

Morris County Advisory Committee on Women
March 16, 2021, 5:30pm to 7:00pm
Via Microsoft Teams

Present: Kasey Errico, Pam Bennett-Santoro, Joann Bjornson, Eileen Specchio, Sidney Ugalde, Karen O’Keeffe, Donna Boyce, Elaine Muller, Liz Kisatsky

Welcome and review of February Meeting Minutes – Ms. O’Keeffe called the meeting to order at 5:30pm and welcomed attendees. The Committee reviewed the February 16, 2021 meeting minutes. A motion to approve the minutes was made by Ms. Specchio, seconded by Ms. Muller.

1. **Women’s History Month** – The Committee will create a time line to participate in Women’s History Month for next year. Ms. O’Keeffe suggested the group also participate in creating a blurb for the Morris County E-newsletter about the Committee, members agreed. By doing so would afford the opportunity to solicit for new members as well. Ms. Muller volunteered to write up a draft paragraph with possible assistance from Ms. Bennett-Santoro and Ms. Harper. Commissioner DeFillippo recommended forwarding the draft information to Ms. Kisatsky, who will reach out to Brian Murray, the County Information Officer for posting.
2. **Membership** – Ms. O’Keeffe stated that at February’s meeting, the Committee discussed potentially having out of County members, who work in Morris County, join the Committee. At February’s meeting, Ms. Bjornson recommended a perspective new member, Ms. Xiomara Guevara. The Committee discussed what would be the best course of action moving forward for perspective new members and demographic representation? Interview them, or invite them to a meeting? Ms. Bjornson stated that as the Committee already has Ms. Guevara’s resume and application, it can certainly be discussed, with an invitation to attend an upcoming meeting. A process for future perspective members needs to be in place. Ms. Errico commented that the final step in the approval process for membership would still be approval by the County Commissioners. Commissioner DeFillippo confirmed this. She also stated that there may be times that candidates are not appointed. Ms. Bjornson stated that within the E-newsletter blurb, maybe we can solicit new members. We can draft the policy and procedures now, to ensure it’s clearly defined.

Ms. Bjornson addressed the Committee asking if there were any issues with Ms. Guevara’s application or resume. She is the Executive Director of Morris County Organization for Hispanic Affairs (MCOHA) and has worked in Morris County for 15 years. She does live out of County, but would bring leadership skills and diversity to the Committee. Ms. O’Keeffe stated she has an amazing resume and would be a great asset to the Committee. MCOHA is a highly regarded organization and has a big impact within the County. Ms. Bjornson made a motion to recommend Ms. Guevara for membership. Ms. O’Keeffe seconded the motion. Commissioner DeFillippo suggested inviting Ms. Guevara to the next meeting to see if she is interested in serving and is a good fit. If so, the next steps would be, is for Ms. Kisatsky to forward her documentation, with an attached memorandum to the Clerk of the Board. The Clerk of the Board would then forward to the Commissioners for review and final approval. Ms. Bjornson will invite Ms. Guevara to the April 20th Committee meeting. Ms. O’Keeffe reminded members to think about inviting new members who have demographic representation.

3. **Going forward** – Ms. O’Keeffe reported that members from the Human Services Advisory Council (HSAC) were unable to present on the Needs Assessment report as it is not back from the State. Ms. Errico stated she hopes it will be available in time for the April 20th meeting. However, if the report is not, maybe we can create another backup or possible presentation on something of interest we can pursue.

Ms. O’Keeffe stated that several members brought in articles regarding the impact of the pandemic on women in general, focusing on Morris County. Ms. Boyce stated that there is a tremendous economic jobs impact for women from the pandemic as well as rental issues. Since there will be some relief as a result of significant funding for Morris County, is there an appropriate way for the Committee to provide some input, guidance or partnership/advocacy on how the funds will be allocated? Ms. O’Keeffe referred to the bylaws, which states that the Committee can be utilized as a resource by the Commissioners. Members also mentioned that child care and isolation, (particularly older women living alone) are also major issues. Ms. Muller stated it will be very interesting to see the results of the Needs Assessment. She asked if the results are just human services or inclusive of a gambit of services that the County provides? Ms. Errico responded that the Needs Assessment

comes through all of the State's Human Services Advisory Councils, who are required to conduct needs assessments for the County's. There definitely will be information related to women as well as different segments of the population. Ms. Muller asked if the ALICE (Asset Limited Income Constrained Employed) report, through United Way has been recently updated. Ms. Bennett-Santoro stated that it has not been updated. Ms. Errico stated she recently attended a webinar that viewed how United Way is presenting all their information so that people can access pertinent information related to ALICE. Ms. Bjornson suggested inviting one of the ALICE Presenters to the next meeting to conduct the presentation, primarily focusing on women's needs. The Committee agreed, Ms. Bjornson will reach out to the United Way. Ms. Muller asked if we could check with Ms. Guevara to see if she has done any type of research recently, through Hispanic Affairs, that the Committee would be interested in hearing about. Ms. Bjornson will find out when she invites Ms. Guevara to the next meeting.

Ms. O'Keeffe asked the Committee about past events, and the "Seeds of Change Award". Ms. Muller stated that in the past, the Committee had large scale women's leadership events during Women's History Month, utilizing space within the County College of Morris (CCM). She said it was important to let the public know that there is an Advisory Committee on Women within the County. Three Seeds of Change Award Ceremonies have been conducted to date. The Committee can have this award again next year or plan on to something else. The Seeds of Change Award was created to recognize and demonstrate appreciation to women active in grassroots efforts to advance women's focused causes in Morris County. Nomination forms were sent to County Non-Profit agencies and distributed to Advisory Committees and Councils. Nomination forms were collected, and a candidate was chosen. Due to time constraints, the Committee decided not to have the event this year, and resume in 2022. Ms. O'Keeffe and Ms. Bjornson agreed that postponing the Seeds of Change Award until next year will give the Committee itself time to develop. Ms. Errico asked what timeline was used before. Ms. Bjornson stated and Ms. Kisatsky concurred, that nomination forms should be reviewed/revised in September, sent out in October, and returned by January 2022. Ms. O'Keeffe recommended creating a subcommittee to begin the process. Ms. Bjornson stated the nominating form has been revised several times and is not necessary. She also stated we don't have enough members for a subcommittee and the event can be an agenda item. Ms. Kisatsky will send Ms. O'Keeffe a copy of the nomination form for review.

Various members of the Committee expressed patience to newer members in terms of discussed projects and events that did not come to fruition last year. Unfortunately the Pandemic put a halt on many activity plans. Historically the Advisory Committee on Women held very successful and informational events, and will again moving forward. Ms. Errico added that interacting directly and exchanging ideas and information with other Committees/Councils, who do have funding attached, could prove beneficial to the Committee. The more that we can be informing them directly and having their information exchanged back to us, the Committee might be able to help to guide the direction sometimes with where they want to put focus on for funding initiatives. These linkages could to be very important.

4. **New Business/Announcements** - No new business or announcements.
5. **Adjourn** - The meeting was adjourned at 6:43pm. The next meeting will be held on April 20, 2021.