

## Baltimore County Commission for Women Nov. 21, 2019 Meeting Minutes

Call to order at 6:03 p.m.

Present: Brenda Savoy, Cheryl Brooks, Frances Smith, Helene Waranch, Jacqui Lampell, Renee McGuirk-Spence, Rosalyn Berkowitz, Ruth Howard, Sabrina Jones, Sharon Kehnemui, Sheila Derman, Amy Blank

Absent Excused: Carmen Christiana, Cecilia Myrick, Emily Hunter, Jennie Fernandez, Kelly Carter, Nitsa Stakias Zdziera, Teresa Messler

Absent Unexcused: Dorothy Foos, Lynda K. Stahl, Vonzella Perry

1) Bylaws Committee - Parliamentarian Jones introduced amendments to update the objectives and aims and Article IV membership of the bylaws. Additional wording was added regarding payment of registration expenses and removal of commissioners who miss more than three meetings in a fiscal year.

The changes were reviewed, and some minor updates were proposed. A vote will be taken at the next meeting.

2) President Howard welcomed a guest, Rev. Angela Bullock, pastor of the Basil African Methodist Episcopal Church in Cockeysville, MD.

3) President Howard welcomed new Commissioner Amy Blank, an at-large appointee of County Executive Johnny Olszewski. Commissioner Blank provided a background about herself, describing her experience at the University of Maryland College Park, where she worked on youth advocacy; the Johns Hopkins Center for Communications Program, where she taught NGO and health nonprofit leaders; and Gacaca, Rwandan community tribunals set up to address genocide and crimes against humanity. She has worked on many political campaigns in Maryland, starting with Sen. Barbara Mikulski's first senatorial campaign. Commission members went around the table to introduce themselves to Commissioner Blank.

4) Minutes from the October 17, 2019, commission meeting were approved.

5) Treasurer's Report – The commission had no expenditures since the prior month. The balance sheet started and ended with \$9,698.16. Questions were raised about what it will take to keep the Friends of the Baltimore County Commission for Women in place since the current leadership said it is not interested in maintaining the organization. Currently, the nonprofit is required to file a 990 form for federal tax returns, and the state requires a nonprofit filing yearly. These filings are likely not current. President Howard said she has asked county Office of Community Engagement Director Debbie Risper to inquire about transferring leadership of the nonprofit and adding commission members to a revitalized Friends board. President Howard said she will escalate the topic to the county executive depending on what further action is required.

6) President's Report – President Howard introduced a proposed budget for the 2019-2020 year. The annual budget is \$10,000. Vice President Waranch moved to accept and a vote by acclamation approved the following spending priorities:

Maryland Legislative Agenda for Women (MLAW) Membership – \$75

MLAW Meeting Attendance Registrations — \$200

National Association of Women's Commission (NAWC) Membership - \$150

Annual Women of the Year Awards— \$3,000

Women's Health Fair — \$400

Voices of Baltimore County Women's Initiative — \$3150.00 (\$450 per district)

Committee on Domestic Violence — \$800

Women's Suffrage 100<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Event — \$1900

Member Nametags – \$200

Miscellaneous — \$125

Vice President Waranch noted that the event celebrating the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of women's suffrage may have sponsors, which could affect the final budget. She added that the Maryland Commission for Women is looking for partners for its August 20, 2020, suffrage celebration event, where Maryland House Speaker Adrienne Jones is speaking.

President Howard reviewed the attendance rules, clarifying that there is no clarity on what constitutes an "excused absence." She noted that ad hoc commissioners are non-voting members. Vice President Waranch motioned to have the secretary notify members when they are going to be expelled for excessive absenteeism and notify council members when their appointee has been dismissed. This was approved by acclamation.

## 7) Committee Reports

A. Human Trafficking Task Force Work Group — President Howard noted that Bella Owens resigned from the commission and suggested moving the trafficking work group to the Domestic Violence Committee since there is no longer a commissioner acting as a task force member. Commissioner Berkowitz offered to relay updates from the task force from a colleague who serves on the group. Commissioners Smith, Savoy and Berkowitz agreed that they will determine the commission's role in the work group, and whether one among them will participate on it.

B. Women's Voices Initiative — January 22, 2020, is the new date for the District 6 event. Councilwoman Bevins will attend the 6:30-8:30 p.m. meeting at Rosedale Library, and agreed to share the event details with her constituent email list. Commissioners Waranch, McGuirk-Spence, Smith, and Kehnemui all got positive replies from council members to participate in future events and will return to the next meeting with dates to schedule on the calendar. Revised fliers will be sent to all commissioners to distribute to interested communities.

C. Public Policy Agenda — Commissioner Blank mentioned that MLAW, which was having its legislative agenda meeting on Nov. 23, was very interested in how the Kirwan Commission recommendations would be executed, and suggested communicating with the county executive's

legislative director or his chief of staff regarding whom to appoint from the county to serve on the commission's funding formula workgroup.

Commissioner Derman noted that MLAW will also be discussing criminal justice reforms, which may include some marijuana possession laws. It will probably not elevate any environmental issues this session.

D. Women's Health — Commissioner Messler was absent and sent a note ahead of the meeting that she would submit a written report.

E. Domestic Violence — Commissioner Berkowitz said that she and Commissioner Savoy met with Maryland House Delegate Dana Stein, who agreed to propose legislation to add strangulation to the state felony statutes. Commissioner Berkowitz also testified in Howard County as an expert witness, noting that without visible injuries, many women can have complications and die from strangulation (due to stroke or other internal injuries). She also spoke with Maryland Coalition Against Sexual Assault (MCASA) Executive Director and Counsel Lisa Jordan, who said several county attorneys are interested in getting this felony statute on the books. Several of them have signed a letter in support of the legislation, and House Dels. Vanessa Atterbeary and Jesse Pippy and Sen. Susan Lee have also expressed their support.

Commissioner Berkowitz suggested that the commission write a letter of support for the legislation. President Howard asked her to write a draft to be sent from the commission.

Commissioner Berkowitz also suggested bringing resources to the women's voices initiative meetings for those seeking help from domestic violence situations. She can provide cards from the Department of Health to distribute. Vice President Waranch added that two other organizations wish to be added to resource distribution lists.

F. Women of the Year – Liaison Christiana was not present at the meeting. Commissioner McGuirk-Spence said she is finalizing dates for distribution of requests for nominees and for the event itself.

G. 100<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Women's Suffrage Celebration – Vice President Waranch suggested hosting the commission's event at the Sheraton on Dulaney Valley Road in Towson and hosting it as a breakfast from 8:00 a.m.-10:00 a.m. on Thursday, June 4, 2020. She said that she would like to host a panel to talk specifically about the future of women in political and professional roles in America.

Vice President Waranch and Commissioners Smith and Blank said they will meet to come up with final details and start putting together a letter to send to the county executive to promote the event. Vice President Waranch noted that the Women of the World (WOW)-Baltimore Foundation is working on finding \$100,000 donors for its 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary commemoration.

8. Announcements – WOW-Baltimore is hosting an event on March 7, 2020, at Columbus Center in downtown Baltimore. The keynote speaker is prison reform advocate Cyntoia Brown Long, who at age 16 killed a man whom she feared was going to kill her. She was given a life sentence for a murder conviction. She has since had her sentence overturned and was released in April 2019.

Adjournment – 7:32 p.m.