

Virginia Council on Women

Minutes

Wednesday, March 3, 2021

Virtual Meeting

(Meeting held virtually on the platform Cisco Webex Meetings due to COVID19.)

Members Present: Ashley Reynolds Marshall (Chair); Michelle Strucke (Vice-Chair); Aisha Johnson (Secretary); Kelly Thomasson, Secretary of the Commonwealth (Ex-Officio Council Member); Heather Caputo; Nicole Cary; Margie Del Castillo; LaShawn Farmer; Courtney Hill; Da'Shaun Joseph; Aesha Mehta; Karishman Merchant; Marisol Morales-Diaz; Kara Moran; Brigitta Toruno; and Ramunda Young

Staff Present: Traci J. DeShazor, Deputy Secretary of the Commonwealth (Staff Liaison); Suzanne Holland, Special Assistant for Advisory Board Administration and Director of Women's Outreach; Rose Minor, Director of LGBTQ+ Outreach; Maribel Castaneda, Director of Appointments

Others in Attendance: Dr. Laurie Forlano, Deputy Director, Office of Epidemiology, Virginia Department of Health

Welcome, Call to Order, and Meeting Overview: Chair Ashley Reynolds-Marshall called the meeting to order at 10:06 a.m. and gave the welcome.

Agenda and Minutes: The January 13, 2021 meeting minutes were not completed at the time of the meeting. The March 3, 2021 meeting agenda was unanimously approved on a motion by Nicole Cary and seconded by Da'Shaun Joseph.

Public Comment: No public comments were submitted at the time of the meeting. Ms. Holland notified the Council that Ms. Minor and Ms. Castaneda were in attendance.

Chair's Report: Ms. Reynolds-Marshall presented the Chair's Report. The Office of the Attorney General has opened an Office of Civil Rights. The One Virginia Plan has been released by the Office of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion. The Office of New Americans has held its first meeting. Meetings of the Health Equity Taskforce continue and are currently focusing on equity in the response to COVID-19. The Council Members are asked to continue fundraising for the STEAM-H Essay Contest. Ms. Joseph placed the links to

the essay contest and the donation website in the chat feature. They include: <https://www.women.virginia.gov/stem-essay-contest/> and <https://www.stemforher.org/donate/>

Board Administration & Women's Outreach Update: Ms. Holland gave the Board Administration and Women's Outreach Update. She stated that the next Council on Women meeting is scheduled for September 2021, and the Council will need to schedule a meeting before that time to address upcoming events. Ms. Holland also gave a timeline for creating an Executive Summary or Report to submit to the Office of the Governor. January-April 2021, committees should meet to discuss what the report will include from their respective committees. April-June, 2021 a draft report or summary should be created with recommendations. A finalized draft of the report or summary should be completed by the end of June 2021. July-August 2021, the Council should review and approve the report or summary. August-September 2021, the report or summary should be presented to Governor Northam.

February 11, 2021, an event was presented by the STEAM-H Committee. The event, *Celebrating Women and Girls in Science Day*, was a virtual discussion hosted by First Lady Pam Northam, and featuring Council Member Joseph. A recording of the event has been placed on the Council's Facebook Page. February was Black History Month. African American Outreach events were held. Ms. DeShazor requested in the chat feature that anyone contact her if they want to receive outreach from the African American Advisory Board. She can place those individuals on the distribution list. Women's History Month is in March. Governor Northam issued a proclamation, which is available on-line

(<https://www.governor.virginia.gov/newsroom/proclamations/proclamation/womens-history-month.html>).

The Governor also released a press release regarding events across the Commonwealth being held in honor of Women's History Month. The press release is available on-line

(<https://www.governor.virginia.gov/newsroom/all-releases/2021/march/headline-893269-en.html>). Below are significant months throughout the remainder of the year:

April: Sexual Violence Awareness Month

April: Women and Girls' Wellness Month

May: Mental Health Awareness Month

August 3: Black women's Equal Pay Day

August 18: Women's Equality Day and the 101st Anniversary of the 19th Amendment

September 8: Native Women's Equal Pay Day

October: Domestic Violence Awareness Month and Breast Cancer Awareness Month

October 21: Latina Women's Equal Pay Day

The STEAM-H contest timeline has been extended to March 5. Some regions do not have representation in need-based applications. Ms. Hill asked which regions were not represented. Ms. Holland stated that those regions include Southwest and the Shenandoah Valley. Other regions have been represented with only one need-based application.

Efforts continue to receive donations, receive applications, coordinate judges, and plan the virtual awards ceremony.

Administration Update: Commonwealth: Secretary Thomasson gave the Administration Update of the Commonwealth. She stated that the competition among advisory boards to nominate new members has concluded and the Council of Women took second place. The General Assembly wrapped up its session this week with many advancements in new legislation, including abolishing the death penalty. Moving forward, Secretary Thomasson and her office will make an extra effort to show advisory boards how their recommendations turn into policy.

Committee Reports: Aisha Johnson gave the Community Engagement Committee report. The Committee is planning a virtual women's summit for Saturday, March 13, from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. The event is a partnership with the Virginia Tech Women's Alliance. It will be held on VT's Zoom Account, allowing for up to 250 attendees. VT also secured a funder for enhanced closed captioning services. The theme is *Stand Up and Speak Out, Women Using Their Voices to Create Change*. Dr. Janice Underwood with the Virginia Office of Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion will serve as the keynote speaker. The workshop speakers will include the following. Dr. Menah Pratt-Clarke, VT Vice President for Strategic Affairs, Diversity, and Inclusion will speak about women being allies as each other. Dr. Abrina Schnurman, Executive Director of the Batten Leadership Institute at Hollins University will lead a discussion on women finding their voices in the workplace. Dr. Sandra Treadway with the Library of Virginia, and Megan Shockley, historian and author, will speak about advancements in Virginia history by women and what remains to be done. Council Members are needed to serve as

moderators of workshops, giving time cues and asking panelists questions placed in the chat feature. Secretary Thomasson inquired about how the event is being publicized. Aisha Johnson stated that it is being publicized by Virginia Tech Women's Alliance and the Council on Women. Council Members are also asked to get the word out about the event in their circles to drive registration. Ms. Young mentioned that donation information for the STEAM-H essay contest will be shown during virtual summit breaks.

Vice-Chair Strucke gave the Healthcare Committee update. The Committee will hold a maternal health summit follow-up on April 22. They are securing speakers to include medical professionals, academic professionals who can discuss inequity and racism in medicine, speakers from advocacy groups, and stories of women's experiences. This event could provide information to the Virginia Department of Health and Human Resources in its Maternal Health Strategic Plan. Chair Reynolds-Marshall announced that the YWCA is taking a Stand Against Racism and treating racism as a public health crisis.

Secretary Thomasson announced that Ms. DeShazor added to her responsibilities, Director of Vaccine Outreach.

COVID Impact on Women: Dr. Forlano gave the report on the COVID Impact on Women. Dr. Forlano is a ten year employee of the Virginia Department of Health. She stated that Virginia is approaching one year since the first documented case of COVID-19. The summer months saw an increase in positive cases. Numbers have since decreased to between 1,000-2,000 positive cases per day. The percent positivity rate is 6-7%. The goal is to have a percent positivity rate under 10%, with 5% and below being ideal. Fifty-two percent of positive cases in Virginia are women. More women than men have received at least one dose of the vaccine. Women make up 80% of the healthcare workforce and healthcare workers being vaccinated which partially accounts for the higher number of vaccinations among women. The same is true for the teaching and public education profession. Employers need to elevate women in the workforce, as more women than men are staying home during the Pandemic to care for children. Dr. Forlano stated that Virginia has done well in keeping childcare facilities open for working parents. Aisha Johnson and Ms Hill inquired about the effort to vaccinate 16 and 17 year old teenagers who have underlying medical conditions. Ms. Forlano stated that this population can pre-register on the Virginia Department of Health web site and identify as having an underlying medical condition. She also stated that an effort may be made to get this population into closed clinics held for specific populations, similar to how teachers and those in the education profession were vaccinated. This

effort may advance the timeline to reach this population. Vice-Chair Strucke commented that the high risk list may need to be expanded to include other conditions, and the Council may make recommendations to Governor Northam to address the impact COVID-19 is having on women. Dr. Forlano suggested a recommendation that employers allow employees to stay home if they are sick or caring for sick children, and not have to use paid leave. Some individuals in lower wage jobs do not have paid leave and work when sick to avoid losing income. Chair Reynolds-Marshall requested that Dr. Forlano share visuals of data, including data on the impact of COVID-19 on women in rural communities.

Committee Reports, cont...: Ms. Joseph gave the STEAM-H Committee report. To date the donation drive has raised \$2,700, equaling \$270 per award recipient. Nine percent of donations came from the link. Ms. Joseph's employer gave a \$300 donation and Dominion Energy gave a donation. Ms. Joseph stated that she can make an ask on behalf of a Council Member. She also stated that she may be able to involve an organization in next year's contest to assist students in writing their essays. Ms. Del Castillo will create a post for social media to request donations. Aisha Johnson has made donation requests of American Electric Power and Wells Fargo. Below are additional suggestions that were placed in the chat feature:

United Healthcare of the Mid-Atlantic
Capitol One
GE
ADP
Murphy & McGonigle, PC
Patient First
Troutman Sanders, LLP
McGuireWood LLP
Morrison & Foerster LLP
Hunton & Williams LLP
Pfizer, Inc.
Charles Ryan Associates
Latham & Watkins LLP

Also placed in the chat feature:

Ms. Joseph: The contest ends March 5, that is the last day to receive essay submissions. Judging will be held March 9-23. Ms. Joseph is also taking fundraising suggestions.

Ms. Holland: April 12 is the tentative date for the virtual awards ceremony. Contact Ms. Holland if you wish to serve as a judge.

Discussion: Committee Restructure: Chair Reynolds-Marshall led the discussion on changing committee structures. She suggested changing the STEAM-H Committee to the Education Equity Committee, changing the Healthcare Committee to the Healthcare and Environmental Equity Committee, and not changing the name of the Community Engagement Committee, but investigating additional opportunities for advocacy. Chair Reynolds-Marshall also suggested creating a Workforce Development and Business Equity Committee. These adjustments will allow the committees to broaden the scope of their work. The suggestion to adjust the committees and task the Council with submitting an annual report to the Office of the Governor was unanimously approved on a motion made by Chair Reynolds-Marshall and seconded by Ms. Moran.

The meeting adjourned at 11:59 a.m. with unanimous approval.

Submitted,

Aisha Johnson, Secretary