

Maryland Commission for Women

Meeting Minutes

Thursday, September 15, 2022

5 p.m.

Attman-Glazer Building ♦ 45 Calvert Street, Annapolis, MD

Commissioners Attending:

Tawanda Bailey, Chair
Maxine Griffin Somerville, First Vice Chair
Andrea Bottner
Essita Duncan (Virtual)
Tammy Bresnahan
Deborah Cartee
Judith Emmel
Kristi S. Halford
Eugenia B. Henry (Virtual)
Kaprece James (Virtual)
Lauren M. Lambert
Patricia McHugh Lambert
Christine Lee
Jenny Peña Dias (Virtual)
Lenita Walker
Tamara E. Wilson

Yun Jung Yang (Conference Call)
Monica Watkins

Commissioners Absent:

Kathryn M. Fiddler
Beth Anne Langrell
Brenda J. McChriston
Maria Menucci
Roberta Pardo, Second Vice Chair
Carole Jaar Sepe
Evelyne S. Steward

Staff Attending:

Judith Vaughan-Prather, Executive Director
Tammy Wise, Management Associate
Lavonne Tongue, OTHS

I. Call to Order.....Chair Bailey

A quorum having been established; the meeting was called to order at 5:01 p.m.

A. Approval of Agenda

Chair Bailey welcomed the commissioners. She called for approval of the agenda for tonight's meeting. Executive Director proposed adding one item – introduction of the new commissioner. Commissioner P. Lambert moved approval of the agenda with that change. Commissioner Wilson seconded the motion which passed unanimously.

B. Approval of Minutes of the June 16, 2022 MCW Meeting

The Chair called for any amendments to the minutes of the June MCW meeting. Commissioner P. Lambert moved approval of the minutes. First Vice Chair Somerville seconded the motion which passed unanimously.

II. Executive Committee Report..... Chair Bailey

A. Meeting Inspiration

Chair Bailey called the Commissioners' attention to the quote at the top of the agenda, from Oprah Winfrey: *"Step out of the history that is holding you back. Step into the new story you are willing to create."* She said she wants to start each meeting with a quote that will remind everyone attending why they are there. The Commissioners expressed their enthusiastic approval of this idea.

B. Introduction of New Commissioner

The Governor has appointed Christine Lee to the Commission for Women, and Commissioner Lee, on very short notice, was able to attend this evening's meeting. She and the Commissioners introduced themselves to one another.

C. Appointment of Committee Chairs and Vice Chairs

Chair Bailey announced her appointment of Commissioner Wilson as Chair of the ACT, Commissioners Halford and Duncan, respectively as Chair and Vice Chair of the PAL Committee, and Commissioner L. Lambert as Chair of the ARC Committee. Commissioner Walker has agreed to serve as one of the two Coordinators for the Hall of Fame and Young Women Leaders Awards. Another Coordinator will be selected from among the ARC Committee members.

D. 2022 – 2023 MCW Meeting Locations

MCW meetings will alternate between in-person and virtual. A calendar of the meetings and their location was attached to the packets for tonight's meeting. The meetings in September, November, February and June will be in-person at the current location. The meetings for October, January, April and May will be held virtually. The MCW does not meet in December. Instead of a meeting in March, the MCW will be hosting the Hall of Fame/Young Women Leaders Award Ceremony. All Commissioners are expected to attend that event in person.

E. Maryland Ranked "Best State for Women"

Maryland was ranked No. 1 in a new U.S. News & World Report analysis comparing outcomes in gender parity. In the education category, Maryland placed first among the 50 states for lower gender disparities in math and reading scores for eighth graders, and third among them for four-year public college graduation rates. Maryland came in 4th place for balanced representation and power, based on the percentage of women and men in elected office and in managerial positions. The report noted that nationally women earn an average of 82% of what men earn in weekly wages. It's a little better in Maryland where female workers average 86 cents on the male dollar. Maryland was ranked seventh in that category.

However, [the report](#) noted: "Despite girls having higher test scores and women having higher graduation rates in every state, that doesn't translate into top-tier status in other categories. Women see lower earnings and labor force participation, report worse health statuses, and are underrepresented in both government and the private sector."

F. Internal Communications Strategy

It has been suggested that the MCW use certain messaging applications that could make it easier for Commissioners to see and keep track of messages relating to the MCW’s work. It was noted that there may be some limitations of the kinds of applications available for use by public offices, and there may be concerns related to the Open Meetings Act and the necessity of public records for Commission business and communications. Commissioner Peña Dias suggested that emails from the MCW office use blind copies for the addresses to prevent commissioners from accidentally and unnecessarily using “Reply All” and adding to the volume of emails in everyone’s inbox. She also suggested that the staff mark email messages, in the subject line, with an indication as to whether the message is just for informational purposes or if some action or a reply is necessary. The consensus was supportive of this proposal.

Commissioner Wilson noted that the requirements of the Open Meetings Act mean that any decision the MCW makes via email “voting,” must be ratified at the next MCW meeting.

III. Unfinished Business

A. MCW issue Statement Process

Over the summer months, when the MCW does not typically meet, the Executive Committee proposed a statement from the MCW in response to the U.S. Supreme Court Dobbs ruling, overturning its Roe v. Wade decision. There was considerable discussion via email about the proposed statement, and the proposal was eventually passed by a vote of 17 in favor, 6 opposed and 1 suggesting delaying the decision. Some raised questions about the process for issuing such statements. Chair Bailey reminded the MCW that the MCW’s process for all decisions is made by a vote in which all commissioners have an opportunity to participate, and the majority of votes determines the decision.

Commissioner P. Lambert noted that, on some issues, especially where there is controversy, the opportunity to discuss and hear other commissioners’ opinions is important. Commissioner Bottner agreed. Chair Bailey expressed appreciation for those comments.

Commissioner P. Lambert then moved the ratification of the vote on the proposed statement. Commissioner Watkins seconded the motion which passed unanimously.

B. MD Commission on Civil Rights (MCCR) Anniversary Event

The MCCR held a very special event on August 20, commemorating its 50th anniversary. The MCCR very generously provided a table to the MCW, at no charge. Commissioners Bailey, James, McChriston, Somerville, Watkins and Wilson represented the MCW at the event.

IV. New Business

A. Domestic Violence During the Pandemic..... P. Lambert

The House of Ruth, a shelter for survivors of domestic violence, reportedly experienced a significant drop in the number of calls for assistance it received at the beginning of the pandemic. The staff determined that in many abusive households, the shutdowns meant that abused women did not have the privacy to seek help without their abuser knowing, since they were rarely alone. The shelter staff devised a virtual application that protects the user’s privacy and the numbers of people seeking their help returned to normal.

B. The Year of Harriet Tubman..... Wilson
In March 2022, the Governor declared this year as “The Year of Harriet Tubman” in Maryland. Numerous activities are being organized in her honor. Commissioner Wilson suggested that the MCW should also find a way to commemorate her contributions. Harriet Tubman was inducted into the Maryland Women’s Hall of Fame in 1985.

V. Committee Reports

A. Advocacy and Collaboration Taskforce (ACT)..... Wilson
The SWiM Committee report indicated that Maryland women identified the following problems during the pandemic:

- A delay in seeking routine health care
- Depression and anxiety
- Loss of job or reduced work hours

The Report made thirteen recommendations. They fall into two groups: those that the Commission will address directly and those on which we hope to partner with government agencies and private businesses, schools, and organizations. To address these recommendations the Advocacy & Collaboration Taskforce (henceforth known as ACT) proposes the following to the Commission:

1. To expand our reach, support the efforts of local Commissions for Women and where Commissions for Women do not exist, encourage counties to develop one:
 - Create a list of all Commission for Women - completed
 - Have Commissioners serve as liaisons to their local CFW
 - Attend their meetings/events
 - Invite them as guests to inform MCW

This will increase our involvement and education beyond our current initiatives, while also helping us to impact a more diverse audience.

2. To empower current and future Commissioners to adequately amplify the voices of women and issues in their local jurisdictions:
 - The Commission should participate in bias training
 - Connect with the ethnic commissions to learn the needs of ethnic groups
 - Invite them to meet with MCW
3. To address the following recommendations, we propose that the PAL Committee consider researching laws being proposed by organizations that address these issues and solicit legislators to draft legislation:
 - Paid leave
 - Childcare for working women
 - Increase salaries and benefits for childcare workers
 - Fair compensation for those who took on the health risks presented by the pandemic (basic necessities and health care)
 - Affordable and consistent internet access
 - Access to technology

- Training need for new occupations available post-pandemic and for upskilling in technical fields
- Workplace mental health needs of women
- Student achievement following pandemic (develop programs to help students catch up and engage once again in learning)
- Psychological stress of students resulting from the pandemic

We suggest these issues make up the MCW’s legislative agenda for the 2023 legislative session and that legislative groups, women’s policymakers, etc. be made aware of them, and Commissions provide written and oral testimony during hearings.

We suggest the Commission connect with other organizations such as National Alliance on Mental Health (NAMI), Strong Schools, workforce development organizations, universities, HUD, and state agencies such as Department of Education, Department of Mental Health

ACT will continue as an ad hoc committee to:

- Help the Commission act more as an advocate/resource for issues that matter to women, and
- Connect with other organizations to determine how we may partner to address issues related to the recommendations.

Commissioner Halford moved approval of the plan proposed by the ACT. Commissioner P. Lambert seconded the motion which passed unanimously.

B. Policy and Legislation (PAL) Committee..... Halford

Commissioner Halford thanked Commissioner Duncan for agreeing to serve as Vice Chair of the PAL Committee again this year. The Committee plans to consider the SWiM report’s recommendations and incorporate as many as possible into its legislative agenda for the 2023 Maryland General Assembly. She noted that the Maryland Legislative Agenda for Women (MLAW) is holding its annual Fall Conference on November 22. MLAW is a private, nonprofit coalition of individuals and organizations that work together to support a list of bills of concern to women in Maryland. At its Fall Conference, a number of legislative proposals will be discussed. Later, the MLAW members will be invited to vote on which bills should be included on its agenda for this year. Once the agenda is decided, the members are invited to sign on in support. The MCW has been a member of MLAW, and a sponsor of its annual conference for many years, although the Commission does not always sign onto the agenda as it occasionally included legislation that the MCW wasn’t supporting for one reason or another. However, the MCW will establish its own list of bills it is supporting each year, and many of those, if not all on the MLAW agenda will be included on the MCW’s legislative agenda.

At the June planning meeting, the MCW approved sponsoring the MLAW Fall Conference at the “Platinum” level (\$500) and also inviting representatives of the local CFWs in the state, and also our own Commissioners to attend the conference as MCW guests.

The Women’s Legislative Briefing, sponsored primarily by the Montgomery County Commission for Women, is scheduled for January 29, 2023. The MCW’s liaison to the planning committee for this event is Commissioner McChriston.

A message was received from the president of the Virginia NOW, asking for support for a rally it is organizing outside the DC District Court where a hearing will be held to decide whether the ERA can be considered ratified and the U.S. Constitution amended, since sufficient states have now ratified it, but the deadline for ratification has long passed. (Editor’s Note: Visit this [link](#) for more information about this issue.) VA NOW also asked if the MCW would write to the Governor asking him to encourage President Biden to publish the ERA as part of the U.S. Constitution. Discussion followed, including whether the MCW may, as a state agency, participate in demonstrations, protests, etc., and noting that commissioners may do so, as individuals, not as representatives of the MCW. Since the question to be decided now is not whether the ERA should be ratified because it would enshrine equity for women in the Constitution, but whether it legally can be ratified, given the length of time that has passed since its introduction. That would seem to be a decision the courts will have to make.

C. Achievement and Recognition (ARC) Committee.....L. Lambert

Much appreciation is due to Commissioner Pardo who led the initiative to develop a policy and procedure manual outlining the process for soliciting nominations and selecting the honorees for the Hall of Fame and the Young Women Leaders Awards. The manual is now complete, and thanks go to Commissioner Pardo and the taskforce that worked to hard to get it done.

The Hall of Fame Induction and Young Women Leaders Awards Ceremony will be held March 16, 2023. It was hoped to be able to hold the event in-person this year, for the first time since 2019, and to hold it at the Miller Senate Office Building and Conference Center. However, Commissioner Bresnahan reported that the Conference Center is now temporarily housing offices for other state agencies whose building is being demolished. A new venue for the event will have to be found.

VI. Liaison Reports

A. The Foundation for the Maryland Commission for Women..... Henry

The Foundation has \$39,000 to support programs and projects of the MCW, including the ARC program. Commissioner Henry, who was elected Chair of the Foundation thanked the new board members, Commissioners James, Watkins, Langrell and Pardo for their support. Commissioner Steward, also a member of The Foundation board, has developed a fundraising plan the board will implement this year.

B. Maryland Women’s Heritage Center..... Bailey

The Center created large panels for its physical exhibit of the biographies of HOF inductees, and displayed the exhibit in its former quarters. It is now in smaller space and arranged with Notre Dame of Maryland University for the exhibit to be displayed on its campus in the future. The University plans to open its new Science Center and hold a ribbon-cutting ceremony for the HOF exhibit in March 2023, during Women’s History Month.

The Center’s Board of Directors is meeting this weekend in Frederick and has invited MCW Chair Bailey to present a briefing about the MCW.

C. Women Moving Forward (WMF) Conference.....Bottner & McChriston

No report

D. Maternal Mortality Review Stakeholders Group

No report.

E. Maryland Women’s History Museum..... Emmel
The agreement the museum’s founders had developed with the Queen Anne County for use of a facility has not worked out, so they are once again searching for a home.

F. UMD SAFE Center..... Somerville
No report.

G. Maryland 250 Commission..... Emmel
The Governor spoke to the Commission at its most recent meeting. That Commission will meet again next week.

H. NACW..... Sommerville
Commissioner Somerville has been in touch with an NACW Board member from Maryland. They will connect again soon to discuss some of the problems the organization is facing and what might be done to help.

VII. Staff Report.....Vaughan-Prather

A. Sad News

For several years, Samantha Blizzard, the DHS Secretary’s Chief of Staff, served as the liaison between the MCW staff and the DHS Secretary. Tragically, Ms. Blizzard passed away earlier this month. Her support for the MCW will be missed. A memorial to her will be included in the MCW’s annual report.

B. MCW Annual Report

The FY 2022 (July 1, 2021 – June 30, 2022) has been written and graphically designed. It is just waiting the DHS Secretary’s approval before being sent for publication.

C. Transition

Commissioners commented that with the November elections, a new governor will emerge and undoubtedly new leadership of the state government agencies as well. Commissioners P. Lambert, Halford and Bresnahan suggested that a “transition document” be prepared. Commissioner P. Lambert moved that the MCW develop a strategy for increasing the MCW budget and staff so that it can better serve the state of Maryland. Commissioner Wilson seconded the motion which passed unanimously.

VIII. Announcements

A. Executive Committee Meeting: Thursday, October 13, 2022 @ 4:30 p.m.

B. MCW Meeting: **Thursday, October 20, 2022 @ 5:00 p.m. (Virtual)**

IX. Adjournment

No further business being brought before the Commission, the meeting was adjourned at 7:01 p.m. Chair Bailey thanked all the commissioners for their thoughtful participation.

Respectfully Submitted: October 14, 2022

By: Judith Vaughan-Prather

Approved: October 20, 2022