

**Hampden County Commission on the Status of Women and Girls**

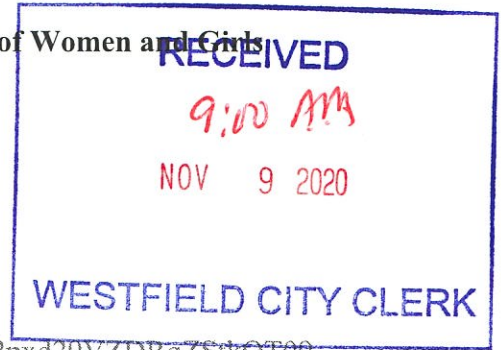
**Minutes DRAFT**

October 8, 2020

6:00 PM - 8:00 PM

Online via Zoom:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/6895726626?pwd=aDdCTEpPSlkwa2pxd29VZDRqZStkOT09>



I. Call to Order and Roll Call

A. Jackson called the meeting to order at 6:09PM, seconded by Distefano

B. Marshall did the role call. Present at the meeting were:

1. Gabrielle Jackson
2. Dawn Distefano
3. Michelle Goncalves
4. Patricia Hallberg
5. Lizzy Ortiz
6. Shanique Spalding
7. Guest- Maria Bedard VP of Early Education and Care of Square One and Linda-Jeanne Mack-Chair of Hampshire County Commission



- 8.
9. Absent- Jennifer Metsch

II. Public Speak Out

A. Linda-Jeanne spoke first. She is the new chair of the Hampshire County Commission. Wants to be more involved and work together. Their next meeting is next Tuesday 6-8 PM. Wants to do a hearing about childcare in Western MA and reached out to Berkshire. Perhaps collaborate on coffee chats or our own public hearing that is more about Western MA than the state hearing. Virtual trivia night to get to know each other and have fun.

III. Gabrielle made motion to approve 9/10/20 meeting minutes. Dawn moved and Lizzy seconded. All in favor and Spalding abstained because she wasn't in the meeting.

IV. Chair Report

- A. Planning meeting with state commission for events due to differences of opinion about funding and services we would get. Once they decide about vendors Gabrielle will give us info. Their budget committee votes on it, TBD.
- B. Budget proposal for funding if we have events, submit to state chapter for approval. Do we want funding and what do we want to use it for? Determine what funding consists of (things or pay a speaker) and what is the timing?
- C. Statewide newsletter. Asked if we want to be featured and Gabrielle thinks we should take them up on that. Gabrielle and Tara will work on something. Patty suggested to highlight our speakers.
- D. Discussed malware attacks at Springfield Public Schools today as well as the one that we had as well.

#### V. Vice Chair Report

- A. Used her time to ask Shanique about what is going on at Beacon Hill.
  - 1. Legislative session was extended into November instead of ending 7/31 due to legislators unable to complete fiscal year budget.
  - 2. ROE Act Bill given until 11/12 to move out of judiciary committee. Received new energy since Barret nomination. Focus is on the budget first and police accountability bill.
  - 3. Census was extended to the end of October. Anyone interested in advocacy about this to let her know. Suggests putting census link on our page.
  - 4. Ranked choice voting is on the ballot this election and many people running for re-election or have challengers. Very important.

#### VI. Featured Speaker Speak Out

- A. Distefano gave an introduction for Maria Bedard. Has a very big job at Square One, She is the Vice President of Early Education Services. Manages daily care of over 500 children up to age 12. Oversees staff working with children doing school from 7:30-5:00 every day. Former school teacher, center director, administrator, pre-school trainer, and all things wonderful according to Dawn.
- B. Maria said early childhood field is near and dear to her heart.
- C. Discussed language barriers causing issues with accessing care. Makes the whole process difficult especially when forms are only in English. It can make women want to put off working and just stay home with the kids.
- D. Springfield's bus system is difficult and when you get into rural areas there is no bus service.
- E. A solid foundation at pre-school level can set the tone for young women. Strong skills can be learned because they want to help break the cycle. It can help them continue through school and enjoy it. Wants to instill in these kids a love of learning.
- F. Square One provides multi level support for the family so the kids can be successful.
- G. Dawn mentioned prevalence of women in the early Ed field. 98-99% of the professionals in that field are women but they aren't getting rich doing it. Maria continued with saying people with the kids all day are among the working poor. Women take the job because they love kids but it isn't a well paying job so it just perpetuates the cycle. Hard career to get ahead and move up.

- H. Dawn wonders what we as a commission can do to help the women working in childcare get thought of as professionals and not just babysitters.
- I. Patty asked Maria if these jobs are minimum wage jobs and asked who sets the bar, government because of subsidies, parents because of the costs? Maria said its the tri-lemma, government, families, and program. Parents can't cover the cost of expensive program and government doesn't pay. Square One 100% subsidized by the state and then staff is paid. It is different than a private sector like a college campus, could have parents paying so those programs so pay more. Federal funded programs are different as well, doesn't depend on how many children show up to the program.
- J. Early Ed workers are back to work in pandemic and instead of being considered an essential worker it is more like glorified babysitters again.
- K. Patty asked how often Square One sees these kids, do they go through the program for a long time or are they kind of in and out. Maria feels this program has a long lasting impact on these kids. For some it is getting regular meals in a steady, safe environment. Until they have this safety, it will still take time before they can begin with the learning. They do see regular attendance. But a big part of that is if they start to see the attendance becoming poor then they have an outreach program to get the kids into school.
- L. Lizzy added that kids aren't hungry for food only they also need the love and compassion and clothing and happiness and a clean place to be and Square One provides that and she thanks them.
- M. Gabrielle added she is originally from OH and has been here for a year now. She said it is interesting to see the gap in education levels for teachers. Would be nice if Spfld offered in teacher contract to provide financial support for teachers to get education to get their degrees.

## VII. Old Business

- A. Ongoing items. Website, coffee chat, and media.
  - 1. Gabrielle said we should try and do at least one coffee chat a month.
  - 2. Michelle suggested coffee chats would be good to invite a speaker like we are doing with the meetings, might draw in more people to join in to discuss a certain topic.
  - 3. Still plugging away at the website. Email pics to Gabrielle that we would like included.
  - 4. No newsletter went out this month due to work requirements for Gabrielle with instituting remote learning. Will be back next month.
  - 5. No info about Mass Appeal yet.

## VIII. New Business

- A. Fall events.
  - 1. What speakers do we want on which months.
    - a) Tara suggested Lakisha Coppedge for November 12th meeting, sent her a message to see if she is available for Nov. or would December be better.
    - b) Michelle may bring students in to hear what young voices have to say.
    - c) Dawn mentioned Wozniac and will wait and see when Lakisha is

available.

- d) Lizzy mentioned youth advocacy division and having someone from that come in, attorney and social worker.
  - 2. Don't want to plan too far out so focusing on November and December first and then move on to Jan/Feb.
  - 3. Fall/Winter social discussed last meeting. Looks like it would need to be virtual if we want to do something. Maybe collaborate with Hampshire county and do a women's history trivia night.
- B. Gabrielle will try to join the Hampshire County meeting next week to build more allies.
- IX. Gabrielle made a motion to move into Executive session. Patty seconded. All in favor. The group moved into Executive Session to discuss and review applicants for new commissioner for the open seat.
- X. Group came out of executive session with the recommendation for the open seat to give to the state and Gabrielle made motion to adjourn this meeting at 7:39PM and all were in favor.