

Maryland Commission for Women

Meeting Minutes
Friday, September 18, 2015
10 a.m.

Attman-Glazer Building 45 Calvert Street, Room 158 Annapolis, MD

Commissioners Attending:

Lee Bachu, Chair
Wandra Ashley-Williams, Secretary
Homayara Aziz
Tammy Bresnahan
Gloria Chang
Patricia Cornish
Lorna Forde
Bonnie Nelson Luna
Marion Manski
Carole Jaar Sepe
A. Diane Williams, Vice Chair

Commissioners Absent:

Helen Holton
Velvet Johnson
Doris Ligon
Betsy Ramirez
Anita Riley

Staff Attending:

Judith Vaughan-Prather, Executive Director

- I. Call to Order.....Lee Bachu, Chair**
MCW Chair Lee Bachu called the meeting to order at 10 a.m., and welcomed the commissioners to the MCW's annual planning meeting. She invited all those in attendance to introduce their selves and to share the issues they find most compelling in the work of the commission. She reviewed the goals for this meeting, including the development of a consensus for and commitment to an agenda for the year and to engage the commissioners as a team in planning and carrying out that agenda.
- II. Session I**
- A. Orientation to the Planning Process.....Lee Bachu, Chair**
Chair Bachu reviewed the MCW's enabling legislation which states its mandate to: "Inform the executive and legislative branches of government on issues of concern to women," and to "Stimulate and encourage study and review of the status of women in the State." She also reviewed the MCW's operating principles, adopted in 2013, which include: "Mission value drives decisions when considering. We won't embark on a new initiative unless we have the collective commitment to do it well, the financial analysis that demonstrates we can afford it and a clear understanding of how it benefits women and families in Maryland."

Chair Bachu outlined the roles and responsibilities of commissioners, urging care in developing the MCW work plan to ensure that it meets the MCW mandate and mission and that commissioners actually are able to fulfill the tasks to which they commit today.

B. MCW Operations and Support

1. MCW Bylaws.....A. Diane Williams, Vice Chair

Vice Chair Williams reviewed the MCW bylaws, highlighting changes adopted after study during the past year, including the policy for participation in official meetings via teleconferencing. She noted that there are still a number of items that warrant further consideration and recommended that the Bylaws Review Ad Hoc Committee continue its work this year. She noted that at the last MCW meeting, the Commission decided to establish a five-member committee for this purpose.

2. Friends of the MCW.....A. Diane Williams, Vice Chair

No one from the Friends organization was present at today’s meeting. Vice Chair Williams reported that the Friends of the MCW is a 501(c) 3 organization that receives funds donated for MCW programs.

C. 2014 – 2015 Committee Activities & Consideration of Current Commitments

Chair Bachu reported on the March 19 Maryland Women’s Hall of Fame Ceremony and the planning that led up to that event. Commissioner Forde, who chaired the Education and Outreach Committee while co-chairing the Women of Tomorrow award program planning committee reported on the work that produced the June 25 event. MCW Secretary Ashley-Williams described the November 7, 2014 roundtable conference the MCW held for representatives of county Commissions for Women in the state. Discussion followed on the work of the MCW’s other committees, reports of which were presented to the new commissioners at their orientation sessions. It was noted that the Women Moving Forward Conference for residents at the Maryland Correctional Institute for Women has been postponed for the time being. Commissioner Johnson has offered to serve as the liaison to that conference planning and will keep the MCW informed of future developments. Chair Bachu noted the importance of that event – helping incarcerated women return to the community and to productive lives upon their release – and hoped that the MCW will maintain an active role in planning that event.

D. Identification of Key Priorities and Issues for 2015 – 2016

The Commissioners reviewed the priority issues established at the 2014 annual planning meeting and consolidated the many issues listed into two broad areas:

- Women’s Economic Equity and Security
- Women’s Safety, Health and Wellness

The Commissioners discussed last year’s plan to hold a symposium in the fall of this year, and other possible activities that would further the MCW’s goal of improving the lives of the women and girls of Maryland. Each committee is encouraged to focus on those two priority areas. After considerable discussion, Commissioner Sepe moved that the previously planned Symposium not be held in this 2015 – 2016

program year. Commissioner Manski seconded the motion which passed with one abstention. Commission Vice Chair Williams said that she hopes the Symposium will be held in a future year.

After further discussion, Commissioner Forde moved that the MCW begin planning a “listening tour” initiative. Commissioner Cornish seconded the motion. Listening tours have been conducted by a number of other state Commissions for Women (Massachusetts, Indiana and Louisiana, for example) as a method of gathering data on the status and needs of women and girls across the state, in their own voices. In a NACW-hosted webinar, these listening tours, sometimes accompanied by online surveys, have proven to be a good venue for establishing connections, visibility and credibility across the state, and provide data that can inform Commission decision making well into the future.

Commissioner Luna proposed an amendment to the motion, requiring that the Education and Outreach Committee come back to the Commission with an outline for the project before the initiative is approved. Commissioners Forde and Ashley-Williams noted that it is standard operating procedure for the full commission to approve the plan of any committee before the plan is implemented and that the committee shouldn’t have to commit all the work it will take to develop a plan without first knowing that the Commission fully intends to undertake the project. Commissioner Sepe called for a vote on the amendment. The amendment passed with six of the eleven in attendance voting in favor of the amendment. The Commission then considered the amended proposal:

The Education and Outreach Committee will begin the process of planning a listening tour and will return to the MCW with an outline of the project for approval.

Chair Bachu called for a vote on the motion as amended. The motion passed unanimously. Considerable enthusiasm for this new initiative was expressed by the commissioners.

The MCW 2015 – 2016 Committee chairs and members were then identified:

Education & Outreach:

Chair: Lorna Forde
Members: Carole Sepe and Gloria Chang

Maryland Women’s Hall of Fame:

Co-Chairs: Pat Cornish and A. Diane Williams
Members: Bonnie Luna

Women of Tomorrow:

Co-Chairs: Lorna Forde and Wandra Ashley Williams
Members: Carole Sepe

Legislation & Public Policy

Co-Chairs: Velvet Johnson and Tammy Bresnahan
Members: Marion Manski and Carole Sepe

Public Relations and Communications:

Chair: Betsy Ramirez

Health and Wellness:

Co-Chairs: Homayara Aziz and Marion Manski

Members: Gloria Chang

Ad Hoc Governance Committee (Bylaws Review);

Chair: A. Diane Williams

Members: Marion Manski

Women Moving Forward Conference Liaison: Velvet Johnson

Those commissioners unable to attend today's meeting will be invited to join committees before the next meeting.

The Committee Chairs were assigned the task of each convening a meeting of her committee before the October 15 MCW meeting, to develop the 2015 – 2016 work plans. The template for the work plan is included in each commissioner's packet for today's meeting and Executive Director Vaughan-Prather was asked to send the template via email to the committee chairs so they may fill in the form electronically.

At this point, the Commissioners took a five-minute break.

III. MCW Business Meeting

A. Call to Order/Approval of Minutes.....Chair Bachu

The meeting was called back to order at 1:10 p.m. Secretary Ashley-Williams moved approval of the minutes of the August 6 MCW meeting. Commissioner Forde seconded the motion. Commissioner Sepe noted that her first name was misspelled in the draft. The minutes, with that correction, were approved with one abstention.

B. Speakers at MCW Meetings

The Commissioners, in light of the very demanding agenda they just set for themselves, decided not to invite any guest speakers to the meetings during the remainder of this calendar year.

C. Confirm Online Vote to Support the WE3 Conference

The Prince George's County Commission for Women is sponsoring its Women Educated, Women Empowered, Women Engaged (WE3) conference tomorrow, September 19. By email, the Commissioners voted to send \$100 to support the conference as an Advocacy Sponsor. Commissioner Cornish moved to ratify the vote to support the conference at this level. Commissioner Ashley Williams seconded the motion which passed unanimously. Chair Bachu will represent the MCW at the conference, and Vice Chair Williams will also attend.

D. Confirm Online Vote on CFW Roundtable Meeting at MLAW Conference

Last year, the MCW convened a day-long meeting of representatives of county Commissions for Women (CFWs) in our state, on November 7 in Annapolis. The conference included briefings and a panel discussion featuring representatives of leading women’s advocacy organizations in the state. The Maryland Legislative Agenda for Women (MLAW) is a coalition of women’s advocacy organizations across the state working to address state legislation of specific concern to women. Each fall, MLAW holds a conference to develop its legislative platform. Typically, the morning is filled with briefings on legislative issues, and the afternoon includes training in legislative advocacy. This year, it was proposed that the CFW roundtable conference be combined with the already scheduled MLAW fall conference on November 14 at the International Cultural Center in Gaithersburg. The roundtable could be held in the afternoon after the issue briefings.

Three benefits of this proposal are:

1. Many of the same speakers that would be invited to a roundtable conference of CFWs will be speaking at the MLAW conference on the same topics that they would be invited to address at the roundtable.
2. It would encourage more CFWs to attend and possibly become involved in the MLAW conference and thus in the MLAW organization.
3. Combining the two events means one less event for the attendees, which might enhance participation.

A vote on this proposal was needed before today’s meeting as planning is already well underway for the MLAW conference. The online vote was unanimously in support of the proposal. Commissioner Marion Manski moved ratification of the online vote. Commissioner Wandra Ashley-Williams seconded the motion which passed unanimously.

E. Update on MCW Staffing.....Vaughan-Prather

The currently vacant staff support position, originally a grade 17 Program Manager position has been reclassified to a grade 13 Management Associate. Commissioner Forde very generously came into the office on very short notice to participate in interviews with candidates who applied for the same position in another office in hopes of expediting the recruitment process. No appropriate candidate was identified so the position will be advertised very early next week. Two weeks will be permitted for applications.

In the meantime, the office is benefitting from the volunteered assistance of Bev Thoms, who typically works there on Monday and Wednesday afternoons and who contributed significantly to the development of the MCW’s new online health information resource, and Wootton High School Senior Taylor Sullivan who is serving an internship in the MCW office on Tuesday and Thursday afternoons 2:30 – 5 p.m. Both volunteers were of great assistance in preparing the packets and power point presentation for today’s meeting.

In addition, through a program funded by the U.S. State Department and the American Councils for International Education, the MCW office will host a “professional fellow” from Turkey, who will work in the office full time for the month of October.

F. New MCW Logo

The DHR Office of Communications has designed a new logo for the MCW. The design was shared with the commissioners and will begin appearing on MCW publications and other items.

G. Women of Tomorrow/Hall of Fame Dates

For many years, the Women of Tomorrow Awards program has been held on the third Thursday in June, in lieu of a MCW meeting that evening. There are several problems with that date including that many of the honorees are already out of school by then. However, moving the date earlier in the year may conflict with other activities including the March Women’s Hall of Fame.

Commissioner Cornish asked whether the two events could be combined into one – in March. Great enthusiasm was expressed for this concept. Commissioners noted that

- It would elevate the WOT award by introducing the young honorees to the much larger audience that typically attends the HOF ceremony.
- It would provide a natural venue for the young honorees to meet and learn about the extraordinary women being inducted into the Hall of Fame who may then truly serve as inspiration and role models for them.
- It places the Women of Tomorrow event well before final exams and graduations begin.
- It would mean fundraising for one event instead of two.

After considerable discussion, it was proposed that the Education and Outreach Committee consider the possibility of combining the Hall of Fame and the Women of Tomorrow events into a single ceremony held in March, and return a recommendation and plan to the October MCW meeting for a decision.

IV. Adjournment.....Chair Bachu
There being no further business to conduct, the meeting was adjourned at 1:50 p.m.

Respectfully submitted:
Judith Vaughan-Prather, Executive Director
Maryland Commission for Women
09/21/2015

APPROVED: October 15, 2015, Amended and Approved November 14, 2015