

**Oklahoma Commission on the Status of Women
Regular Meeting Minutes
December 11, 2008, 1:30 – 3:00 p.m.
Resonance, 1608 S. Ellwood Ave., Tulsa**

The Oklahoma Commission on the Status of Women met at Resonance Center for Women, 1608 S. Ellwood Ave., Tulsa, on December 11, 2008. Chair Chris Morriss called the meeting to order at 1:30 p.m.

Commissioners Present: Fern Bowling, Patty Bryant, Rebecca Kennedy, Lou Kohlman, Valeska Littlefield, Joyce Martin, Pat Martin, Bernice Mitchell, Chris Morriss, Jilda Motley, Anita Norman, Pam Peterson, Nancy Rothman, Mary Walker

Commissioners Excused: Bob Darcy, Lee Denney, Sally Frasier, Kathryn Jones, Lou Kerr, Denise Kinzie, Debbe Leftwich, Jennifer Paustenbaugh, Patricia Presley

Commissioners Absent: Toni Calvey, Vicki French, Catherine Haynes, Lyn Hester, Claudean Reynolds, Valerie Thompson

Advisory Council Members Present: Deena Fisher, Penny Painter, Heather Simon, Adeline Yerkes. Tya Smith (Staff)

Women's Leadership Moment: Penny Painter delivered a brief program on Resonance Center for Women. This has grown over the years to focus on at-risk women, children and families. Resonance also has a successful girls' program which is being expanded. In addition, Resonance is franchisee for a successful furniture refurbishing, restoration and repair business. The business not only allows Resonance workers to get work experience, it has a significant program component. Participants have classes in everything from parenting to grammar, designed to give them life and work skills to help them succeed.

Roll Call: Secretary Lou Kohlman called the roll and noted that fourteen (14) Commissioners, and four (4) Advisory Council members were present. The Commissioners present constituted a quorum.

Financial Report: As OPM will not prepare a financial report for another week, there was no financial report.

Minutes of the November 20, 2008 Meeting: The Minutes were approved as amended.

Officer Reports

Chair: Chris Morriss reported that Tya Smith is working diligently on the Web site. Several Commissioners need to submit bios to Tya. Commissioner Morriss and Lou Kohlman are reviewing and revising the Policies and Procedures manual, and the Chair invites help on this project. In past years the Commission had lapel pins, and the Chair wants to have these made up again. She is requesting any history on the pins from people

who may remember when they were originally made. The Chair noted that nametags have been made, but they may be too large for regular meeting use.

Vice Chair: All Hall of Fame nominations have been received, and the nominating committee is making their selection process. All nominees will be notified in January. It was suggested that, with so many strong nominees, nomination packets for some of the strong candidates may be preserved for future review. Rebecca Kennedy noted that in the past, nominators of unsuccessful candidates were asked whether they would like to nominate the candidate in the future. Electronic submissions may make this easier in the future.

Secretary: There was no report.

Advisory Council Chair: Jilda Motley announced that letters to the Advisory Council are almost complete and ready to mail.

NACW Representative: Bernice Mitchell reported. An NACW Board meeting was held in November. Tya Smith will send out an email with NACW membership forms. Individual memberships are \$50, and Commissioners are encouraged to join. The next annual convention is July 24-26, 2009, in Arlington, Virginia (near Washington D.C.), with accommodations in Crystal City.

Topical Committee Reports:

Leadership Committee: Chair Lou Kohlman invited Commissioners to submit nominations for the Kate Barnard award. She noted that the Leadership Committee may use its topical lunches and listening sessions to reinforce the focus on incarceration of women.

Women's Health Committee: Adeline Yerkes reported that the Committee has received some money and will hold three forums. They hope to hold at least one in a rural area, and one in Tulsa, working with the Mayor's Commission there. Any Commissioner who wants to work with dates and a location, or to do a Town Hall or meeting at the same time, please contact the Committee. The Commission also hopes to do a May presentation to the Commission on bone health. This might include a heel or hand test for bone density. It might be possible to partner with OU to have a larger and more accurate machine available for testing.

Women Incarcerated Committee: Chair Rebecca Kennedy reported. She suggested that the Commission invite the new DOC director of women's programs to speak at a meeting. The Committee is preparing a spreadsheet of programs which are effective in reducing women's incarceration rates by: (a) deterring or deferring incarceration (domestic violence programs, drug or family courts, other programs keeping women out of the system); (b) restoring women in prison (such as the Eddie Warrior program); (c) helping incarcerated women re-enter society. She asks Commissioners to provide her with any information on these types of programs in their area. Also, Lou Kerr began a

document addressing issues which would help resolve reducing the incarceration rate. The Committee needs help to flesh these 8 or 9 issues out. This document is intended to provide background information to help solicit grants and give information to people who may be able to provide funding.

Penny Painter noted that unless the State changes the way it looks at women and children, the problems will not change. Resonance has a grant for community response to female offenders. She notes that there have been several groups looking at this and every time, this issue is not addressed. She suggested that the Commission lead a conversation on how we as a state think about and value women and children. She also noted that our sentencing ranges are harsher and the resources we devote to women and children are less than those in surrounding states.

Nancy Rothman has met many times with leaders and legislators attempting to have this conversation. Penny Painter noted that the Kaiser Foundation and others are willing to put money behind this. Lou Kohlman noted that the Oklahoma Academy is recommending changes to the criminal justice system which involve putting money into counseling, alternative courts and other alternative systems to address incarceration problems in the beginning, and suggested Committee members might meet with the Academy to discuss working together on these issues. Several members noted that judges pose a big problem; many of them do not know about or are not concerned with domestic violence issues. Chair Morriss has spoken with Justice Winchester, who is interested in requiring legal education for judges on this issue and is willing to devote time to it. Representative Kris Steele is proposing changes to Title X, and there will be recommended changes to DHS from a current task force, which may also make a difference. Pam Peterson may be able to keep the Commission informed on legislation in the upcoming Session.

Commissioners agreed that these efforts should be the Commission's focus.

Ongoing and Unfinished Business:

Commissioners discussed the possibility of either contracting with an Advisory Council member to continue compiling status of women county data, or to have an outside entity donate the salary of a person to do this. Chair Morriss offered to discuss these questions with Marilyn Capps of OPM.

New Business:

Commissioners discussed a budget for new office equipment, to be paid with carryover funds. We need a new computer and software as well as a scanner. The Chair submitted a written request for equipment, which Tya Smith compiled after consultation with OPM experts. Rebecca Kennedy moved to authorize the request and Jilda Motley seconded. The motion passed with no opposition. Pam Peterson abstained. It was suggested that we also acquire program software and we may want to consider a printer. Tya Smith will research this options. Mary Walker moved that the Commission is authorized to purchase up to \$1500 in additional office equipment, including a color printer, software, and any other office supplies necessary. Valeska Littlefield seconded the motion. Anita Norman

offered a friendly amendment increasing the authorization to \$2000, and Fern Bowling seconded the motion. The motion passed without opposition, Pam Peterson abstaining.

Announcements: Rebecca Kennedy noted that the Oklahoma Women's Coalition has been formed and she was asked to serve on its Board. However, she announces that the Coalition and Commission are separate entities with different purposes, and she is explicitly not representing the Commission on that Coalition. The Coalition is formed to advocate for women, families and children, and may have complementary goals with Commission goals. Should a conflict arise she will resign her Coalition Board membership. Tya Smith asked Topical Committee chairs to write a brief summary of the Committee goals and purposes for the Web site.

Next meeting: The next meeting will be on January 22, 2009, from 1:30 – 3:30 p.m. The location will be announced.

The meeting was adjourned at 2:45 p.m.

Motions:

Rebecca Kennedy moved to authorize the written request for office supplies, including a computer, scanner, software and digital camera, and Jilda Motley seconded. The motion passed with no opposition. Pam Peterson abstained.

Mary Walker moved that the Commissioner is authorized to purchase up to \$1500 in additional office equipment, including a color printer, software, and any other office supplies necessary. Valeska Littlefield seconded the motion. Anita Norman offered a friendly amendment increasing the authorization to \$2000, and Fern Bowling seconded the motion. The motion passed without opposition, Pam Peterson abstaining.