

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

Summary of Discussion

March 13, 2014

7:00 p.m.

Attending:

Linda Amendt
Debra Bright Harris
Natalia Farrar
Lorna Forde
Maliha Ilias
Nick Martinez
Barbara Mintz
Manar Morales
Safia Qadri
Heather Reichardt
Karmen Rouland

Absent:

Chandra Walker Holloway, President
Katie Smith
Farah Nageer-Kanthor

Staff:

Judith Vaughan-Prather, Executive Director

Guests:

Mirin Phool, Kaur Foundation
Chander L. Bajaj, Kaur Foundation
Suzanne Vieth, Kaur Foundation

I. Call to Order.....First Vice-President Bright Harris

A. Approval of Agenda and Minutes

The meeting was called to order at 7 p.m. by First Vice President Bright Harris. CFW President Walker Holloway is still recovering from her injury and sent her sincere regrets that she could not attend tonight are meeting. All the commissioners expressed their sympathy for President Walker Holloway and their very best wishes for her recovery. Commissioner Nageer-Kanthor’s baby was born just after the February CFW meeting, and so she is also unable to attend tonight. Commissioner Smith sent a message that her car broke down en route to the meeting, and she will not be able to get here.

Commissioner Martinez moved to approve the agenda for the meeting. Commissioner Mintz seconded the motion which passed unanimously. Commissioner Bright Harris called for approval of the February meeting minutes. Two corrections were noted. On page 1, in Section II. A., Maryland Women’s Hall of Fame, in the last line the date of the event is March 20, not the 22nd, and on page 5 in section V. A. Financial Literacy Camps for Girls, the first word in the third line should read “no” instead of “not”. With those corrections, Commissioner Qadri moved approval of the minutes of the February 27 minutes. Commissioner Martinez seconded the motion which passed unanimously.

The Commissioners thanked Commissioner Martinez for the delicious dinner he provided for this evening’s meeting.

II. Guest SpeakerMirin Phool, President, Kaur Foundation
Ms. Phool informed the Commission that the Kaur Foundation works to dispel stereotypes against Sikh Americans by promoting cultural competency and providing education the public on the basic tenets of Sikh faith and culture. The Kaur Foundation was established after 9/11/2001 when bullying based on misidentification of Sikh Americans escalated. The organization hopes that its efforts will help reduce prejudice experienced by the Sikh population in the US. The Commissioners thanked Ms. Phool for the enlightening presentation.

III. Executive Committee ReportFirst Vice-President Bright Harris

A. Meeting with County Executive

Commissioners Ilias and Bright Harris and Executive Director Vaughan-Prather attended the town hall style meeting with the County Executive on March 11. Commissioner Ilias summarized the important points made by the County Executive, the Ethics Commission Director and County Attorney Mark Hanson. The Ethics Commission Director cautioned members of the county’s boards, committees and commissions (BCCs) to be aware of and avoid conflicts of interest – they should not participate in commission decisions from which they might benefit personally. Any time a concern arises, BCC members may request an opinion from the Ethics Commission, and it is best to get that opinion in writing. The County Attorney advised BCC members against “mission creep.” Each BCC has a clear and specific mission typically spelled out in its enabling documents and it is important that BCCs not undertake activities for which they are not specifically authorized.

B. CFW Book Discussion

The Commission book discussion for Sheryl Sandberg’s “Lean In” will be rescheduled for a date in April. Additional book discussion dates will be determined at the next Commission meeting.

C. New Commissioner Recruitment

President Walker Holloway’s term is ending this year. She will have served two full terms and thus is not eligible to apply for reappointment. The terms of Commissioners Ilias, Reichardt, Bright Harris and Farrar are also complete this year. They are all eligible for reappointment. Commissioner Morales has indicated her intention to resign effective July 1 of this year due to schedule conflicts. Commissioners interested in applying for appointment to a second term will need to write to the County Executive as soon as the recruitment is announced, informing him of their intent to seek re-appointment. Commissioners returning for another term will not be interviewed. Commissioners Forde and Qadri agreed to join the interviewing committee which will be chaired by Commissioner Martinez.

D. Human Trafficking Task Force Proposal

Commissioner Ilias gave a brief presentation on the need for the County to have its own Task Force on Human Trafficking, similar to those recently established in Howard and Prince George’s Counties. Commissioner Morales moved that the CFW recommend to the

County Executive the establishment of a Human Trafficking Task Force in Montgomery County. Commissioner Forde seconded the motion which passed unanimously.

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

A. Updating CFW Brochures

The updated Guide to Surviving the Legal Process of Separation and Divorce has finally been published in English, and should be published in Spanish before the next CFW meeting. Work continues on the update of the CFW’s four information brochures. The graphic work is being done by the MCPS print shop.

B. Montgomery County Diversity Seminars

At the invitation of the County’s Office of Human Resources, the CFW staff has planned two diversity seminars which are meant for County employees but are open to the public.

- **Special Issues Confronting Senior Women – March 19, 2014**
Commissioner Mintz will moderate this seminar. The flier was distributed and Commissioners were encouraged to attend.
- **Special Issues Confronting Muslim Women – April 8th, 2014**
Commissioner Qadri will be one of the panelists and Commissioner Ilias will moderate this seminar.

C. CFW Facebook Page

Executive Director Vaughan-Prather has been working with a volunteer to design a Facebook page for the Commission. The page has been published and Commissioners have been encouraged to ‘like’ the page and thus link their networks to the CFW activities, events and updates. A video of the Women’s Legislative Briefing has also been uploaded.

D. Counseling Service Update

Executive Director Vaughan-Prather is exploring all the possible avenues of providing the CFW Counseling Service, but the necessity of changing from temporary part-time employees to contractors or to contract for the service altogether has not changed.

V. Committee Reports

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

Commissioner Smith was not present at the meeting. Executive Director Vaughan-Prather reported that the CFW has submitted testimony and correspondence on several of the bills on its 2014 state legislative agenda.

B. Women’s History Month Display

The CFW’s display on ‘Women of Character, Courage and Commitment’ is much appreciated at the Rockville Library. Commissioners Ilias, Amendt, and Reichardt were thanked for their efforts and creativity. Executive Director Vaughan-Prather will reserve the space for next year so the Commission may create a display for next year’s Women’s History Month as well.

VI. Unfinished Business

A. Maryland Women’s Hall of Fame

The event will be held on March 20th. Commissioners Forde, Rouland and Reichardt as well as Executive Director Vaughan-Prather will attend and President Walker Holloway if she is sufficiently recovered.

B. Maryland Commission on Child Custody Decision Making (CCCDM)

Commissioner Farrar reported that the default judicial decision for child custody after divorce is to share custody equally between both parents unless one parent can prove that the other is unfit. She said that the state created a Child Custody Task Force last year which has held hearings in five locations around Maryland, but not in Montgomery County. Executive Vaughan-Prather said that, in response to the concerns Commissioner Farrar has raised at earlier CFW meeting regarding this issue, she looked it up on the state legislature’s website and found that the Maryland Commission on Child Custody Decision Making is chaired by the Judge Cynthia Callahan, Circuit Court for Montgomery County, and that both Montgomery County Senator Jennie Forehand and Delegate Kathleen Dumais are members. The CCCDM issued an interim report on December 31, 2013 which may be found at:

<http://msa.maryland.gov/megafile/msa/speccol/sc5300/sc5339/000113/018000/018952/unrestricted/20140028e.pdf>.

The Commissioners asked that Delegate Dumais be invited to the CFW’s May meeting to discuss the work of the CCCDM.

C. Montgomery College Women’s & Gender Studies Scholarship Breakfast

Executive Director Vaughan-Prather attended the awards ceremony and at this evening’s meeting, she spoke very highly of the program and organization.

VII. New Business

A. Day of the Girl October 11th 2014

The Commission agreed to table this topic until the next meeting.

B. Speaker for the April CFW meeting

Sharon Strauss from the Community Action Agency will be addressing the Commission about the impact of poverty on women in Montgomery County, and the Earned Income Tax Credit.

VIII. Liaison Reports

A. MLAW.....Smith
Commissioner Smith was not present at the meeting and there were no updates to be shared.

B. NACW.....Vaughan-Prather
No report.

C. Domestic Violence Coordinating Council

Commissioner Mintz attended the meeting of the Domestic Violence Coordinating Council where the discussion focused on funding for supervised visitation centers.

IX. Announcements

Commissioner Amendt will invite Patricia Hill Collins, distinguished professor of Sociology at the University of Maryland College Park, to present at one of the CFW meetings.

X. Adjournment

There being no further business brought before the Commission, Commissioner Rouland moved to adjourn the meeting at 8:48 p.m. Commissioner Amendt seconded the motion which passed unanimously.

Minutes Submitted by
Maliha Ilias
Commissioner