

Minutes for the Commission for Women

Commission for Women Meeting – December 11, 2023

Call to Order

The Commission for Women met virtually on Zoom on December 11, 2023. The meeting was called to order at 7:17 p.m. by Vice-Chair Alyssa Batchelor.

Attendees

Alyssa Batchelor – At-Large; Amber Beichler – At-Large; Helen Cole – Hunter Mill District; Pamela Montesinos – Sully District; Carla Post – Dranesville District; Enjoli Ramsey – Braddock District; Sabrina Rose-Smith – Mason District; Alesia Taylor-Boyd – Franconia District; Jordan Tautges – Springfield District; Phylicia Woods – Providence District.

Absent: Liz Hernandez Ramirez – Student Representative

Staff in attendance: Toni Zollicoffer, Lois Kirkpatrick

Visitors: None

Public Comment: None

Guest Speakers: Cathy Cole

Start time: 7:17 p.m.

End Time: 9:25 p.m.

Approval of Minutes

Helen Cole made a motion to approve the November minutes. Amber Beichler seconded the motion. None opposed; none abstained. The motion passed unanimously.

Approval of Financial Report

Sabrina Rose-Smith made a motion to approve the October and November financial reports. Carla Post seconded the motion. None opposed; none abstained. The motion passed unanimously.

Commissioner Community Updates – Amber Beichler reported that the Queer Collective is working on creating bylaws, and that the Transgender Education Association potluck went well. Alyssa Batchelor announced that she has been appointed to the Fairfax County Consolidated Community Funding Pool Selection Advisory Committee. Toni Zollicoffer noted that Alyssa Batchelor can bring attention to nonprofits the commission can support with recommendations for funding.

Phylicia Woods notified the group about the Board of Supervisors' inauguration on December 13. Phylicia Woods also thanked commissioners for a very successful year.

Commission on Aging Presentation – Cathy Cole, chair of the Fairfax Area Commission on Aging, summarized the COA's "Shape the Future of Aging" report, and proposed potential projects on which the COA and the Commission for Women could collaborate.

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Old Business

Women’s History Month 2024 – The planning committee will hold its first meeting on Wednesday, December 13 at 6:45 p.m. at the Fairfax Panera.

Sponsoring Teen Dating Violence Awareness Month – For a number of years, the commission has sponsored the annual event organized by the Domestic and Sexual Violence Services division in February (Teen Violence Awareness Month). This year the commission is asked to approve up to \$800 to rent a mobile video gaming unit. Since video games are so popular with teens, the organizers hope the mobile gaming unit will attract students to a February 22, 2024 event where they can also learn about teen dating violence. Amber Beichler made a motion to allow the executive committee to approve the \$800 expenditure pending satisfactory answers to questions raised by commissioners. Helen Cole seconded the motion. Carla Post opposed; Pamela Montesinos abstained. The motion passed.

New Business

Expectations for Commissioners – Alyssa Batchelor showed a document that outlined member responsibilities stated in the commission’s bylaws. She also announced that the monthly “Commissioner Community Update” report-outs will be moved to near the beginning of each meeting. In addition, there will now be time set aside during some commission meetings for to have work sessions for these two committees: (1) Violence Against Women, and (2) Mental Health and Teen Depression.

Focus Area Assignments – The membership of the two committees are: (1) Mental Health and Teen Depression Committee: Alesia Taylor-Boyd; Alyssa Batchelor; Carla Post; Enjoli Ramsey; Liz Hernandez Ramirez and Sabrina Rose-Smith. (2) Violence Against Women Committee: Amber Beichler, Helen Cole; Jordan Tautges; Pamela Montesinos and Phylicia Woods. According to the bylaws, each committee will need to appoint a chair and vice-chair.

Making Decision by Consent – Lois Kirkpatrick explained the consent decision-making model, and proposed that the commission use it to ensure full engagement by all members instead of allowing a vocal minority to control discussions. Sabrina Rose-Smith made a motion to have a one-meeting trial of consent-based decision-making at the January meeting. Enjoli Ramsey seconded the motion. Alyssa Batchelor opposed; Carla Post and Jordan Tautges abstained. The motion passed.

Item Not on Agenda – Lois Kirkpatrick reported that she received confirmation that it violates the Virginia Freedom of Information Act to conduct commission meetings by email through the use of “blind copying” members on emails. She clarified that any member can email announcements to any number of other commissioners, but that there cannot be two-way email discussions by more than two commissioners (even if the others are only “blind copied”) because they are effectively conducting commission business in a way that the public cannot access.

Speaking to Girl Up Groups – This item is being moved to the agenda of the January meeting.

Virginia General Assembly Legislative Preview – Alyssa Batchelor noted that there are likely to be a number of bills related to women in the state legislature’s 2024 session. She reminded commissioners that they were invited to a December 18 Health and Human Services legislative hearing.

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Main Motions

Amber Beichler made a motion to allow the executive committee to approve spending up to \$800 to sponsor the annual Teen Dating Violence Awareness Month event, pending satisfactory answers to several questions raised by commissioners. Helen Cole seconded the motion. Carla Post opposed; Pamela Montesinos abstained. The motion passed.

Sabrina Rose-Smith made a motion to have a one-meeting trial of consent-based decision-making at the January meeting. Enjoli Ramsey seconded the motion. Alyssa Batchelor opposed; Carla Post and Jordan Tautges abstained. The motion passed.

Adjournment

Carla Post moved to adjourn. Jordan Tautges seconded the motion. The meeting adjourned at 9:25 p.m.