

# Michigan Women's Commission Meeting Minutes, April 18 2016

Kellogg Center, East Lansing, Michigan 48824

## Attendance

Chair Chris Etienne, Commissioner Joanne Dawley, Commissioner Meg Derrer, Commissioner Renee Haley, Commissioner Bobbie Gaunt, Commissioner Cathleen Knauf, Commissioner Deidre Lambert-Bounds, Commissioner Darlene Lee, Commissioner Alyssa Martina, Commissioner Janice Nearon, Commissioner Sara Schroeder, Commissioner Beverly Wall. Executive Director Susy Avery, Director of Program Elizabeth Thompson.

Commissioners Krista Haroutunian and Kathleen Vogelsang were excused.

Ex Officios and Liaisons attending included Kristina Leonardi, MVAA; Wendy Fitzner, MDEQ; Ruthanne Okun, LARA; Marchan Darby, MDTMB; Tammy Flynn, Workforce Development; Michelle Riddering, MDFIS;

Guests included Jim Spaulding, LARA; Wanda Stokes, LARA; Lori Shemka, Michigan Supreme Court; Cheryl Zorn, Michigan Court of Appeals; Michelle Massey

The speaker phone system did not work.

## Minutes

1. Chair Etienne called the meeting to order at 2: 03 p.m. The Roll Call was taken and a quorum was present. Vice Chair Kathleen Vogelsang, Commissioner Bobbie Gaunt, and Commissioner Krista Haroutunian were excused.
2. Chair Etienne introduced our new Commissioners.  
Sara Schroeder is a registered nurse and an Army veteran, serving in Desert Storm. She works for the Veterans Administration and is the Women Veterans Program Manager for thirty five counties in Michigan, from Saginaw to the Mackinac Bridge.  
Beverly Wall owns her own company, Languages International, based in Grand Rapids. She has won numerous awards and served on numerous boards. She has been named one of West Michigan's Most Influential Women by the Grand Rapids Business Journal. She was recently appointed, unanimously, to the Grand Rapids Township Boards. But, she claims her passion is to help the next generation of women entrepreneurs.  
Dr. Darlene Lee holds a Ph.D. from Wayne State University. She is CEO of Darling Communication, and is known as a leadership strategist and coach who works to bridge gender, diversity and equity gaps in the workplace. She serves on numerous boards, including being Director of Communications for the American Association of University Women in Detroit.

In addition, she introduced Agustin V. Arbulu, the Director of the Michigan Department of Civil Rights, who welcomed the Commission, and extended greetings on behalf of the Michigan Civil Rights Commission.

3. It was moved and seconded to adopt the agenda as proposed. Passed.
4. Chair Etienne introduced our speakers, Justice Bridget Mary McCormack and Justice Joan L. Larsen, Justice of the Michigan Supreme Court. They held a lively informal conversation with the commissioners and audience. They mentioned that women of the generation entering the workforce want work-life balance, a balance that earlier generations of women didn't think they were entitled to. Younger women are more creative about how to craft their lives. They spoke about the high costs of law school, but stressed that lawyers in public-service careers can have student loans forgiven after a period of public service employment. They spoke about the Court, and noted how collegial it was. The Court receives about 3,000 requests to hear cases each year. Oral arguments can now be seen on YouTube. The Court is emphasizing increased use of technology in Michigan's court system, but the justices acknowledged that the co-ordination of 83 county systems is challenging. When asked about dealing with sexism in their careers, both justices acknowledged that sexism still exists in the career of law. But, Justice Larsen commented that she had two choices – to get angry at a sexist comment or to laugh at it, and she chose to laugh.
5. Chair Etienne called for Advisory and Special Committee Reports.
6. Commissioners Haley and Gaunt reported on the work of the Women Veterans committee. Their activities include working with Grand Valley State University to conduct another women veterans survey, targeting the "everyday" veteran, rather than focusing on the disabled veterans or women who have experienced military sexual trauma. Women veterans do not want to be labelled. Committee members continue to work with the Michigan Veterans Affairs Agency with the goal of creating a statewide Women Veterans Advisory group. Commission Haley spoke on the Veterans Freedom Park opening on May 25.
7. Commissioner Knauf reported on the many activities of the Human Trafficking committee. The Michigan Lodging and Tourism Association conference will be holding a training on recognizing human trafficking in the hospitality industry with Samantha Sanders, of the SAFE Action Project, who will be doing additional trainings in Southwest Michigan. Commissioner Lambert-Bounds reported working with Southfield Schools to explore development of peer-to-peer outreach for at-risk students. Much work continues with commissioner's involvement with regional task forces. It was reported that Kent County's task force held a train-the-trainer training, targeting health care, education and the hospitality industry, and has developed a resource guide. The Oakland/Macomb County task force held a March conference, and has developed informational posters. The Southwest Michigan task force held a law enforcement training for Buchanan.

The committee stressed the importance of careful use of language when speaking about human trafficking. Recent examples include the use in the media of the term “child prostitute” rather than “trafficking victim”. Part of raising awareness about human trafficking is to object when terms such as “child prostitute” are used.

8. Chair Etienne reported on the committee’s progress on initiatives to help increase the representation of women on corporate boards. Dean Lawson and faculty of the College of Business of Grand Valley State University are conducting research on women’s participation on corporate boards. The committee has been working with Crain’s Detroit Business and their development of a directory of women who are qualified to serve on corporate boards. The advisory board for this project includes Mary Kramer, of Crain’s, and representatives from Deloitte. The advisory board is exploring the possibility of bringing a program to Michigan to help women become board-ready. Commissioners are also exploring the possibility of establishing a chapter of the National Association of Corporate Directors to Michigan, and working with Davenport University on networking opportunities.
9. Executive Director Susy Avery told the commissioners that both she and Chair Chris Etienne will be attending the Mackinac Policy Conference.
10. Director of Program Elizabeth Thompson reported that the Michigan Women’s Commission will be co-hosting a webinar with the United States Department of Labor Women’s Bureau on Women and Apprenticeship in Michigan and Indiana on April 27, 2016. The webinar will explain apprenticeship as a workforce development asset for women, and is especially important as it offers the opportunity to earn a salary while learning the skills necessary to succeed in a well-paying occupation. She also discussed the women’s Bureau’s new web portal, Women Build, Protect, and Move America, that gives information and resources about women accessing higher-paying careers in transportation, construction and protective services.
11. The minutes of the January 20, 2016 meeting were submitted for approval. Approved.
12. The next commission meeting will be on Friday, August 12, 2016, at the Seidman Center, Grand Valley State University Downtown Campus, 50 Front Street SW, Grand Rapids.
13. The meeting was adjourned at 4:03 p.m.

*Signature*

Respectfully submitted by Chair Chris Etienne