

Morris County Advisory Committee on Women
February 16, 2021, 4:30pm
Via Microsoft Teams

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

1. **Welcome and Introductions** – Kasey Errico called the meeting to order at 4:49pm. She welcomed attendees and introductions were made.
2. **Review Welcome Packet** – Attendees reviewed the welcome packet. In reviewing the bylaws, Ms. Errico remarked that this information is particularly important as it states the structure of the Committee, the purpose of the Committee, Membership, Officers, etc. The Fact Sheet contains a little more detail on the Committee and meeting information.
3. **Review and Approval of Minutes** – The May 19, 2020 meeting minutes were reviewed. Pam Bennett-Santoro made a motion to approve the minutes, seconded by Joann Bjornson.
4. **Leadership Roles/Nominating Officers:** Shelby Rhoads and Joann Bjornson agreed to be Nominating Officers in 2021. Ms. Bjornson agreed to be the Vice Chair. Ms. Bjornson discussed some of the responsibilities of the Chair; what are the goals moving forward, who is calling the meeting, who sends the invite, what the job actually entails, setting the agenda with Ms. Errico, facilitating the meetings, etc. Ms. Errico stated that her office will handle all the administration pieces. Liz Kisatsky will take meeting minutes, send meeting invitations, forward documentation, and provide clerical support as necessary. The Chair and Vice Chair, will meet briefly (either virtually, email or conference call) with Ms. Errico, to create the agenda. Ms. Bennett-Santoro stated that if the agenda could to be sent a few days prior to each meeting, members could review and add to it if they wish. Karen O’Keefee stated that she will be the Chair this year and run the meetings. The Committee voted in favor of Karen O’Keefee as Chair and Joann Bjornson as Vice Chair.
5. **Discussion Items:**
 - a. **Meeting Dates/Times** – Meetings will be held on the third Tuesday of each month from 5:30pm to 7:00pm via Microsoft Teams. There will be no meeting in August or December.
 - b. **Review/Revise Bylaws** – The Committee discussed revising: Section 3, Duties of the Officers, Letter f., removing Secretary and replacing it with Vice Chair and entirely removing the Secretary as an Officer. Input from the Committee in preparing the agenda was agreed upon. Ms. Bjornson asked if the Commissioners needed to approve bylaws.

Letter h., would also be the responsibility of Administration, not the Chairs.

- c. **Role of Women’s Committee**
 - o Connection to the HSAC – Ms. Errico explained that the Human Services Advisory Council looks broadly at the overall needs of the County. How can we effectively work with the other efforts that are happening across the County, looking at needs? How can we look at what our focus is and tie it into what’s been identified across the County as needs. The HSAC just submitted a required broad based Needs Assessment to the State that was conducted last Fall, on a variety of needs across the County. There might be a real avenue for the Committee to look at the Needs Assessment and focus our efforts based on what’s been identified. We are waiting to receive a copy of the assessment. Ms. Errico would like to invite the HSAC Chair and Vice Chair to a Women’s Committee meeting to speak about the Needs Assessment. The Committee agreed to this recommendation.

Ms. Bennett-Santoro reported that the ALICE Report, a project through the United Way, also conducted a Needs Assessment. She also attended the Women’s Project NJ. It’s a Re-Entry Program. Although there was not a lot about Morris County, it was very interesting. She suggested inviting a staff member to an upcoming meeting. Ms. Bennett-Santoro sent

information last Fall, on the 100th Anniversary on the Women’s Right to Vote, Ms. Bennett-Santoro attended. She stated that we are now part of a new Multi-Commission on the Status of Women. Ms. Bennett-Santoro plans to attend their quarterly meetings and will report the outcome to the Committee.

Ms. Bennett-Santoro brought up the County news articles published on February 4th regarding the collaboration between Homeless Solutions, Family Promise, and Morris Habitat for Humanity. Assisting in some capacity in making the homes habitable was a project slated for 2020. Ms. Bjornson stated that their goal is to provide housing for women experiencing homelessness through a project utilizing the homes on Ruth Davis Drive. This initiative is called “Promising Solutions” and consists of the nine houses on the campus, which is currently being upgraded by Morris Habitat (link to article provided below). The projects the Committee were looking to contribute to have already been addressed.

<https://www.morriscountynj.gov/Morris-County-News/Three-Non-Profits-amp-Morris-County-Unite-To-Provide-Housing-To-Neighbors-Experiencing-Homelessness>

Ms. Bjornson stated that “housing as healthcare” may be a project the Committee can explore moving forward. We can review this topic at the next meeting.

Ms. Boyce reiterated how very important housing is i.e. combating isolation, aging out of foster care. She also mentioned the importance of the House Relief Bill.

Ms. O’Keefe stated that there are 1,000 cases in Morris County of people facing eviction.

Ms. Bennet-Santoro asked that as a result COVID19 and families being home, has the number of women facing domestic abuse increased. Ms. Errico and Ms. Bjornson confirmed that yes it has increased.

- d. **New Membership** – The Committee discussed allowing new members who do not live in Morris County, but have worked here for at least five years. Ms. Errico states that Commissioner DeFillippo is aware of this question and is looking into it. There is certainly room on the Committee for additional members. Possibly the bylaws can be amended to state “2 members” who are not Morris County residents can be allowed Committee membership. If the parameters are sent to Ms. Errico, she will discuss this it with Commissioner DeFillippo. Ms. Mueller was not comfortable with the discussed parameters. She stated that this is a matter that can adjusted as time goes by. The less structure the Committee has on this item, the better off we will be in the future. Ms. Bjornson agreed it is a good point. The subject can be discussed on a case by case basis. This topic will be on the March 16th agenda for further discussion.

Ms. O’Keefe inquired about what the Annual Report entails. Ms. Bjornson explained that it shows what the Committee projects were for the year. Ms. Mueller stated the report is done by the end of the calendar year. Presentations have also been conducted at Commissioner’s meetings. Ms. Errico suggested getting on the agenda for the November Commissioner’s meeting. Ms. Bjornson recommended creating an Ad Hoc Committee to just focus on the Annual Report.

6. **New Business and Announcements**

None

7. **Adjourn** - The meeting was adjourned at 6:11pm