



Michigan Women's Commission Public Meeting Minutes
Battle Creek, MI
Tuesday, October 22, 2024
1:00 pm – 3:00 pm

I. Call to Order and Roll Call at 1:12 pm by Chair D. Sue Townsel

- Commissioners present: Chair D. Sue Townsel, Vice Chair Lisa Cawley, Charity Dean, Karin Hopman, Andrea Hunter, Muna Jondy, Tracy Joshua, Sabala Mandava, and Faye Nelson.
- Commissioners absent: Dannielle Atkinson, Kelli Saunders, Geneva Williams, Vivian Pickard, and Misti Rice.
- Guest present: Ida Byrd-Hill, Chief Executive Officer of Automation Workz
- Staff present: Cheryl Bergman, Anna Rose Benson, and J'Nay Mason.

II. Dr. Geneva Williams, Immediate Past Chair, Remarks

- Commissioner Williams was not present.

III. D. Sue Townsel, Chair, Michigan Women's Commission, Remarks

- Townsel thanked Commissioner Joshua for hosting the Commission in Battle Creek.
- Townsel expressed her excitement about her appointment as Chair of the Commission and she shared her reflections on the Commission. She mentioned her predecessor, Commissioner Williams, and thanked her for her time as Chair. Williams helped with the MI Tri-Share Child Care Program and the roundtables. Townsel introduced the new Commissioners Amanda Wagenschutz and Andrea Hunter and congratulated Commissioners Joshua, Hopman, and Saunders on their re-appointments. Townsel acknowledged and identified the Commissioners leaving the Commission, Commissioner Horvarth and Faber.
- Townsel called on Commissioner Hunter to introduce herself to the Commission and the public. Hunter shared that her background is in United States steel workers, and she is an electrician with various roles in the union, the first woman, African American woman, President of her local union. Also, she was the first woman to be elected President in the basic steel circuit. She highlighted Mary Randolph, and the 19th Amendment and Mary Randolph created an institute to protect the 19th

Amendment and voter's rights, and she is the President of the Detroit, down-river chapter.

- Townsel congratulated Joshua for being named a Crains Grand Rapids 2024 Notable Black Leader and congratulated Commissioner Pickard for being selected to receive the Lifetime Humanitarian Award at the Governor's Service Awards on November 14 in Detroit.

IV. Guest speaker

a. Ida Byrd-Hill, Chief Executive Officer of Automation Workz

- Byrd-Hill explained that Automation Workz is a start-up which started up in 2019 and administers tech certification training, AI data analytics, cybersecurity ops, network engineering, tech project management, and internet of things.

PowerPoint slide on page 9 of the meeting minutes.

V. Approval of Agenda and Minutes of April 16, 2024, Meeting

- Motioned by Vice Chair Cawley to postpone the approval of agenda and minutes for the April 16, 2024, until the next public meeting. Motion was approved.

VI. Report on Unlocking Opportunities Committee: Commissioner Karin Hopman

- Commissioner Hopman shared the events that took place that led MWC to surveying employers and employees about menopause and its effects on the workplace. In collaboration with the Michigan Department of Labor and Economic Opportunity (LEO), MWC produced two mental health webinars focusing on domestic violence and menopause in the workplace ([YouTube video](#)). After the webinars aired, a PhD student, Lorena Disha, approached MWC asking to partner on releasing a survey to better understand menopause in the workplace.
- Hopman listed the following organizations that will participate in the survey:
 - Consumers Energy – complete
 - State of Michigan – early November
 - Service Employees International Union (SEIU) – early November
 - Women in Manufacturing – mid-late October
 - National Association of Women Business Owners (NAWBO)
 - City of Detroit
 - Junior League – late October
- Hopman explained that the survey must be distributed by the end of the year and the results will be reviewed and possibly release a report next March (2025). The goal is to educate employers statewide by recommending policy and protocols.
- Cawley, Joshua, and Dean requested that they receive the survey to share it with their networks and companies.
- Public questioned the timeline and Commissioners responded saying that MWC is in the data collection phase.

VII. Guest Speaker

a. Amy Helner, HR Director of the BlueOval Battery Park Michigan, Ford Motor Company

- Helner was unable to attend so Travis Spencer, Head of Supplier Relations for Ford, sent a video that was played in her place. Spencer discussed Ford's electrification strategy and creating spaces for women in the joining the plant's workforce.

VIII. Report on Visible Authentic Leadership Committee: Commissioner Vivian Pickard

- Commissioner Pickard was absent, and her report was given by Stakeholder Relations Lead, Anna Rose Benson.
- Benson reviewed the mentorship program between Commissioners and Girl Scouts and how it began. It was created from a governor's roundtable held in Mackinac Island, hosted by Gov. Gretchen Whitmer. The governors shared their insights and experiences and discussed ways to uplift the next generation of leaders. One governor said a mentorship between Commissioners and an organization that fosters young women leaders like a Girl Scout troop. Thanks to Bergman's connections, Bergman sought out Monica Woodson, CEO of the Girl Scouts of Southeastern Michigan (GSSEMI) and explained the program and MWC finished the first year of the program.
- Benson shared the first event: an in-person badge earning event, an event where all levels of Girl Scouts could come. The first event took place in January with Secretary of State, Jocelyn Benson as the guest speaker titled Democracy & Me where Girl Scouts learned how to vote and how a bill becomes a law. Williams was not present, but Benson thanked her for her involvement in the first event.
- Benson added that there was another part to the mentorship program, a virtual speakers' series ([YouTube playlist](#)) which included people from various professions within government.
- Benson called on Commissioner Mandava to share her insights as a mentor. Mandava shared that the mentorship program was phenomenal. The mentors were paired with Girl Scouts and met once a month virtually as well as in person. Her mentee wanted to go into pediatrics, and she is a physician, so the match was great. Mandava was able have her mentee to shadow a pediatrician because of her future career interests.
- Benson thanked:
 - Jayshona Hicks and Sen. McDonald Rivet
 - Kali Fox
 - Maria Martinez
 - Sen. Sarah Anthony
 - Commissioner Saunders and Sumaiya Ahmed Sheikh
 - Commissioner Hopman and Teri Langley

- Commissioners Townsel, Faber, Williams, Rice, Mandava, Atkinson, Jondy, and Chair Pickard
- GSSEMI Team: Dana Dew, Kelly Cobbledick, and Monica Woodson
- US Congresswoman Brenda Lawrence
- Next steps include convening with the team and reviewing the surveys from the events to create an event better program for the next year.
- Benson reported that the GSSEMI was one of the four selected councils to review the Beijing Platform for the UN Commission on the Status of Women Girl Scout USA in March 2025. Girl Scouts will act as writers, advocacy liaisons, and discussion facilitators.

IX. Report on Financial Freedom Committee: Commissioner Tracy Joshua

- Joshua thanked to the Financial Freedom Committee, Commissioners Cawley, Nelson, and Jondy) and Kendra Quinlan, for all of their planning, hosting, participating and executing the round tables. She also welcomed Hunter to the Financial Freedom Committee.
- Joshua reported that MWC has held four round tables to date and presented at a conference. The first-round tables covered IT Apprenticeship at Accenture, skilled trades apprenticeship at Consumers Energy, small business and entrepreneurship opportunities at the Small business Association of Michigan and today, in Battle Creek, focusing on corporate initiatives and opportunities for women.
- MWC is planning an Access to Capital for small business owners and entrepreneurs on Nov. 21 and another skilled trades focused round table on December 4. Both will be held in Lansing from 10 am – 11:30 am.
- The goal is to have the report with recommendations on policies that create and widen the pathway to high wage jobs for MI women completed early next year.

X. Stakeholder Relations Lead Report: Anna Rose Benson

- Benson reported that MWC is collaborating with scholar groups from Michigan State University.
 - Community Engagement Scholar: Bailey Griffin, senior majoring in African American and African Studies and Interdisciplinary Social Science. Bailey is spearheading the 21-Day Gender Equity Challenge modeled after the Michigan League of Public Policy’s 21-Day Racial Equity Challenge that MWC administered in the past but has since paused because of capacity. This challenge will focus on intersectionality, solidarity, and gender equity as praxis. The goal is to launch the challenge by spring of 2025. Ask of the Commission: Please be ready to take and test the challenge and give revisions as well as volunteer to host a cohort.
 - Dean suggested to be intentional about including men and women in the discussion.

- Social Science Scholars: Prachujo Das and Delaney Cram and their professor Heather McCauley will interview various stakeholders involved in the roundtables to promote high wage jobs. The goal of the interviews is to understand their personal experiences as a woman in the workforce, challenges they face, and what they want to see from employers going forward. These anecdotes will be used in conjunction with the statistic findings from the roundtable to create a comprehensive report with policy recommendations.

XI. Lisa Cawley, Vice Chair, Remarks

- Townsel acknowledged newly appointed Vice Chair Cawley and called upon her to share her thoughts and feelings about her new appointment.
- Cawley expressed her excitement about her new appointment and how it is a way to give back and make sure she “climbs and lifts”.

XII. Executive Director’s Report: Cheryl Bergman

- Bergman updated the Commission and public on the MI Tri-Share Program. Tri-Share is now at Michigan Department of Lifelong Advancement Education and Potential (MiLEAP) which covers anything from pre-k to post-secondary and is permanent program and in the state budget. While the pilot was successful, one of Bergman’s colleagues, Shannon Garrett has left the Commission to be the Senior Program Advisor for Tri-Share at MiLEAP. The program is available statewide.
- In the transition, the Commission gained Benson as a full-time employee. She started as an AmeriCorps VISTA, and she was the perfect person to pull in and keep. MWC was able to get funding for Benson’s position be full-time.
- MWC gained another staff person, J’Nay Mason. Mason is the new Communications Specialist for the Commission. Mason introduced herself to the Commission and the public. She shared that she is originally from Flint and recently graduated from Michigan State University with a degree in Creative Advertising and the thing that really motivated her to apply to the MWC was her family’s background from her grandmother working at GM and as a teacher to support her mother and herself. Her mom was the first person in her family to not strain herself working in the workplace and is now a lawyer. Mason looked to her family’s leadership which drew her to the MWC.
- Bergman reported that a posting for a new position, State Executive Manager Assistant, will go out soon which will be shared between two other departments and act as an administrative assistant expanding MWC’s capacity even further.
- Bergman shared that the Bipartisan Legislative Women’s Council, a council made up of all of the women legislators, democratic and republican, who together discuss topics that all women agree on, regardless of the party. The chairs include Sen. Kristin McDonald Rivet, Sen. Michelle Hoitenga, Rep. Sarah Lightner, and Rep. Julie Brixie. The Women’s Council began in 2019 and convened various times and

decided to focus on maternal health and how it affects women and specifically women of color. Due to the election year, the Women's Council has not met in a few months but planning to reconvene early next year after the election.

- State Representative Julie Rogers who chairs the Health Policy Committee and has ten bills that she is guiding through the house relating to maternal health. They have passed through the house and now it is on to Senate Health Policy and is working with her constituents to be passed. One is a mandate for insurance companies to pay for blood pressure cuffs during pregnancy. Other bills focus on adding more flexibility of coverages that the insurance companies provide for example, mental health screenings in the OGBYN office and in the pediatrician office because studies show that 40% of women do not attend their postpartum visits because of child care and transportation barriers.

XIII. Old Business

- None

XIV. New Business

- New commissioners and reappointments: Andrea Hunter, President of USW Local 1299 and President of Detroit/Downriver A. Philip Randolph Institute. Amanda Wagenschutz, Vice President of People & Culture Operations at Consumers Energy.
- New staff member: J'Nay Mason, Communications Specialist
- MSU Social Science Scholars: Prachurjo Das, Lana Elsibai, and Delaney Cram
- MSU Community Engagement Scholar: Bailey Griffin, Class of Spring 2025 African American and African Studies and Interdisciplinary Social Science.

XV. Next Meeting

- Tuesday, April 15, 2025, Detroit
- Tuesday, October 14, 2025, location TBD

XVI. Ex Officio and Liaison Reports:

- Michigan Department of Transportation (MDOT): Terri Slaughter, Chief Culture, Equity, and Inclusion Officer and Brenda Kiesling, Equity and Inclusion Officer (EIO). Slaughter and Kiesling asked for recommendations on partnerships with various forms of transit and how to combine various modes of transportation and how do users use this transport network. MDOT is researching the additional struggles faced by women in regard to transportation and how to look at transportation from an economic standpoint.
- Michigan Department of Agriculture & Rural Development (MDARD): Kathy Angerer, Chief of Staff. Angerer shared various initiatives such as the DEI Taskforce, current engagement projects, events, recruitment, accessibility, staff recognition, and training. MDARD has open positions including Communications Chair, DEI Liaisons, and Sponsors. MDARD held its Women's Summit with the highest attendance. **The full slide deck is on page 10.**

- Michigan Department of Natural Resources (DNR): Kristen Phillips, Chief Administrative Officer and Deputy Director. Phillips shared that DNR manages natural and cultural resources of the state, manages 4 million acres of state forest land, and 6 million in mineral rights. DNR is home to 400 species of wildlife, 70 game areas. Michigan has 103 state parks and recreation areas, 104 with the state park in Flint coming online in 2026. DNR developed 829 boating access sites, 10 lighthouses, 16 harbors, and six scenic sites. DNR manages 130 State Forest Campgrounds, 6 fish hatcheries which produce more than 700,000 pounds of fish every year. In Michigan, one is never more than 6 miles from fish-able water. Additionally, DNR oversees 7 museum sites, archaeological responsibilities on state lands, partnering with tribes. DNR has 1800 full time employees, over 3000 seasonal. Phillips asks that the Commission create awareness for the department and recruiting women and women of color into positions in the departments and to sign up for their email stakeholder list.
- Office of the Attorney General (AG): Kim Pendrick, First Assistant Attorney General. Pendrick reports that October is Domestic Violence Awareness Month, and the [Address Confidentially Program \(ACP\)](#) that provides a secondary address that is not available to the public which maintains privacy. This program protects survivors which are majority women. Pendrick asks the Commission to raise awareness for the ACP.
- Michigan Department of Health and Human Services (MDHHS): Beth Nagel, Policy and Planning Director. Nagel shared that the Governor's Gun Violence Taskforce met for the first time on October 21 which correlates to October being Domestic Violence Awareness Month. This taskforce focuses on the intersectionality between gun violence and domestic violence. MDHHS has a victims compensation program that offsets the costs of many types of expenses that can be incurred from any victim of crime. One big change Nagel highlighted was the legislation passed that can now provide compensation for housing. MDHHS has a [Plan First Program](#) that offers family planning services to people who are not typically Medicaid eligible. This program has helped over 200,000 Michiganders as of now.
- Michigan Veterans Affairs Agency (MVAA): Erica Hoover, Mental Health and Suicide Prevention Manager. Hoover was originally the Veterans Coordinator, a product of the advocacy of the MWC. That position now sits under her team which is focused on women and mental health. MVAA hosted its 3rd Annual Women's Veterans Conference in Novi, they had more women show up than ever before, more sponsorship dollars, and more vendors. MVAA saw more than 109 new women show up. Hoover urged that people are aware of the Suicide Prevention Training on November 2 and they are putting out 5 mental trainings in Lansing, Grand Rapids, Saginaw, and Detroit. MVAA has partnered with PsychArmor to help serve veterans who are LGBTQ+. It was their most engaged podcast episode to date. Hoover

expressed her gratitude for Tri-Share. Some Tr-Share staff came to their conference, and they presented in front of more than 300 veteran employers.

- Michigan Department of Corrections: Julie Hamp, Deputy Director of the Budget and Operations Administration. Hamp promoted [job position](#) openings that they want filled by women and she added that the Department of Corrections is a gold star employer with the veterans group.
- Michigan Department of Licensing & Regulatory Affairs (LARA): Anastasha Osborn, Assistant Deputy Director. Ex-Officio was not present but sent in a report to be read aloud and added to the meeting minutes: At LARA, we are dedicated to fostering effective regulatory practices that not only protect the public and promote business, but also empower our workforce. This mission aligns closely with the Michigan Women's Commission's commitment to promoting equal opportunities and economic empowerment for women. I'd like to highlight our newly established Regulatory Effectiveness Office (REO), which focuses on educational outreach, stakeholder engagement, and enhancing organizational performance. Under the leadership of Jackie Badder, who has been with LARA since 2011, REO aims to improve our community engagement and better support our diverse workforce, particularly women in specialized roles. Recently, we hired a Recruitment & Retention Specialist, a vital position that will help us address workforce challenges, especially in attracting women and underrepresented groups. Additionally, REO is currently seeking to fill two key roles: a Data Analyst and an Education and Training Specialist. These positions are essential for developing targeted training programs that promote a more inclusive work environment. One ongoing challenge we face is recruitment and retention in specialized areas, such as our inspector positions. To tackle this, we've introduced entry-level elevator inspector roles within our Bureau of Construction Codes, creating pathways for new talent entering these fields. Another challenge we face is recruitment and retention specifically in skilled trades positions. And we know LARA is not the only department struggling to fill these highly skilled, highly technical positions, which is why we created the MI Trades Partnership. The Partnership consists of 10 different state departments and agencies who are focused on promoting, recruiting, and retaining individuals, especially women, in skilled trades opportunities in state government and across Michigan. The MI Trades Partnership is currently working on scheduling its third annual skilled-trades focused career fair in May 2025. If you have any questions about LARA or the MI Trades Partnership, please don't hesitate to reach out to me (osborna3@michigan.gov).

XVII. Public Comments

- No public comments were made

XVIII. Meeting Adjourned at 3:01 p.m. by Commissioner Townsel

**INCREASE YOUR INCOME LIKE
OUR FORMER LEARNERS**

Kay from **\$35,000** to **\$166,000**

Jah from **\$50,000** to **\$130,000**

Jordan from **\$37,500** to **\$ 92,000**

Sena from **\$50,000** to **\$ 85,000**

Timera from **\$35,000** to **\$ 70,000**

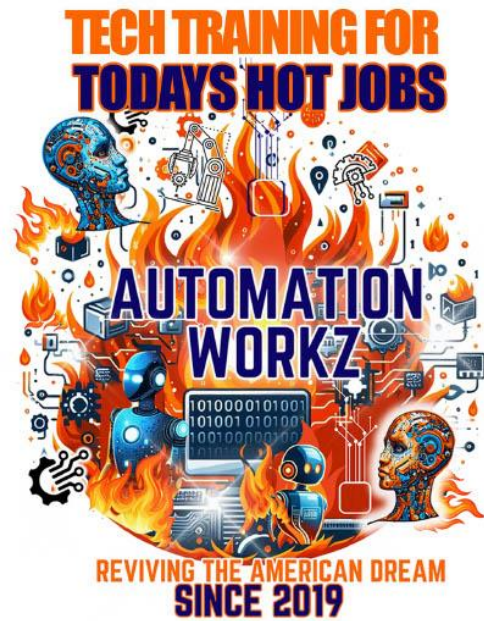
APPLY HERE

<https://www.autoworkz.org>

ELIGIBLE FUNDING

Michigan Works!

Battle Creek Legacy Scholars



A wide-angle photograph of a lush green field, likely a soybean field, with rows of plants stretching towards the horizon under a bright sky with scattered clouds.

MDARD DEI TASKFORCE



MDARD DEI MISSION STATEMENT

At MDARD, we're proudly committed to sustainable department-wide diversity, equity, and inclusion programs that foster an enhanced workforce and add value to its mission to serve Michiganders.

The MDARD DEI Taskforce is charged with creating, promoting, and fostering a culture of diversity, equity, and inclusion within our department for all individuals by supporting, celebrating, and respecting unique differences.



DIRECTOR BORING'S STATEMENT

“At MDARD, I’m proud that we’re committed to fostering a diverse, equitable, and inclusive (DEI) environment for our employees. Our commitment to equity means that we strive to reduce disparities and create opportunities for everyone to thrive. We’re aiming to create a welcome and respectful environment within the department. I recognize that this work is ongoing. At MDARD we’re dedicated to continuous improvement. Our dedication to diversity, equity and inclusion is not just a statement, but a fundamental part of our identity and mission as a department. The work of the DEI Taskforce is a shining example of how we can all create a more equitable and inclusive for all at MDARD.”



DEI TASKFORCE TEAM STRUCTURE

CORE TEAM: This team is responsible for making decisions for DEI work at MDARD.

ALLY TEAM: This team is committed to ongoing project work throughout the year.

SUPPORT TEAM: This team is committed to supporting project work when they are available.



DEI TASKFORCE TEAM STRUCTURE

COMMUNICATION CHAIR: Leads communication efforts within the DEI Taskforce.

DEI LIAISONS: DEI liaisons lead and develop DEI work in their divisions to amplify the departments vision and goals.

SPONSORS: Sponsors review, provide feedback, and approve the work of the DEI Taskforce to align with department statagey.

CURRENT PROJECTS

- 01 ACCESSIBILITY**
Rollout procedure and training to raise staff awareness and integrate accessibility into operations
- 02 DEI ALL EARS**
Improve feedback collection and reporting on DEI through tools like a master spreadsheet and Power BI.
- 03 DEI ENGAGEMENT PROJECT**
Provide in-person DEI learning experiences, including Day of Service events.
- 04 DEI EVENTS**
Organize DEI-related events throughout the year, including the DEI Summit, ThinkTank Sessions, and partnerships w/ MSU.
- 05 LEADERSHIP ENGAGEMENT**
Integrate leadership engagement projects into MDARD's operations.
- 06 RECRUITMENT**
Develop guidance for integrating equity and inclusion into MDARD's recruitment strategy, including a hire review process.

- 07 STAFF RECOGNITION**
Create staff recognition programs to celebrate diversity and achievements.
- 08 TRAINING**
Implement DEI training for staff to meet the 25% statewide training goal set by EIOs.

HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE 2024 WOMEN'S SUMMIT



- Session 1: Women Supporting Women**
- Session 2: Handling Safety Issues and Proper Documentation and Follow up on Issues**
- Session 3: Using Allyship to Advance Equity**
- Session 4: Learning and Using Key Verbal Phrases to Counter Aggression**
- Session 5: Resiliency Awareness and Defensive Tactics**
- Session 6: The Future of Women at MDARD**


February
15
2024


151 Staff
Members
Attended


15
Speakers

Thank you!