



**Michigan Women's Commission
Public Meeting Minutes
Grand Rapids, MI
Tuesday, October 14, 2025
1:00 PM-3:00 PM**

- I. Call to Order and Roll Call 1:01 PM
- Commissioners Present: Chair Sue Townsel, Vice Chair Lisa Cawley, Danielle Atkinson, Amanda Said Canto, Charity Dean, Karin Hopman, Sabala Mandava, Vivian Pickard, Kelli Saunders, Geneva Williams
 - Commissioners Absent: Andrea Hunter, Tracy Joshua, Faye Nelson, Misti Rice, Amanda Wagenschutz
 - Staff Present: Executive Director, Cheryl Bergman, Stakeholder Relations Lead Anna Rose Benson, Communications Specialist J'Nay Mason, Executive Assistant Robin Tidwell
 - Guests Present: Kate Luckert Schmid, Grand Rapids Community Foundation; Kim Bode, Chief Executive Officer & Owner, 8THIRTYFOUR Integrated Communications and Sarah Miller, Executive Director, Small Business Association of Michigan Foundation, Women's Entrepreneurial Fellowship
- II. MWC Chair Remarks
- Chair Townsel expressed her gratitude for being reappointed to Michigan Women's Commission and congratulated her fellow commissioners on their reappointments. She noted that following the meeting, Vice Chair Cawley would be the new Chair of the Commission, and Commissioner Dean would assume the role of Vice Chair. Chair Townsel also thanked Executive Director Bergman for her work.
- III. Guest Speakers
- Kate Luckert Schmid – Grand Rapids Community Foundation (GRCF). Ms. Schmid shared a video, which gave a brief history of the GRCF and explained that its primary focus is to promote collective giving. The Foundation currently holds the

endowment for Women's Resource Fund, which is centered around equity and justice.

- Kim Bode - Chief Executive Officer & Owner, 8THIRTYFOUR Integrated Communications, and Sarah Miller - Executive Director, Small Business Association of Michigan Foundation, Women's Entrepreneurial Fellowship. Commissioner Saunders welcomed the next guest speakers, Sarah Miller and Kim Bode on behalf of Women's Entrepreneurial Fellowship. Ms. Miller explained that the SBAM foundation is relatively new. Ms. Bode shared a video highlighting the WEF's mentorship program. The first cohort started in fall 2024. Ms. Bode explained the program is built by business owners for business owners. This year's cohort will include coaching sessions, and participants are matched with mentors.

III. Approval of Agenda

- Commissioner Pickard moved; Commissioner Cawley seconded. Agenda was approved by consent.

IV. Approval of Minutes of April 16, 2024, October 22, 2024, and April 15, 2025, Meetings

- Commissioner Picard moved; Commissioner Saunders seconded. Minutes were approved by consent.

V. Report from Financial Freedom Committee

- Commissioner Cawley spoke about the Pathway to High Wage Career report. The report was informed by roundtables around the state. Eight recommendations were included in the report. Commissioners are currently voting to determine the top three recommendations the MWC will champion in the 2026 Fiscal Year.
- Director Bergman updated Commissioners on the Menopause movement. The movement was launched in March 2025 when Governor Whitmer asked the MWC to take the lead and put Michigan at the forefront of menopause policy. Legislation has been introduced. Three menopause conversations remain in 2025.
- Lauren MacConnachie is a Ph.D. candidate at University of Michigan who has been working with the Michigan Women's Commission to analyze responses from the menopause in the workplace survey MWC has been conducting. She gave preliminary analysis of survey data. The survey was launched in December 2024. Majority of respondents do not feel strongly about their menopause knowledge. Most want a menopause supportive workplace.

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

- Commissioner Pickard discussed the mentors/mentees program in conjunction with the Girl Scouts of Southeast Michigan. Anna Rose Benson relayed a story about

a successful mentee who has excelled since her first time through the program. Commissioner Mandava talked about taking over the chairmanship of VAL. She was a mentor previously and is excited to continue the program and working toward helping counties establish their own women's commissions. Chair Mandava also talked about the committee's work to help create guidance for local women's commissions to develop. Madelyn Schurman, senior at Michigan State University majoring in Psychology and minoring in Leadership of Organizations, and scholar was introduced and is working with the MWC to create a guide book on how to create a women's commission at the local level.

VII. Executive Director Report: Cheryl Bergman

- Thanked Commissioner Townsel for her leadership on the commission and introduced the MWC team.
- Director Bergman reported there were no cuts in the state budget for the MWC and received small boost of \$4,000.
- Introduced Robin Tidwell, the new Executive Assistant.
- J'Nay Mason, Communications Specialist, presented MWC's social media platform key performance indicators, social media campaigns, and celebrating their one-year work-anniversary.

VIII. Old Business

- Consolidation of the Unlocking Opportunities Committee

IX. New Business

- New Commissioner Said Canto introduced herself.
- Reappointment: Commissioners Cawley, Dean, Townsel, and Williams were reappointed to serve another term on the Michigan Women's Commissioner
- Public meetings will be held on Mondays instead of Tuesdays to boost legislators' attendance.

X. Next Meeting

- April 13, 2026
- October 12, 2026
 - Locations to be determined

XI. Ex Officio Members and Liaison Reports

- Deputy Director Kim Trent for Prosperity at the Department of Labor and Economic Opportunity gave an overview of the department, the department report, and the Prosperity Poverty Task Force. Lastly, Trent thanked MWC for the work they do.

- Anna Rose Benson reported on behalf of Keri Lardie, HR Director for Michigan Civil Service Commission (MCSC), Lardie reported this past December MCSC took into consideration the results of an Office of State Employer sanctioned salary survey to increase pay scales of some hard to recruit/retain classifications for state employees and increased those respective pay scales by 20%. While this is not specific to women only, it has significant impact on some classifications that are primarily filled by women, including social work and rehab counselors. Of our approximately 450 employees impacted by this change, 67% are women. This change went into effect October 1 and over the next several years, employees in those classifications will ultimately receive a 20% increase from the previous maximum salary.
- Jaclyn Merchant, Corrective Action Enforcement Specialist Department of Environment, Great Lakes, and Energy (EGLE) is the new equity and inclusion officer. Merchant highlighted several employee resource groups offering trainings and emphasized that recruitment is their top priority specifically getting women and other marginalized communities into STEM fields.
- Anastasha Osborn, Director of Communications Department of Licensing & Regulatory Affairs (LARA) spoke to the importance of women in skilled trades and that skilled trades career fair coming soon and plugged the LARA Living Room Podcast.
- Ti'Kyra Napoleon, Equity and Inclusion Officer, Department of Technology, Management & Budget (DTMB) reported that the department has a women leadership alliance in house that puts on events for women and has opportunities for community members to serve.
- Missy Harrington, Assistant Administrator Michigan Department of Corrections (MDOC) attended on behalf of Julie Hamp, Administrator for MDOC, there's a new open forum for women in corrections to talk about their challenges in the department, mentorship, and healthcare clinic staff.

XII. Public Comment (Public comments are limited to five minutes per person.)

- Jacqui Dolce, Senior manager of Government Affairs at Grand Rapids Chamber of Commerce spoke about their work with the MI Tri-Share Child Care program
- Nicole Turks, Vice President of Women's Health Corewell Health, announced that they're coming up on their 3rd annual women's development day.
- Tyra Jonas, Corporate Communications, MillerKnoll shared that MillerKnoll is working on workplace furniture to enhance the work environment for menopausal women.
- Allyn Lebster, President, True Women's Health, echoed her gratitude for the menopause conversations.

- XIII. Meeting Adjourned at 3:04 PM
- Meeting adjourned by consent.

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