

MONTGOMERY COUNTY COMMISSION FOR WOMEN

**401 Hungerford Drive, 1st Floor
Rockville, Maryland 20850**

MEETING MINUTES

May 25, 2011

7:10 p.m.

ATTENDING

Leila Aridi Afas
Vanessa E. Atterbeary
Noha A. Bakr
Jennifer Cryor Baldwin
Chandra Walker Holloway
Wilma K. Holmes
Jaclyn Lichter Vincent
Ivonne C. Lindley
Nick Martinez
Larniece McKoy Moore
Jane Smith

STAFF

Judith Vaughan-Prather
Paula Rodgers

ABSENT

Miriam J. Carter
Leticia Mederos
Manar S. Morales
Jocelyn Samuels (participated by phone)

GUEST

Bethany Portner, Founder and CEO
Transformations of Montgomery County

**I. CALL TO ORDERPresident Lichter
APPROVAL OF AGENDA AND MINUTES**

President Lichter called the meeting to order at 7:10 p.m. Executive Director Vaughan-Prather offered additional items to the agenda. Upon the motion made by Commissioner Lindley and duly seconded by Commissioner Cryor Baldwin, the agenda was approved as amended.

Upon the motion made by Commissioner Lindley and seconded by Commissioner Atterbeary, the Minutes of the April 27, 2011 meeting were approved as submitted.

Appreciation was expressed to Commissioner Lindley who provided the commissioners' dinner for the meeting.

II. GUEST PRESENTATION..... Bethany Portner, Founder and CEO
Transformations of Montgomery County

Ms. Portner spoke about her new non-profit organization, *Transformations: Improving Lives by Design*. As an interior designer for over 40 years, she said that she has always been aware that people, who can afford to do so, design their homes to feel safe and comforting; but that many women, especially single mothers of low income, cannot create that kind of space for themselves.

Transformations partners with other organizations to create a residential setting that promotes healthy, positive growth, as well as improved physical, emotional and spiritual well-being. This results in a stronger, more productive individual and a stronger community.

Ms. Portner said that MCCFW can help Transformations by spreading the word to community organizations about Transformations services and needs, such as:

- Getting on the Transformations “Wish List” that details specific client needs
- Monetary donations (including providing Visa or MasterCard gift cards)
- Donating items as Transformations requests them
- Helping with fundraisers and marketing
- Storing items needed for later use; delivering items to the client and providing hands-on work in client’s home
- Providing administrative help and office chores
- Volunteering in positions such as executive director and grants writer

The Commissioners thanked Ms. Portner for presenting this information and commended her on her work in the community.

III. EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE.....President Lichter

A. Council Budget Decisions for CFW

On May 19, 2011, the County Council took a “straw vote” on funding for the items on its Reconciliation List. The two additional staff positions that were proposed for the CFW were not on the list. If this vote holds when the final vote is taken on May 26, the only staff dedicated to the CFW will be the director position. The office will be included in the newly created Community Engagement Cluster. The position/office will be housed in the Rockville Library building where it will share administrative staff support, equipment, supplies and space with the other entities included in that Cluster. The Counseling Center will be officially closed by July 1.

An interest was expressed by some Councilmembers in undertaking a summer study to investigate the possibility of restoration of some of the counseling services.

President Lichter Vincent suggested that a priority for the MCCFW Annual Planning Meeting should be how to approach revival of the CFW/CCC. She thanked the commissioners for their hard work and efforts in supporting the department by attending Council worksessions and meeting individually with Councilmembers. A suggestion was made to send thank-you letters to the many persons and organizations that supported saving the CFW Counseling Center.

B. Recruitment of New CommissionersCommissioner Martinez

Earlier today, Commissioner Martinez and Executive Director Vaughan-Prather interviewed one CFW candidate by phone and on May 31, will conduct interviews for the 13 others next week. The terms of commissioners Cryor Baldwin, Walker Holloway, Holmes, Samuels and Smith expire in June. Commissioners Samuels and Smith did not request reappointment. Commissioners Cryor Baldwin, Holloway, and Holmes have sent letters to the County Executive indicating their interest in continuing to serve. Commissioner Lindley is expecting her second baby in June and intends to resign then, having served three full years.

On May 24, 2011, Commissioner Carter announced her resignation in order to accept a position as a General Manager – Director of Community Colleges with Jindal Steel and Power in India.

In total, there will be three vacancies to fill.

C. CFW Presidential Nominations

Commissioner Atterbeary has submitted her Intent to Run as CFW president for the 2011-12 year. Nominations may be accepted from the floor at the June 22 meeting at which time the election will take place.

D. Annual Planning Meeting

The MCCFW will hold the Annual Planning Meeting on September 21, 2011 at 6 pm. The exact location will be determined later, but the meeting will most likely be held in the Rockville Library building. *(Note: The date of the Planning Meeting has been changed to September 7, 2011)*

IV. STAFF REPORT.....Vaughan-Prather

A. Reorganization of CFW Department

Counseling Center Manager Elma Rambo will retire effective June 30, 2011 and other Counseling Center positions end effective July 2. Two counselors are retiring and will go into counseling private practice. Two others will be in Reduction in Force status. Program Specialist Clotilde Puertolas has accepted another position in County government.

The Counseling and Career Center will officially close on June 30, 2011. The Center is organizing an appreciation event on June 16 for the many volunteers, including counseling interns and externs, attorneys, and information and referral staff, as well as workshop leaders and special project staffers who have been invaluable to the success of the Center's programs and activities over the years.

The Commission for Women offices will be relocated to the third floor of the Rockville Library sometime in July. Executive Director Vaughan-Prather is looking into new initiatives that MCCFW can undertake effectively with its reduced resources.

B. UMBC Research on Older Women

The University of Maryland, Baltimore County received a grant from the National Institute on Aging to conduct a study on childless women, age 65 and older, and wants to be sure the study is representative of the area's diverse population. The researchers are actively seeking African American women to participate in the study. Commissioners are asked to help by participating in the study (if eligible) and by sharing this invitation widely with friends, family and networks. For more information, e-mail amosby@umbc.edu.

C. Alzheimer's Association Brain Health Initiative

The Alzheimer's Association National Capital Area Chapter is conducting a series of events during the month of June that focus on brain health. The Brain Health Initiative is focused on teaching a new perspective on fitness and quality of life. For more information, visit http://www.alz.org/nca/in_my_community_21444.asp.

D. F. Scott Fitzgerald Literary Conference

Celebrating the 116th birthday of the famed American author and the art of writing, the F. Scott Fitzgerald Literary Conference, Inc., a non-profit group, is sponsoring the Fifteenth Annual F. Scott Fitzgerald Literary Conference. The Conference offers the unique opportunity for aspiring writers to have their work critiqued by accomplished writers in the specialty field of their choice.

MCCFW was asked for its help in generating publicity for the event. Commissioner Aridi Afas moved that MCCFW support the event; the motion was seconded by Commissioner Cryor Baldwin and unanimously passed.

E. Commissioner Reimbursements

Administrative Specialist Rodgers distributed meeting reimbursement forms to each commissioner for the MCCFW meetings held August 2010 through April 2011. Commissioners were given instructions on how to register as a vendor or make their name and address changes in the County's Central Vendor Registration System <https://www.mcipcc.net>.

V. NEW BUSINESS

A. Child Support Enforcement

Last year, Executive Director Vaughan-Prather was contacted by a single mother whose ex-husband was in such arrears with child support payments that the woman could file criminal charges under State law. The woman filed a complaint with the Commissioner's Office and that office issued a warrant for the ex-husband's arrest. However, the woman says her case was denied by the Montgomery County State's Attorney Office because it has discretion over which cases to prosecute and it rarely prosecutes for non-payment of child support.

The Child Support Enforcement Office, a state agency with branches in each county, does not handle criminal prosecution, just collection.

Ms. Vaughan-Prather proposed to commissioners that the MCCFW request a meeting with the Montgomery County Office of Child Support Enforcement regarding how many cases it has in which the arrearages have reached such a significant level that criminal prosecution might be considered. This would be to assist the CFW in ascertaining the size of the problem which undoubtedly impacts many female heads of households in the County. Meeting with the State's Attorney's Office to discuss its policy and the reasoning on which it is based might also be helpful. A meeting with the County Office of Child Support, the County Attorney and the State's Attorney has been scheduled for June 13 at 2:30 pm. Commissioners Walker Holloway, Lindley, and Martinez expressed an interest in being present at that meeting.

After that initial collection of information, the CFW may consider whether it wants to advocate for a change in the prosecution policy.

VI. LIAISON REPORTS

A. NACW

The New Mexico Commission on the Status of Women was completely de-funded and on May 20, NACW was informed that it had to vacate the space used to house the NACW office that very day. In the face of these setbacks, NACW is trying hard to finalize the details for the National Conference in Phoenix, Arizona on July 20-23, 2011.

Executive Director Vaughan-Prather has been invited to speak at the conference and to run for the office of NACW president but she will most likely not be able to attend the conference.

B. Clearinghouse on Women's Issues Program – Arab-American and Muslim Women

On May 24, 2011, Commissioner Bakr participated in the Clearinghouse on Women's Issues discussion on social and political issues of concern and political participation by Arab-American and Muslim women. Approximately 40 people were in attendance. Commissioner Aridi Afas, who attended the event, said that Commissioner Bakr's presentation was excellent.

VII. ANNOUNCEMENTS

A. Maryland's Top 100 Women

Former members of the MCCFW were selected for inclusion in the Daily Record Maryland's Top 100 Women in 2011: Dorothy Fait (1981-82) to the Circle of Excellence; Patricia Cornish (2002-08) to the Circle of Excellence; and Resa Levy (2004-10). County Councilmember Nancy Floreen was also selected to the Circle of Excellence. Commissioners asked that a formal letter of congratulations be sent to each honoree.

VIII. ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business to come before the Commission for Women, the meeting was adjourned at 8:45 p.m.

**Minutes Submitted By
Paula S. Rodgers
Montgomery County Commission for Women**