

**Meeting Notes – MWC Strategic Planning Retreat**  
**Monday, March 9, 2020**  
**9:30am - 4:30pm**  
**Held at Edward Lowe Foundation, 118 W. Ottawa Ave., Lansing, MI**

Commissioners in attendance: Chair Chris Etienne, Vice Chair Muna Jondy, Commissioners JoAnn Chavez, Charity Dean, Deirdre Lambert-Bounds, Barbara Land, Alisha Meneely, Kelli Saunders, Meg Wheeler Derrer

Commissioners absent: Whitney Gravelle, Renee Haley, Krista Haroutunian, Catherine Hendrian, Cathleen Knauf, Geneva Williams

MWC Staff in attendance: Executive Director Cheryl Bergman, Chief Strategy Officer Shannon Garrett

Others in attendance: Facilitator Naimah Wade, Presenter Rebecca Bahar-Cook, Volunteer Waverlee Baron-Galbavi, Volunteer Courtney Louis, Millennial Advisory Committee Members Megan Blue, Harley Paulsen, Di’Ane Townsel

- **Welcome**

- Executive Director Bergman and Chief Strategy Officer Garrett welcomed Commissioners and guests; reviewed agenda; set the tone and purpose of retreat.

- **Celebration of Accomplishments**

- Chair Etienne reviewed highlights and accomplishments of Commission over the past few years under the previous Administration, including:

- Women in Business Committee helped to connect women entrepreneurs with opportunities for funding, co-sponsored the Young Women, Strong Leaders conferences for college women, supported the First Robotics program for girls to encourage STEM careers.
- Veterans Committee advocated to help female veterans to self-identify and get connected to resources and support; created a private Facebook group currently at 258 members; launched the Women Veterans Recognition Day and 5k Run. Adventure outings for women veterans were sponsored by Moxie Wild. New Michigan Veterans Affairs Agency Director Zaneta Adams has created a Women Veterans & Special Populations program to help identify and serve this important community of women.
- Human Trafficking and Sexual Assault Committee worked with local task forces and partnered with several organizations, helped train workers on what to look for, advocated on behalf of those who have been trafficked. A Human Trafficking Health Advisory Board was created within the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services, and the first Michigan Human Trafficking Commission was created within the Attorney General’s Office.

Other highlights include:

- Creation of a Millennial Advisory Committee, which looked at women’s health care and women’s empowerment. The Millennial Committee will now end, and

current committee members will be appointed to new committees as determined by the Commission coming out of this retreat.

- Ongoing collaborations with the Michigan Women's Hall of Fame to spotlight women leaders throughout Michigan's history.
- Produced a line of bookmarks to help create awareness for gender equity.
- Improved the Commission's presence on social media.

- **Overarching Learnings from Gender Equity Conversations**

Chief Strategy Officer Garrett shared that the statewide Gender Equity Conversations held over last five months has highlighted five broad themes or needs (aside from the specific policy issues to be presented and discussed later in the retreat): a need for greater implicit bias learning, a need for more funding to support the Commission's work, a call for a statewide Women's Policy Agenda, calls for county or regional women's commissions, and the need for a directory of organizations and experts on policy issues impacting women's lives.

- **Implicit Bias**

Based on feedback received following the Gender Equity Conversation in Kent County, Commissioners Derrer and Meneely recommended the Commission create a Committee on Implicit Bias and offered to co-chair the Committee. The purpose of the Committee will be to research options/formats and recommend an implicit bias training for the entire Commission to participate in, as well as ideas for including the public in the Commission's learning.

- **Foundation to Support MWC**

Executive Director Bergman reported that she's been approached by someone interested in starting a foundation to support the work of the Commission. The Commission receives a very small budget from the State of Michigan - mostly covers salaries for two staff and costs related to holding four Commission meetings per year. The Gender Equity Conversations have proved to be a powerful learning, awareness-raising and action-building tool for the Commission, but has relied largely on volunteer planning teams, pro bono facilitator time, and donated space and food. Foundation support could be used to compensate these communities and expand the reach of these conversations. Foundation dollars could also be used to support local actions arising out of the conversations, such as the county/regional women's commissions discussed below and the implicit bias trainings discussed above. The Commissioners discussed questions and suggestions, and Bergman agreed to do further research and share updates/information. It was stressed that the foundation would be independently created and run, and that the Commission legally cannot form the foundation itself.

- **Women's Policy Agenda**

Chief Strategy Officer Garrett reported that the data collected from all of the Gender Equity Conversations is being tracked and will be compiled into a statewide Women's Policy Agenda (exact title TBD). Once all conversations are completed, the goal is to produce a report sharing what Michigan women say

are the top policy priorities needed to achieve gender equity. The report will be shared with the Governor and the Legislature, and will help guide specific work and activities within the Commission.

- **County/Regional Women's Commissions**

Executive Director Bergman shared that the Gender Equity Conversations have resulted in many women calling for local women's commissions to work on issues specific to their regions. One example is a former Commissioner in Genesee County looking to start an independent Genesee County Women's Commission. Some counties, like Genesee, used to have commissions created by their County Commissions. At this point, Ingham County is the only remaining women's commission housed within county government. It was stressed that the Michigan Women's Commission is not allowed to set up branches or chapters; that this would be an effort to support local independent actions, and to help direct funding toward them using the foundation discussed above. Commissioner Chavez volunteered to have an attorney look into ways the Commission could support county/regional commissions (linked also to conversation about a potential foundation, above). Bergman will continue researching and discussing this topic with local women, and will share updates/information with the Commission.

- **Directory of Women's Policy Organizations**

Chief Strategy Officer Garrett shared that the priorities coming out of the Gender Equity Conversations and the resulting priority actions of the Commission will require bringing all expertise and experience to bear on our work -- and that the Commission Chair has the power to appoint non-Commissioners to Commission committees. To that end, Garrett is compiling a directory of organizations working on policy issues that impact women's lives. Commissioners are encouraged to share [this link](#) with their networks to help build this directory.

- **Commissioner Roles, Responsibilities and Expectations**

Rebecca Bahar-Cook, of Capitol Fundraising Associates, shared a presentation (attached) on the roles and responsibilities of successful Commissioners. Her presentation reviewed the Commission's statutory powers and duties, stressed the importance of prioritizing participation in the Commission, offered a self-evaluation that Commissioners can use independently to assess their own commitment, and included tools for identifying and recruiting additional talents and experts to potentially serve on Commission committees.

- **Why Did You Accept?**

Dr. Naimah Wade, of 826michigan and Vision Learning Solutions, facilitated an activity for Commissioners to share why they sought and/or accepted their appointment to the Michigan Women's Commission. (Dr. Wade's slides for this and all other retreat activities is attached.)

- **Asset Mapping**

Dr. Wade also led an activity to encourage Commissioners to think about the things each Commissioner does well -- the qualities and expertise that each brings to this work. The activity helped Commissioners consider ways their own stories, their experiences and their connections to places/communities can help serve the Commission's agenda.

- **Personas of Michigan Women**

Dr. Wade helped Commissioners better understand the people served by the Commission with an activity creating personas of individual women living in Michigan. This exercise was designed to centralize the most marginalized women in our state -- to create a framework for focusing the Commission's priorities around those most adversely impacted by inequities in each policy area.

- **Presentation of Conversation Results**

Every Commissioner was given a printed full report from each of the six Gender Equity Conversations held to date at the beginning of the retreat. Each report contains the full range of responses received to conversation questions, as well as the top-reported challenges and top-ranked desired actions.

Chief Strategy Officer Garrett presented flipcharts with the common themes across conversations organized largely into eight policy issue areas.

The Commissioners spent a significant amount of time in conversations and activities that resulted in consolidating and reorganizing some items within and between flipcharts.

Following the conversation, Commissioners understood the five policy themes coming out of the Gender Equity Conversations to be:

- *Unlocking Opportunity*  
Defined as things that remove barriers to work -- e.g., child care (density, access, availability, affordable, hours, etc.), support for family caregivers (those caring for children, elders, others), paid parental leave, earned paid sick time, affordable housing.
- *Financial Freedom*  
Defined as actions to close gaps and increase access to income -- e.g., pay equity, addressing skills gaps, training for higher paid jobs, higher education, alternative incomes (gig economy).
- *Visible Authentic Leadership*  
Defined as ways to have more women serving in publicly visible leadership roles across sectors, and leading with their authentic whole selves -- e.g., increase number of women on corporate boards and c-suite offices, corporate pipeline plans, more women running for elected office and/or seeking government appointments, more women leading foundations.
- *Violence and Safety*  
Defined as things to address violence and harassment targeted toward women - - e.g., epidemic of missing and murdered indigenous women, sexual assault, sexual harassment, domestic violence.
- *Healthcare*  
Defined as issues related to ending disparate health outcomes and increasing access to healthcare.

**When looking at the specific policy actions ranked highest throughout the statewide Gender Equity Conversations, Commissioners at the retreat found a) Unlocking Opportunity, b) Financial Freedom, and c) Visible Authentic Leadership to be the most requested policy areas.**

However, because a significant number of Commissioners were not present for the full retreat, those in attendance felt it important to present this information to the entire Commission before making a final decision about the new Commission priorities and committees.

A summary of the issue area flipcharts is attached.

**All Commissioners will be asked to review these five policy themes as potential committees and come to the next Commission meeting prepared to:**

**1) Choose 2-3 policy themes to become new committees,**

NOTE: these new committees are in addition to the Committee on Implicit Bias to be led by Commissioners Derrer and Meneely

**2) Propose 3-5 specific actions the Commission could prioritize within your top-ranked policy themes (committees), preferably presented as a SMART goal, and**

**3) Choose a committee assignment Option A and Option B.**

- **Current Committees**

Commissioners in attendance discussed the opportunity to wrap up the work of all current committees and move forward with establishing new committees.

- Work around women veterans and human trafficking issues will continue to be amplified by the Commission, but will not continue as committees of the Women's Commission.
- The current/ongoing work of the Women in Business Committee will move into the new committees, as defined above.
- The Millennial Committee will be dissolved, and the current Millennial Committee members will be appointed to one of the new Commission committees.

- **New 2020+ Committees and MWC Work**

Commissioners will discuss and select the new committees for 2020 and beyond at the next Commission meeting. New committees will be selected from among the five policy themes outlined above.

The retreat ended with a discussion of things to keep in mind as Commissioners determine the next committees and priority actions within those committees:

- Each committee should intentionally organize its priorities and actions around centralizing the most marginalized communities impacted by that policy.
- With every action, the Commission and each committee should do its best to understand what a truly equitable solution looks like and what it will take to achieve that equitable solution.
- Each committee should develop goals for both the short-term (things that can be accomplished in 2020) and the long-term (things that can be accomplished within the next 2-4 years).

- Committee goals should be SMART: Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant and Time-bound.
- The Commission Chair has the power to appoint non-Commissioners to our committees. Commissioners should look both inside and outside of their networks to help identify experts and advocates who can bring needed knowledge and experience to each committee's issue area.

Commissioners also quickly brainstormed the broad range of options available for action, including but not limited to:

- Look to what Governor Whitmer has done or is working on, and ways the Commission can help amplify or expand on.
- Analyze and support or oppose existing legislative proposals.
- Craft a policy agenda for the Governor and the Legislature.
- Convene organizations from around the state interested in pushing a common action or policy.
- Create public education campaigns.
- Guide stakeholders, advocates and the public to available resources.