

**STATE OF DELAWARE - COMMISSION FOR WOMEN**  
**Office of Women's Advancement and Advocacy**  
**Department of Human Resources**

Regular Meeting  
Dover, Cannon Building  
Tuesday, October 24, 2017  
10:30 a.m. to 12:00 p.m.

**Attendees:**

Melanie Ross Levin, Director, Office for Women's Advancement and Advocacy  
Dr. Marian Palley, Commissioner, Chair  
Sherese Brewington-Carr, Commissioner  
Alisha W. Bryson, Commissioner  
Katherine Caudle, Commissioner  
Dr. Sobia Choudhri, Commissioner  
Sherry Dorsey Walker, Commissioner  
Rosalia Velazquez, Commissioner  
Lydia E. Massey, Director, Boards and Commissions  
Mary Darby, Department of Human Resources

**MINUTES**

**Call to Order and Roll Call:**

Department of Human Resources ("DHR") Acting Secretary Sandra Johnson absent due to emergency; Michelle Taylor absent.

**Introductions of Commissioners:** Chair Palley

Each Commissioner briefly introduced herself. It was the consensus of the members that women are the key to saving our communities and our world.

**Welcome:** Director Ross Levin, on behalf of Acting Secretary Johnson

Acting Secretary Johnson wants Delaware to be an employer of women. Delaware's Office of Women's Advancement and Advocacy ("OWAA") is the first state office of its kind in the country; the City of Boston has had such an office for ten years.

**Updates:** Director Ross Levin

The OWAA has a staffing role for three sister groups: the Commission for Women (the "Commission"), the Delaware Women's Hall of Fame Committee, and the Delaware Women's

Workforce Council, which will concentrate on pay equity. The OWAA will work with the DHR, the Governor's Office, and the General Assembly to move legislation forward. We will be looking at HB 4, the Ivy Reports, and the Governor's Action Plan. We will hire someone responsible for policy and research, and an executive secretary. We are in the process of creating a website, and want to have a voice on multiple social media platforms. Please let me know about events that we would have an interest in and might want to publicize.

**Vice Chair Election Process:** Dr. Marian Palley, Chair

Chair Palley stated that the Commission needs to elect a Vice Chair, who will be responsible for presiding over meetings when the Chair cannot attend. Commissioner Brewington-Carr volunteered for this position. A motion was proposed, seconded by Commissioner Dorsey Walker, and unanimously approved by voice vote.

**Open Discussion to Address Bylaws and Structure:**

Ms. Massey brought sample bylaws for use in laying out a structure of the Commission and setting the goals to be discussed by the Commission. Commissioner Brewington-Carr asked Ms. Massey to share her research and comparable bylaws of other states' commissions.

Ms. Massey suggested creating a user-friendly website with helpful articles, such as "How to Divorce without an Attorney" and possibly having paid advertisements from daycare centers and other organizations.

Commissioner Brewington-Carr asked that the Commission use a dropbox for its documents, and Director Ross Levin agreed. Commissioner Brewington-Carr stated that prior work of the Commission has been archived. Hundreds of women had input about women's concerns based on a survey, and the report summarizing the survey's findings needs to be finished. Director Ross Levin would like to see flyers and information about past events of the Commission.

Ms. Massey asked when the Commission's old website will come down. It shows the prior members and is causing confusion.

Chair Palley requested volunteers for a Bylaws Subcommittee. Commissioners Brewington-Carr, Bryson, and Caudle volunteered. Ms. Massey suggested that the Subcommittee might want to elect a Chair. Chair Palley stated that she will chair the Bylaws Subcommittee.

Chair Palley would like the Commission to meet on the last Monday of the month and proposed the meeting months as September, November, January, March, May and, if needed, June. Having the meetings take place in Dover would keep it in the middle county of the state. Commissioner Caudle mentioned that the meetings are open to the public. Chair Palley will send an email regarding the time of the meetings. Commissioner Brewington-Carr moved to accept the meeting day and months; Commissioner Caudle seconded the motion; the motion was unanimously approved by voice vote. Chair Palley moved that the meetings take place in Dover; Commissioner Bryson seconded the motion; the motion was unanimously approved by voice vote. A motion to meet from 10:30 a.m. until noon was made, seconded, and unanimously

approved by voice vote. Commissioner Brewington-Carr stated that the date of the November 2017 meeting will coincide with the long Thanksgiving holiday weekend; however, it was agreed to meet on November 27<sup>th</sup> this year.

Chair Palley requested ideas of women's issues for the Commission to work on. Commissioner Velazquez noted the high occurrence of domestic violence in Sussex County, along with increasing instances of young teenage girls with much older men. Chair Palley stated that there is a very active Domestic Violence Coalition, which might be able to help us by providing outreach, speakers, and workshops. Commissioner Brewington-Carr suggested that the Commission make live statements or PSAs to present its focus on the needs of women in Delaware, using visual aids, and having a presence on the Governor's office website. Chair Palley suggested that each county in Delaware hold an event announcing the Commission's purpose to the public and highlighting a dynamic speaker from that county.

Chair Palley asked for volunteers for this Needs of Women in Delaware Subcommittee; Commissioners Caudle, Dorsey Walker, and Velazquez volunteered, with Commissioner Dorsey Walker agreeing to chair the subcommittee. Commissioner Dorsey Walker suggested that the Commission could work with the recently created Delaware African and Caribbean Affairs Commission. Commissioner Velazquez noted that, as a society, we constantly tell the story from a negative viewpoint; and that we try to find a positive voice, such as a survivor of violence to women. Ms. Massey mentioned also working with Delaware's newly re-established Human Trafficking Interagency Coordinating Council.

Commissioner Brewington-Carr suggested that the Commission issue a statement or advisory around breast cancer awareness and that it needs to be a holistic discussion, preferably during October. Chair Palley did not see a way to accomplish this with one week remaining in the month, but wants to remember this for next year. Director Ross Levin cautioned that the bylaws need to be established before such a statement could be made on behalf of the Commission. Commissioner Dorsey Walker reminded us that breast cancer awareness is not just for October. Commissioner Brewington-Carr stated that we need to be prepared to act; however, Ms. Massey reiterated that there needs to be a structure to that action, which bylaws will provide. Chair Palley will call The News Journal and ask them to interview her regarding the needs of women in Delaware. Director Ross Levin stated that she put in a request for access to social media channels. For instance, the women in the Boston office are on Twitter and Facebook. When she gets that permission, she will let us know. Also, the DHR is a new state department; she will work with the DHR Communications Director on this.

Chair Palley restated that Commissioners Dorsey Walker, Caudle, and Velazquez will discuss breast cancer awareness, human trafficking, and domestic violence; and she would like this subcommittee to meet before the next Commission meeting. Ms. Massey suggested adding women's corrections and juvenile justice as part of the original issues. Director Ross Levin suggested having a listening session at the Women's Correctional Institution; Commissioner Brewington-Carr replied that the same suggestion and many others have been made over the years by thousands of people working on these issues. Chair Palley stated that these problems have not gone away; but we cannot remove ourselves – we have to keep at it, we have to keep addressing these issues. Commissioner Velazquez asked what our intent and focus are: to

educate? We do not want to dilute important messages. We should pick three issues to address. Chair Palley responded that the Commission should work on that. Ms. Massey stated that everyone should study what is in the Delaware Code. You need a Mission Statement, etc.; you need an ongoing subcommittee. You cannot conflict with the Code, but you can add structure – it is the most important thing to get in the beginning. Chair Palley replied that the Needs of Women in Delaware Subcommittee will do that. Ms. Massey stated that the bylaws will be voted on by the entire Commission. Commissioner Brewington-Carr asked if the public can call in. Ms. Massey said that if you call in, you cannot vote; and the public cannot call in.

A motion to adjourn was proposed, seconded, and approved unanimously by voice vote.

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