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Mayor

# CITY OF HARTFORD

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## Permanent Commission on the Status of Hartford Women

Meeting Minutes  
Monday May 17<sup>th</sup> 2021 5:30-7:00pm

### Virtual Meeting

1. Call to Order at 5:33
2. Roll Call
  - a. Present: Chairwoman Pope, Vice Chairwoman Leach, Commissioners: Melinda Johnson, Shannon Kula, and Yadira Jeter
  - b. Present: City Staffer Faith Palmer, Karen Taylor, Kimberly Taylor, Research Assistant Jillian Davey
  - c. Absent: Managing Secretary Erica Crowley, Commissioners Janeé Folston, Haben Abraham
3. Approval of Previous Meeting Minutes
  - a. No corrections
4. Officer Reports
  - a. Chairwoman Pope
    - i. Nominations committee has been appointed (Chairwoman Pope, Vice Chairwoman Leach and Commissioner Johnson) for officer positions.
    - ii. Questions asked to Karen Taylor, Director of the Office of Equity and Opportunity, City of Hartford.
      1. Any group working to assist women through the process of joining HPD/HFD?
        - a. Karen still doing research and looking into if there are any groups assisting women interesting in joining HPD or HFD

2. Any promotional materials for Commissions? Just a link currently
  - a. Karen is looking for other city Commission's promotional material and is asking for Commissioners to volunteer to look at other cities' commissions for examples.
    - i. Research Assistant Jillian Davey looked at other city's commissions websites and promotional materials
    - ii. Commissioner Kula suggests looking at Richmond, and Alexandria Virginia
3. Can we use social media to reach a broader audience including the youth in Hartford?
  - a. Answer: Yes. Other City Commissions already have social media accounts (Facebook pages), and it is a great way to reach broader audiences.
  - b. PCSHW can have a Facebook page.
    - i. Thoughts from Commissioners: Commissioner Melinda Johnson– asked about nature/purpose of a Commission Facebook page? Is it just to showcase our actions or is it to get feedback from community?
      1. Question for the recruitment committee to discuss
    - iii. Marlene Fleeting, Interim Director of Human Resources, will present HR's quarterly report to the Commission in June
  - b. Vice-Chairwoman Leach
    - i. Vice-Chairwoman Leach is resigning from the Commission. This is her last meeting. She will help out with nominations for officer positions.
5. Committees and Special Reports
  - a. Chairwoman Pope proposed we move the Aurora Report up first
6. Special Orders
  - a. Jennifer Steadman, Executive Director of Aurora Women and Girls Foundation – Annual Report
    - i. Essential Equity: Women, Covid-19, and Rebuilding CT
      1. Aurora Foundation presented their Essential Equity report to the Gates Foundation in March. They received funding from the Women's Funding Network, which was used to fund Covid Emergency Response Fund, as part of Women's Giving Circle and also to do this report.

2. The Essential Equity report was a collaborative project funded by five women's funds across the state. Aurora also worked with nonprofits serving women and girls across the state for policy recommendations. Data focused on March – September of last year (when pandemic was building to crescendo) and they hope to revisit this data.
3. Aurora was able to update Women and Girls Data Platform, which was a tool that made it possible for them to respond quickly to Covid. They knew that women and girls, particularly women and girls of color would be hit hardest and data supported this, and found that women were disproportionately impacted by the pandemic, particularly women of color. Aurora's recommendations around this were on expanding HUSKY eligibility and access and access to telehealth, and recognizing racism as public health crisis.
4. Women as Caregivers and Essential Workers — For first time women passed men in unemployment claims in CT. Women are essential to CTs economy and unless we address women, we're not going to have a full recovery. Need to advocate for policies for guaranteed sick leave, paid family leave, increasing minimum wage, building more opportunities for job training and advancement for women.
5. Childcare Crisis – An expected impact of the pandemic is the greater loss of childcare spots. 94% of families of color can't afford high quality child care and small childcare centers are 92% women owned—largely women of color. Advocating for expansion of eligibility for Care 4 Kids. Continuing push for universal early education and childcare in CT.
6. Eviction moratoriums — Up to 1/3<sup>rd</sup> of black women are not confident in their ability to pay rent. With eviction moratoriums ending, we could be facing huge number of evictions and increases in homelessness. Advocating for extending eviction moratorium and federal vouchers
7. Mental Health — Increase in mental health needs, particularly for women of color. 70% of females reported experiencing mental health concerns, and there has been an increase of more challenging mental health issues (need more services). Advocating for extending and expanding access to telehealth. Also make sure telehealth visits get reimbursed same way as in person
8. Domestic Violence — Increase in domestic violence and increased costs because survivors had to be housed in hotels rather than shelters. Advocating for increased funding for DV survivors and survivors of trafficking and sexual assault

9. Hunger — fourfold increase in calls to 211 about help buying food. 300% increase in SNAP applications. These leveled off with increased unemployment benefits but as soon as benefits ended, spike increased again. Recommendations: expanded eligibility for SNAP
  - ii. Major takeaways of the report: this data exists. This is a tool to use in advocating for women. Women are powerful contributors to CT's economy and the more we can highlight that fact, the more compelling it makes it to move resources to women and girls and what we're advocating for.
    1. Commissioner Kula asked if there has been progress on any of Aurora's recommendations. There has been progress on some including discussion on racism as public health issue and other laws around expanding care for kids.
    2. Commissioner Kula asked if there is anything from a policy standpoint that the PCSHW can be engaged in. Engaging with city budget; think about where money and resources are going.
7. Committees and Special Reports
- a. Policy Committee
    - i. There was an abbreviated meeting last April, in which the Committee identified 5-10 bills moving through legislation that the Commission wanted to advocate for. The Committee decided to communicate and advocate to the mayor. The mayor shared breakdown of categories on how City of Hartford would breakdown federal in next 3 years. The day after mayor asked for community input on \$11 million federal money spending, the Policy Committee drafted a draft letter to mayor, taking his categories and also thinking about how to address his issues in addition to the very specific topic of HPD. The Commission is considering the letter to approve it to send to the mayor. The letter includes the following suggestions:
      1. Community Safety and Wellness – Increased funding for HPD specifically for hiring of 60 female Hartford residents to make women 25% of the police department. Increased funding for HPD to institute free applications, free uniforms, and paid childcare for female Hartford residents who want to go through application process (women need childcare in order to pursue employment and economic opportunities). The Committee is willing to include fire department, but don't currently have data on the Fire Department.
      2. Youth Services — Increase funding for sports leagues and police explorer programs.
      3. Business Support and Activation — Designating 50% of funding for women-owned small businesses, given dramatic statistics showing more than 75% of job losses were female during the pandemic

4. Housing-Focused Non-Profits — Designating funding specifically for a new program aimed to provide home-ownership grants to Hartford residents who serve HPD encouraging officers to live where they work. Support rental subsidies for women to assist with back-rent and homelessness
  5. Economic and Community Development to restore economic activity and promote economic growth — Expand funding for Hartford childcare programs, increasing spots available and increased subsidies for care
    - ii. Research Assistant Jillian Davey expressed qualms about the extensive focus on giving more funding to the police rather than other community programs.
    - iii. Commissioner Johnson agreed with Jillian on the concept of this being recommendations on how money is spent. Don't think increased spending on getting women in police should be happening through this pocket of money. It should happen from regular budget, not stimulus spending/grants. City of Hartford could provide health care bill assistance. City and private hospital providers could help women. Add healthcare expenses to childcare expenses section
    - iv. Chairwoman Pope commented that 3-times more money is recommended for non-police funding and overall the letter has pretty good balance. Chairwoman Pope motioned to approve letter to send to mayor and council.
      1. Motion passed in favor to send the letter to the mayor
- b. Recruitment and Planning Committee
- i. Chairwoman Pope wrote to Karen Taylor to encourage the mayor to send an eblast out to City Commissioners and boards regarding recruitment. Karen Taylor is working on a partnership with the Mayor's Office—Priority is to make sure boards are fully staffed and functioning and making sure people know this is a service opportunity.
  - ii. Other City Commissions (LBGTQ+ Commission) have Facebook pages
  - iii. Application sent out to all commissioners with request for more names. By-laws can go up to 20 members.
  - iv. Commissioner Jeter has invited faith-based individual to share with PCSHW in July on issues relating to women
  - v. Research Assistant Jillian Davey reported on other Cities' Commissions' social media. She suggested we update the PCSHW city website landing page info and will work with Karen and Kimberly Taylor.

## 8. Old/Unfinished Business

- a. Commissioner Kula gave an update regarding the Commission's Bylaws. Increased total number of members to 20. All members must be Hartford residents. The composition of the Commission has broad membership & representation and no more than 2/3rds of full membership can be comprised of the same political party (as per City Ordinance).
  - i. Several minor corrections were made during the meeting. The Commission will have staff support provided by City of Hartford. If the Commission does receive grants or donations in future, they have to be approved by City Council. Updated date and time of meetings – changed to be the third Monday of every month.
  - ii. City Staffer Faith Palmer commented that there should be an update to Notice of Meetings, which references technology that doesn't really reflect what we use. The bylaws don't have anything about meeting virtually or over conference, and also talks about things being mailed out even though the Commission doesn't follow that script any longer in 2021.
- b. Chairwoman Pope motioned to Vote to approve bylaws as amendments. Seconded by Commissioner Kula. All in favor. Bylaws have passed and will be put through to the next steps.

## 9. New Business

- a. No new business
  - i. Motion to approve the slate by Erica Crowley, seconded by Mary-Jane Foster. All were in favor and the motion passed.

## 10. Public Comments

- a. Leslie Hammond - Leslie thanked the Commission for great service.

## 11. Announcements

- a. Karen Taylor announced that she is looking to transition to transition PCSHW back under Office of Equity and Opportunity starting next month. She praised Faith Palmer and thanked her for taking up the mantle. Faith has been very supportive in helping with the transition.
  - i. The Commission expressed major thanks to City Staffer Palmer for everything she's done for the Commission
- b. The finalized letter to the Mayor will be sent to Chairwoman Pope tomorrow to send on to the Mayor

## 12. Meeting adjourned at 6:51pm.