

**Morris County Advisory Committee on Women**  
**June 15, 2021, 2021, 5:30pm to 7:00pm**  
**Via Microsoft Teams**

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

**Guest:** Miranda Kawiecki

**1. Welcome and Introductions**

Ms. O’Keeffe called the meeting to order at 5:32pm and welcomed attendees.

**2. Review of April Meeting Minutes** – The Committee reviewed the May 18, 2021 meeting minutes. A motion to approve the minutes was made by Ms. O’Keeffe, seconded by Ms. Bennett-Santoro.

**3. Discussion:**

- a. Expectations for in-person committee meetings – Ms. O’Keeffe stated that there is no specific date yet, but it’s something the committee needs to think about going forward. Ms. Errico stated that the County’s intention is to upgrade facility conference rooms. As a result, there will be an option for in-person and virtual meetings. This project will take a while to complete. MAPS dispatchers who were based out of Morris View needed to vacate because of COVID. They are currently using conference space at 1 Medical Drive. It would be helpful to know how the committee feels about meeting in person. Ms. Specchio stated she was fine either way as long as it doesn’t interfere with her teaching schedule in the fall. Ms. Boyce would like to see everyone in person. Ms. Bjornson is happy to meet in person, after summer, maybe September. Ms. O’Keeffe suggested we revisit this topic at an upcoming meeting.
- b. Membership – Ms. Bjornson remarked the Committee is looking to increase the number of members. This increase will allow for the establishment of subcommittees. Per the bylaws, the Committee is allowed 11 to 14 members. The Committee discussed increasing diversity (LBGTQ, racial/gender/age diversity) and inclusion in several areas such as expertise and skill in some of the areas we are focusing on. If any members have a potential candidate in mind, please bring this matter to the attention of the complete Committee for discussion. We can then speak with the candidate to determine they will be a good fit. The Committee can then recommend the candidate to the Commissioners. All Advisory Committee candidates will need final approval by the County Commissioners.
- c. Calendar planning – Ms. O’Keeffe stated that at the last meeting, the Committee discussed developing a time line for projects we would like to do this year. For example, on planning for the Seeds of Change award, we would need to work on a timeline backwards on the calendar to ensure the planning stays on target for the forms to be mailed, and received back for review. Ms. Bjornson stated that if we choose March for this event, we would need to start planning now. We would need to establish a time frame on the calendar and be mindful of the Commissioner’s meetings. Ms. Mueller recommended keeping the Seeds of Change award in March as its National Women’s History month. Ms. Bjornson asked when should the Committee finalize the form, make sure the form is mailed out, and establish a deadline for applications to be returned to the Committee. There will also need to be a deadline to select the award recipient, and notify the person. Ms. O’Keeffe and Ms. Bjornson both agreed that a subcommittee should handle these matters. The formation of additional subcommittees would help with the other action items that will need to be addressed. Ms. Bennett-Santoro volunteered to be on the Seeds of Change subcommittee. Ms. Errico said that the subcommittee can meet on a mutually agreeable time outside of the standard monthly meeting.
- d. Seeds of Change – Ms. O’Keeffe asked Ms. Bennett-Santoro to brief the Committee on the criteria of the award. Ms. Bennett-Santoro stated that the Seeds of Change is awarded to a person who is a volunteer in the community. Ms. Mueller added that the award, inspired by Leanna Brown, former Morris County Freeholder, and NJ Senator, seeks to highlight and celebrate women who build up other women. Often it

is those who work at the roots who go unrecognized. Through this event, our Committee demonstrates our appreciation for those grassroots efforts. At the first award event, the Committee planted a tree at the Arboretum as a memorial to Ms. Brown. As a new project, Ms. Mueller believes there were probably 3 more subsequent award events held. Each were very successful. Ms. Bjornson recommended at least two more people to assist Ms. Bennet-Santoro with this project. Ms. O’Keeffe stressed that this Committee needs to move into a subcommittee format moving forward.

- e. County E-newsletter topics – Ms. O’Keeffe began the discussion, informing the Committee that Ms. Mueller has agreed to take this project on. This is a great way to promote a number of different topics as well as promoting the Committee and our focus too. Ms. Mueller stated that the newsletter was a good way to keep this Committee in the public eye. The Committee could be a good source for making the community aware of outlets for needs and services. Ms. Mueller has already made contact with the Director of Communications, Brian Murray. Ms. Bjornson recommended discussing ideas for the newsletter. It would be great if we can have one article ready for September. We can also put information regarding the March Seeds of Change Award in the newsletter. Ms. Kawiecki stated that October is Breast Cancer Awareness Month. Ms. Specchio added that October is also National Women’s Small Business Month. Ms. Errico stated that May is Women’s Health Month. Ms. Specchio volunteered to research what occurs in each month related to women. Ms. O’Keeffe will keep the County E-newsletter topics as an agenda item moving forward. Ms. Bjornson recommended keeping Committee submissions to a quarterly basis. Creation of a Public Relations (PR) subcommittee was discussed.
- f. What are the pressing issues from the Needs Assessment that we should be promoting to the women of Morris County? – Ms. O’Keeffe stated we were unable to get a member of the Human Services Advisory Council (HSAC) to report on the Needs Assessment. The members are still reviewing the findings. Ms. Errico is hopeful someone will be able to attend at the July 20<sup>th</sup> meeting. Ms. O’Keeffe reported that the Committee discussed establishing a subcommittee that would take on what our action item is. This subcommittee would report back to the Committee on the Needs Assessment findings and what our role could be for the community i.e. child care, housing, etc. Regarding other small advisory bodies, Ms. Errico mentioned that full committees meetings are held on certain months and on other month there are only subcommittee meetings. It’s something to consider. Ms. Bjornson suggested splitting meetings. Ms. O’Keeffe does not want meetings to become onerous. Ms. O’Keeffe encouraged members to please join a subcommittee. Ms. Bjornson reached out to Rebekka Zydell and Terry Connolly. They Chair the HSAC and the Continuum of Care, which looks at how funding is spent on homelessness. They had an idea, that was also brought up by this Committee, which was on women returning back to the workforce after COVID and their child care issues. Ms. O’Keeffe said she received an email from CCM, on a dedicated program to help women get back into the workforce. This could potentially be a good topic for the newsletter. Ms. Kawiecki asked what was the County’s social media presence like. Can we start our own Instagram account? Ms. Errico responded that the county has several social media outlets available. All media recommendations need to be approved through the Director of Communications. Ms. Mueller asked if Ms. Kawiecki can assist her with the newsletter and if it was possible for her to join the Committee.

Ms. Boyce brought up the topic for ARP funds. There are some targeted efforts to help segments of the population. Are there any strategies from anyone, who is more familiar with it, that can point her in the right direction so she can take a look at it and get some ideas on how the Committee can assist. Ms. Errico stated we are still waiting for guidelines and parameters of the funding.

Ms. Specchio asked if anything is being done for residential Long Term Care, as far as any preparedness, for another pandemic. Is there any way this Committee can advocate for this matter? Ms. Errico doesn’t know the day to day operations of Morris View. To date, Morris View continues to have very strict screening processes in place for staff and visitors. Ms. O’Keeffe recommended revisiting this topic in the upcoming months.

Ms. O’Keeffe recapped the meeting discussions:

- Please volunteer to join a subcommittee

- Public Relations Subcommittee
- Ad Hoc / Seeds of Change Subcommittee
- Action Plan Subcommittee
- Membership Subcommittee

4. **Public Section/Questions** - None

5. **Adjourn** - The meeting was adjourned at 6:34pm. The next meeting will be held on July 20, 2021. **\*\*There will be no meeting in August.**