two to three weeks.

VII. Liaison Reports

A. Women’s Legislative Briefing.....Nicole Drew

Commissioner Drew represents the MCW on the planning committee for the WLB. She said that Commissioner Velvet Johnson, as Chair of the MCW’s Legislation and Public Policy Committee, will moderate one of the seminars at the WLB on Sunday, January 25. She asked all the commissioners to mark their calendars and plan to attend. She recommended that the MCW sponsor the WLB at the \$125 level which includes three tickets to the event, the Chair’s participation in the “Presidents Networking Session” and an exhibit table. As there was not a quorum at tonight’s meeting, a vote on this proposal could not be taken. Dr. White asked Commissioner Drew to develop a one paragraph message describing her proposed level of sponsorship which may be sent to the commissioners for a vote. Commissioner Drew noted that space for exhibit tables is allotted on the basis of date of receipt of the sponsorship, with the best spaces going first, therefore it is important to make the decision quickly and to send in the sponsorship.

VIII. Staff Report.....Judith Vaughan-Prather

A. Mid-Atlantic Region Network of Commissions for Women

Executive Director Vaughan-Prather represented the MCW at the November 14 meeting of CFWs in the six-state Region III, held in Glen Mills, PA. The purpose of the meeting is to begin the establishment of a network of all the CFWs in these states. The group hopes to plan a conference of those CFWs in the spring of 2015. Maryland has more CFWs in our state than in the other five states combined. The meeting was very well organized and there was a great deal of enthusiasm for establishing the network and strengthening our ties to other CFWs in our region.

B. MCW Budget for FY 15

A report on the expenditures of the MCW’s operating budget for this year was distributed at tonight’s meeting. Dr. White asked the committee chairs to review the budget and keep in mind the financial needs their committees may have.

Program Manager Young was asked to send mileage reimbursement request forms to the commissioners along with information about the requirements for timely filing.

IX. Adjournment.....Dr. White
Dr. White thanked the commissioners for attending and for all their hard work. She adjourned the meeting at 7:45 p.m.

Respectfully submitted:
Judith Vaughan-Prather, Executive Director
Maryland Commission for Women
12/11/2014

APPROVED: 1/15/2015