

**Montgomery County Commission for Women
21 Maryland Avenue, Suite 330, Rockville, MD 20850**

Summary of Discussion

February 29, 2012

7:00 p.m.

Attending:

Vanessa Atterbeary, President
Maria Montserrat Alvarado
Debra Bright Harris
Chandra Walker Holloway
Wilma Holmes
Maliha Ilias
Colleen Kelly
Nick Martinez
Leticia Mederos
Larniece McKoy Moore
Jaclyn Lichter Vincent

Absent:

Leila Aridi Afas
Jennifer Cryor Baldwin
Manar Morales

Staff:

Judith Vaughan-Prather, Executive Director
Consuwella Carrington, Americorps Intern

Guests:

Susan Kerin, Pax Christi
Melinda Thompson, Peace Action Montgomery

I. Call to Order.....President Atterbeary

The meeting was called to order at 7:07 p.m.

II. Guest Presentation.....Susan Kerin and Melinda Thompson

Human Rights Matter! is as an “ad hoc human rights group” organized out of concern regarding Montgomery County Government’s choice of Beit Shemesh, Israel as a potential Sister City for the County. Representatives of this group have met with the County Executive and Ms. Kerin said that he had given “his blessings” for them to meet with the Commission for Women to explain it’s cause. Printed materials were presented along with a discussion of the reported human rights and women’s rights abuses reported in that community. Human Rights Matter! is very much opposed to establishing a Sister City relationship between Montgomery County and Beit Shemesh. She said that the county’s Hate Violence Committee has an affirmation of zero tolerance for bullying and she questions why the county would engage in this relationship with a jurisdiction that has reportedly tolerated the attacks and harassment by adult men upon young women and girls who have violated religious traditions of an “ultra orthodox” community.

President Atterbeary thanked Ms. Kerin and Ms. Thompson for their presentation and said that the CFW would take this information under advisement and consider whether there is an appropriate role for the CFW in this matter.

III. Approval of Minutes and Agenda.....President Atterbeary

President Atterbeary called for approval of the minutes of the January 25 CFW meeting. Commissioner Lichter noted a “typo” on page 3, Item VII., A. (“and” should be “at”) and Commissioner Kelly noted that her new employer is the Credit Union National Association, not the National Credit Union Association. Commissioner Ilias moved, seconded by Commissioner Martinez that the minutes be approved as amended. The motion passed. President Atterbeary then called for approval of the agenda for the meeting. Commissioner Martinez so moved, seconded by Commissioner Kelly, and the motion passed.

IV. Executive Committee Report.....President Atterbeary

A. Women’s History Month

The CFW wrote to the County Executive requesting a Joint Proclamation of Women’s History Month and sent a draft of language to be included on the proclamation. It was reported later in the meeting that the CFW has been encouraged to write in support of the inclusion of a statue of Harriet Tubman in the U.S. Capitol, and individual commissioners are also urged to send personal letters to this effect. Commissioner Walker Holloway offered to draft the letter on behalf of the CFW and to send the background documents and a sample letter to the CFW office to be distributed to the commissioners. The hearing on this bill is next week on March 6, so letters must be received before then.

B. Fiesta de las Madres

The CFW has been invited by the Director of the Silver Spring Regional Government Center to participate in the May 20 Fiesta de las Madres to be held at Veterans Plaza outside the Silver Spring Civic Building. The event features Telemundo celebrities, entertainment, food and a vendors and activities focusing on mothers. The commissioners suggested that the CFW offer to assist in publicizing the event and its contribution to the program.

C. Healthcare Coverage Program for Indigent Cancer Patients

The CFW received an email message from a woman asking the CFW to assist in the development and implementation of a program to provide care and services to low income cancer patients. The executive director was asked to respond on behalf of the CFW advising the writer that while the CFW recognizes the importance of this cause, it does not have the capacity to undertake the development of such programs.

D. Meeting with the County Executive

Commissioners Ilias, Bright Harris, and Alvarado represented the CFW very well at last week’s annual town hall meeting between the County Executive and the county’s officially appointed boards, committees and commissions (BCCs). About 25 BCCs were represented and following presentations by the county’s budget director and county attorney, each was invited to present remarks. Our commissioners did an excellent job presenting the CFW’s current work and priorities. Commissioner Alvarado noted that among the issues addressed by other BCCs that might be of specific interest to the CFW were:

- The Commission on Children & Youth decried the shortage of reproductive health services for youth in Montgomery County.

- The Commission on Child Care reported an increase in need for subsidized child care and a shortage of availability, resulting in the establishment of a waiting list; and expressed concern that people will be forced to use unlicensed child care if they can't find affordable options.
- The Human Rights Commission mentioned the difficulty of carrying out its work with the staff reductions experienced last year.
- The Community Action Board noted that the Standard of Need in this county for a single mother with two children is \$78,000 annual income.

In addition, the County Attorney announced the establishment of the Committee Evaluation and Review Board (CERB), which county law requires every 10 years to evaluate the various officially established BCCs – which will include the CFW. This time, the CERB is also asked to assess the cost of operating the BCCs. Each BCC will be asked to describe its work, justify its existence, explain its workload, provide a two-year work plan, and discuss how much government resources are expended in the accomplishment of its work and how could the work be accomplished using fewer resources.

At the end, the County Executive offered to come to BCC meetings if invited, and promised that he will return to the annual meetings held in previous years with each BCC, but that the timing needs to be changed so that those meetings are not scheduled during the budget season when there are so many other demands on his time.

President Atterbeary thanked for three commissioners for representing the CFW so well at this very important meeting.

E. SB 291 – Unemployment Insurance for Victims of Domestic Violence

Commissioner Lichter Vincent attended the hearing on this bill today. Current law prohibits anyone who has voluntarily left their job from collecting unemployment benefits. However, sometimes a victim of domestic violence must quit her job in order to protect her own safety. The Maryland Department of Labor and Licensing has introduced a bill that will make victims of domestic violence who must leave their jobs for this reason, eligible for unemployment benefits. The Lt. Governor is taking the lead in support of this legislation. Advocates for the victims of domestic violence are very pleased to have the administration's support and the bill has a good chance of passage.

F. U.S. Women's Bureau

Tremendous budget cuts have been proposed for the Women's Bureau within the Department of Labor, reducing the bureau's overall budget by 22%, the staff by 37% and cutting the number of regional offices from 10 to six. The Women's Bureau has been instrumental in the establishment and support of CFWs for decades and is the only official voice for working women in the federal government. The CFW will write to its U.S. Senators and Congressional Representatives urging them not to let these cuts be implemented.

G. Executive Committee Meetings

The Executive Committee will meet by conference call on the third Wednesday of each month at 1 p.m. All members of the Executive Committee are urged to mark those dates on their calendars and to make themselves available for those meetings.

V. Staff Report.....Executive Director Vaughan-Prather

A. Women’s History Quilts Installation

The CFW’s two quilts, created by former CFW president Anne Sanderoff-Walker, have been installed on the walls of the corridor outside the suite housing the CFW office, along with plaques explaining each square in the quilts. One quilt recognizes thirty women of historical significance to Montgomery county and was created in honor of the CFW’s 30th anniversary. The other quilt has squares created by women’s organizations in the county commemorating the diversity of women and women’s groups in this community.

B. Requests for Service.....Americorps Intern Carrington

Ms. Carrington has been working at the “front desk” for the Commission for Women for several months, responding to requests for information and referral to services no longer offered by the CFW’s counseling center, and working with callers for the lawyer call-back service. Almost 200 callers have been provided assistance. The largest number were seeking counseling, much of it related to either career or family crises.

C. NACW National Conference

The NACW annual conference will be held in West Virginia this July. The MC CFW sponsored the conference in Rockville in 2010. Some of the money NACW donated to the MC CFW over the years that it staffed the national office may still remain and may be available to send a delegation from the MC CFW to the national conference.

D. CFW Website

The CFW pages on the county government’s website have been updated to reflect the new jobs of several commissioners. We need to add a report of the 2012 WLB and remove some of the pre-conference publicity.

E. Crittenton Service’s Talk to a Teen Girl Project

Crittenton Service provides programs for teens from low income families. The teens in those programs conducted a survey of teen girls in Montgomery County. The MC CFW helped distribute the survey and the Executive Director attended the program last week where the results of the survey were announced. The problem most often cited by the respondents as their chief concern was difficulty getting a healthy meal at school. The second highest rated concern was fear of pregnancy and not being able to complete their education; and the third ranked concern was fighting between students. Crittenton distributed a number of educational publications relating to these concerns and hopes that the findings of this survey, however limited, will be of use to parents and other professionals working with teens.

VI. Committee Work

A. 2012 Women’s Legislative Briefing.....Holmes

The WLB, held January 29, 2012 at the Universities at Shady Grove, and attended by close to 700, was by all accounts a huge success. A wrap-up meeting of the planning committee was held February 15 and many good suggestions were made for next year’s event. The USG has already been reserved for Sunday, January 27, 2013. The committee recommends that, given the CFW’s reduced resources, planning begin sooner, perhaps in the late Spring rather than in the Fall as has been the practice. President Atterbear thanked all the commissioners who worked so hard on the WLB, especially Jennifer Baldwin who was instrumental in securing corporate sponsorship, and Wilma Holmes who chaired the planning committee.

B. Program Planning Leadership Committee.....Kelly/Ilias

The Program Planning Committee will sponsor two seminars related to family law as a “pilot project” in April. Speakers have been confirmed and the dates have been set for:

- Thursday, April 19 Overview of the Legal Process of Separation & Divorce
- Thursday, April 26 Child Custody and Child Support Issues

A fee of \$10 will be charged and registration will be set up on Eventbrite.

C. 40th Anniversary Committee.....Lichter Vincent/Aridi Afas
No Report

VII. Old Business

A. Recruitment of New Commissioner

Commissioners Martinez and Bright Harris and the Executive Director interviewed the five candidates for appointment to the commission to fill the partial term created by the resignation of Commissioner Bakr. The interview committee has submitted its recommendation to the County Executive’s Office. It is hoped that an appointment will be made sometime during the next month.

VIII. Adjournment

Given the lateness of the hour, the remaining items on the agenda for tonight’s meeting were tabled and the meeting was adjourned at 9:10 p.m.

Minutes submitted by
Judith Vaughan-Prather

Follow-Up Items

- Sister City Project Consideration
- Chandra to draft letter supporting Harriet Tubman bill
- Commissioners encouraged to send personal messages for support for Tubman bill
- Judy to offer help with publicity for Fiesta de las Madres
- Judy to respond to help with Think Pink program development request
- Judy and Letty to draft letter in support of Women's Bureau