

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

Summary of Discussion

April 10, 2014

7:00 p.m.

Attending:

Chandra Walker Holloway, President
Maliha Ilias
Karmen Rouland
Natalia Farrar
Nick Martinez
Linda Amendt
Heather Reichardt
Safia Qadri
Debra Bright Harris
Lorna Forde
Katie Smith
Barbara Mintz

Absent:

Farah Nageer-Kanthor
Manar Morales

Staff:

Judith Vaughan-Prather, Executive Director

Guests:

Sharon Strauss, Executive Director
Community Action Agency
Pamela Lockett, Community Action Board
Hope Worldwide Mid-Atlantic Chapter
Mary Bennett, Community Action Board,
Stepping Stones Shelter

-
- I. Call To Order.....First Vice President Bright Harris**
The meeting was called to order at 7:05 p.m. First Vice-President Bright Harris who called for approval of the agenda for the meeting as well as the March meeting minutes. There was an addition to the agenda about the date of the June meeting. The agenda, as amended, and the March minutes as submitted were approved unanimously. The Commissioners thanked Commissioner Ilias for so generously hosting dinner for the commissioners this evening.
- II. Guest SpeakersSharon Strauss, Deborah Stein, Community Action Board**
First Vice-President Bright Harris introduced the guest speakers who had asked to brief the Commission about the Earned Income Tax Credit and its potential impact on efforts to curb poverty in Montgomery County. Ms. Strauss is the Executive Director of the Community Action Board (CAB). She reported that there are over 63,000 people living below the federal poverty level in Montgomery County, and in this community, the federal poverty level represents extreme poverty. She said the female-headed households are about 20% of all poor households, using these guidelines, and that among those with children under age five, one-third of female-headed households are poor.
- Ms. Strauss said that no income assistance programs are more effective than the Earned Income Tax Credit in lifting people out of poverty, but that one-fifth of all those eligible do not access the program.

Ms. Stein reported that Montgomery County is one of only four local jurisdictions in the U.S. with its own EITC program. She noted that:

- The EITC helps people work and earn more
- Higher earnings improve eventual retirement and Social Security income – thus reducing poverty among the elderly
- Increased family income has been shown to have the effect of:
 - Improved children’s health
 - Improved children’s performance in school

In Montgomery County, about 10 percent of the population is eligible for free tax preparation assistance, and the program serves about 2300 per year. Many very low income people spend hundreds of dollars on tax preparation assistance because they don’t know about the free assistance offered through the Community Action Board.

The CFW and the CAB could collaborate on outreach to low-income families to help the access the EITC and the free tax preparation assistance offered through the CAB, and in general advocating for legislation, programs and policies that help move low-income families out of poverty.

The commissioners thanked the speakers for their information and compelling presentation, indicated that they look forward to an opportunity to work together on this important issue, and commended them on their very hard work on behalf of our county’s most vulnerable families.

III. Executive Committee Report President Walker-Holloway

A. Human Trafficking Task Force Proposal

On April 10, the CFW wrote to the County Executive recommending that he establish a Human Trafficking Task Force, with the goal of developing interagency coordination of strategies for response and prevention. The goals of the Task Force would be:

- To eliminate human trafficking through education, awareness, prevention, legislation and enforcement;
- To increase the identification and prosecution of all parties supporting the organized crime of human trafficking to include traffickers, suppliers, transporters, advertisers and demand elements
- To improve identification or and services to the victims of human trafficking

The CFW recommended that the Task Force be composed of representatives of:

- The County Executive’s Office
- The Police Department
- The State’s Attorney’s Office
- The CFW
- The Commission on Human Rights
- The Department of Health and Human Services
- The Sheriff’s Office
- The Circuit Court for Montgomery County

- The Governor’s Task Force on Human Trafficking
- The Office of Community Partnerships
- MCPS
- MC Chamber of Commerce
- Private non-profit advocacy organizations
- Private non-profit service providers

The Executive has not responded formally yet, but it is our understanding that he has received this recommendation very positively and that Executive Director Vaughan-Prather is working with his office to set up an interagency meeting on the proposal.

B. Unequal Pay Day – April 8

The County Executive will introduce legislation similar to that which President Obama has proposed nationally to address the gender wage gap. On Equal Pay Day, Mr. Leggett announced his intent to introduce county legislation that will add wage reporting requirements for County contractors, requiring contractors to report by race and gender the annual wages paid to employees that perform direct, measurable work under a County contract. Further, the bill will prohibit discrimination or retaliation against a contractor’s employees for discussion their compensation.

C. CFW Book Discussion

The Commission book club discussion on Sheryl Sandberg’s ‘Lean In’ was rescheduled for May 15th, location to be determined later.

D. Women’s History Month Activities

The MC CFW’s Women’s History Month Activities included:

- Exhibit, featuring the historic contributions of 18 women of character, courage and conviction, in the Rockville Memorial Library for the entire month
- Receipt of proclamation from the County Council
- Participation in Montgomery College Women’s and Gender Studies Scholarship Award Event
- Prominent feature on Women’s History Month and the CFW Women’s History Archives on the CFW website
- Henrietta Lacks induction to the Women’s History Hall of Fame. President Walker Holloway attended the event along with Commissioners Forde and Reichardt and Executive Director Vaughan-Prather. Governor O’Malley and Ms. Lacks’ son were also present on the occasion.

E. Women’s Power Conference

The Women’s Power Conference is scheduled for August 28th 2014 at the Bethesda Marriott. The CFW has been a “power partner” (community co-sponsor) of this event for several years and was invited to sponsor again this year. It was the consensus of the CFW that it should agree to a “power partnership” for this conference again this year. Partnership only requires assistance with publicity for the event.

F. June Election of CFW President

The intent-to-run forms were included in the packet distributed to the Commissioners for tonight’s meeting. Completed forms must be submitted to President Walker Holloway before the June meeting. One candidate has already submitted her intent to run.

G. June Meetings

The June meeting will be the last meeting for President Walker Holloway, but she has a conflict that meeting date. Commissioner Bright Harris moved to hold the June meeting on June 11th instead of the 12th. Commissioner Forde seconded the motion which passed unanimously.

IV. Staff Report.....Executive Director Judith Vaughan-Prather

A. Updating CFW Publications

- The CFW Guide for Surviving the Legal Process of Separation and Divorce has been updated both for changes in the law since its last publication and to include the CFW’s current contact information. It has been published in both English and Spanish and is now available for distribution at the CFW legal seminars.
- The Violence in Relationships brochure is currently published on the CFW website in six languages: English, French, Spanish, Korean, Chinese and Vietnamese. It was updated and printed in English and Spanish in time for the Choose Respect Conference in February. Updates of the other four languages will be completed soon and will be posted on the CFW website.
- The Domestic Workers Guide updates are complete in all three languages (English, French and Spanish). We are just waiting for a final proof of the French before printing all three, and posting on the CFW website.
- The Employment Rights of Pregnant Women brochure is on our website in five languages: English, Spanish, Chinese, Korean and Vietnamese. Unfortunately, we have access to the original text of only the English. The printing company that created the originals has gone out of business and we have no access to those documents. To recreate them is prohibitively expensive. Therefore, our plan is to update the English, and translate that into Spanish and French, and publish it in those three languages.
- The Sexual Harassment in the Workplace brochure is currently published on our website in six languages: English, Spanish, French, Chinese, Vietnamese and Korean. We plan to update all six languages and publish them to the CFW website. We will print hard copies of the English, Spanish and French.

B. Noon Diversity Seminars

The CFW conducted two seminars as its contribution to the County Office of Human Resources EEO and Diversity Office series of lunch-time seminars on serving the diverse population of our community:

- The March 19 seminar moderated by Commissioner Mintz was attended by 40 people and was very well received.
- The April 8 seminar, coincidentally offered on Equal Pay Day, was very well attended with at least 50 people in the audience. Commissioner Ilias moderated the panel, and Commissioner Qadri was one of the speakers. The audience clearly appreciated the

information presented. MyMCmedia filmed the entire seminar and interview the speakers and members of the audience.

C. Counseling Services Update

Executive Director Vaughan-Prather continues to explore avenues for contracting for the services presently offered by the CFW’s three part time temporary social workers since the CFW’s request to make those positions permanent was declined. She is in the process of developing a Request for Proposals in the hope of finding an organization to contract with to deliver the service.

In the meantime, as of April 9, the Counseling Service has offered a total of 16 seminars in this fiscal year – four in Spanish – with a combined audience of 282. Several more seminars are planned for the next three months including *A Collaborative Approach to Divorce* on May 15, and *Divorce and Your Finances* on May 22, in addition to the monthly *Legal Process of Separation and Divorce* seminars.

As of the end of February, 121 referrals for counseling had been received, and 80 individuals have participated in the counseling services offered here, through nearly 600 sessions.

D. MNADV Conference

The annual Maryland Network Against Domestic Violence (MNADV) conference is scheduled for May 13th in Annapolis. Executive Director Vaughn-Prather has registered to attend. She also arranged for the CFW to be a sponsor of the conference by offering in-kind services in the form of helping with publicity.

V. Committee Reports

A. Policy and Legislation Committee.....Smith

Commissioner Smith updated the Commission on the status of the ten bills the Commission was following in the Maryland General Assembly for 2014. She distributed a chart listing each bill along with the status of that bill. Of note is the passage of six of the bills supported by the Commission. For example, the Parental Leave – Birth or Adoption of a Child, Maryland Minimum Wage Act of 2014, Criminal Law – Crimes committed in the presence of a minor, Child Kidnapping and Prostitution – Penalty, Healthy Births for Incarcerated Women Act, Domestic Violence – Permanent Final Protective Orders Bill all passed.

B. Women’s Legislative Briefing 2015.....Bright Harris

The date for the Briefing has been set as January 25th 2015. The planning meeting dates have also been established and meeting rooms at the White Oak Community Recreation Center have been reserved. These meetings will occur every first Thursday of the month starting with September 4th, 2014. This will be the Briefing’s 35th Anniversary. Therefore, President Walker Holloway suggested a special \$35 sponsorship/admission linked to the Anniversary and these sponsors will be titled as the ‘35th Anniversary Gems’. Previous Commissioners should be reached offer the opportunity to attend as “Anniversary Gems.”

Other levels of sponsorship have been established, with updates and revisions, and all will be titled as “gems” such as Diamond Sponsor, Ruby Sponsor, Ruby, Sapphire, Emerald, etc. They are distinguished based on contribution amount.

VI. Unfinished Business

A. New Commissioner Recruitment

The County Executive’s Appointments Office tells us that it expects to advertise the openings on the CFW in late April. This means that the CFW interviews will likely be held in late May, and that recommendations for appointment should be made as soon as possible after that in order to have any hope of appointments and confirmation by the July CFW meeting. Right now, we are anticipating a total of seven positions to fill. Since there are three commissioners in expiring terms who are eligible for and are requesting reappointment, it is anticipated that four positions will actually become, or already are vacant. All four are for endorsed candidates. Any commissioner who does not plan to continue to serve is urged to let us know immediately. Those who do want to be appointed to a second term must write to the County Executive as soon as the announcement is released. Commissioner Qadri will not be able to participate in the Committee for the candidate interviews due to her travel schedule. President Walker Holloway will be part of the Committee. The Committee typically interviews all candidates on one day and will send nominations to the County Executive as soon as possible thereafter.

B. Speaker for May CFW Meeting

Delegate Kathleen Dumais will brief the Commission about the Child Custody Decision Making Task Force at the May CFW meeting.

C. Social Media Strategy

Commissioner Reichardt distributed a hand-out outlining an update on the use of social media for the Commission work. Commissioner Bright-Harris suggested that Commissioner Reichardt demonstrate the use of Twitter and Facebook for the Commission at an upcoming meeting. Commissioner Reichardt mentioned that the Commissioners could link their Linked In profiles to their bio-sketches on the CFW Facebook page. However, Executive Director Vaughan-Prather will check to see if that is permissible. President Walker Holloway suggested that if the CFW ever decides to do a blog, each Commissioner could write a blog for each month on a topic related to the Commission’s work. This topic will be discussed at the CFW planning meeting.

VII. New Business

A. Day of the Girl October 11th. 2014

The Commission agreed to table this until next meeting.

B. Bylaws update

In reviewing the Bylaw provisions regarding the upcoming CFW elections, Executive Director Vaughan-Prather found a few inconsistencies that require correcting:

- The County Attorney has advised the CFW to eliminate Articles I and II. They are unnecessary and that information is delineated in the CFW’s enabling legislation.
- The County Attorney advised that the clause in the current Bylaws regarding the elections that provides for repeated votes in an election when no candidate wins, each time eliminating the candidate with the least votes, is contrary to *Robert’s Rules* and county law requires that its Boards, Committees and Commissions follow *Robert’s Rules*. All candidates should stay on the ballot until someone wins.
- The language the CFW adopted last November regarding the dates for nominations of candidates for its officers omitted dates for the two Vice Presidents who are elected in August.
- In the language regarding Meetings and Attendance, the County Attorney recommends simply including the exact language and table from county law, if the CFW believes this section is needed in its Bylaws.
- The County Attorney recommended deleting the section referring to county law provisions for the staffing of the CFW.
- The remaining articles needed to be renumbered, if these amendments are accepted, and there were a few minor edits for grammar or word choice.

A copy of the current Bylaws with all these suggested amendments noted in “redline” was distributed to the Commissioners, who indicated their willingness to adopt these changes. A “clean copy” incorporating the changes will be distributed for the May meeting, and a formal vote will be taken at the June meeting.

VIII. Liaison Reports

- A. MLAW.....Smith**
No report
- B. NACW.....Vaughan-Prather**
Tabled until next month’s meeting
- C. Domestic Violence Coordinating Council.....Mintz**
Commissioner Mintz attended the meeting of the Domestic Violence Coordinating Council.

IX. Announcements

- A. Family Justice Center 5th Anniversary**
This event is Monday, May 5.
- B. Maryland’s Top 100 Women’s Event**
President Walker Holloway has been selected for his honor and will participate in the commemoration event in Baltimore on May 5th.

X. Adjournment

The Meeting was adjourned at 9:22 p.m.

Minutes Submitted by Maliha Ilias, Commissioner