

MIAMI-DADE COUNTY COMMISSION FOR WOMEN
111 N.W. 1st Street, Suite 1034, Miami, FL 33128
Minutes of Meeting of February 26, 2014

Present: Nordis Alvarez, Leah Blumenfeld, Marie Soeurette Eloi, Viviana Jordan, Michelle Dunaj Lucking, Eveline Pierre, Linda Robinson, Phyllis Sloan-Simpkins, Marie Woodson, Mara Zapata and Dona Zemo

Excused: Monica Interian, Sharon Kendrick-Johnson, Samia Taoulost Malik, Noreen Lagault Mendoza, Francesca Menes, Beverly Nixon, Kit Rafferty, and Rhonda Wimberly

Staff: Laura Morilla

Guests: Bradley Rosen and Renee Rosen; and Jude Bruno from the Miami-Dade County Youth Commission

Chair Michelle Dunaj Lucking commenced the meeting at 6:40 p.m. and welcomed everyone.

The **Committee Reports** were presented first.

The Events and Fundraising Committee met last night and Laura prepared the written report today. Michelle reviewed the highlights from the written report. The CFW's lobby display for Women's History Month will go up on March 3rd; Marie Woodson, Monica and Sharon will help Laura. The event with the Young Women's Preparatory Academy will most likely be postponed until last September or early October.

The Legislative Committee met on February 18th to review the progress of legislation in Tallahassee. Leah reviewed the written report and also talked about some additional bills that have been brought to the Committee's attention since the Committee meeting. One of these is an anti-abortion bill filed by State Senator Anitere Flores, and Leah reported that the Committee recommends that the CFW oppose this bill.

At this point there was a quorum and Michelle asked everyone to introduce themselves.

Then there was a **presentation** by Bradley and Renee Rosen about his proposed Women's Health and Wealth Conference at the Pritikin Center in Doral on May 2. The capacity for the conference is about 60 people. The Pritikin Center is underwriting a lot of the event. The program will feature a team of experts on various topics such as estate planning, nutrition, health issues, etc. There will be a test kitchen with a chef, a life coach and raffle items. Brad and Renee hope to make it a fun interactive experience. They are looking for the CFW's endorsement and support of the event. Bradley said that he might be able to give the CFW 2 to 4 tickets to give to whomever the CFW deems worthy. Bradley is also working out a way to have the net proceeds go to a women's shelter like the Lotus House. Bradley and Renee then answered some questions from CFW members.

Next there was another **presentation** from Jude Bruno of the Miami-Dade County Youth Commission about their inaugural Women's Leadership Conference for high school girls. The conference will be held on March 17 with the morning session in the County Commission Chambers with the women County Commissioners. Patricia Ireland will be the moderator. About 200 girls from different high schools who are part of the Women of Tomorrow mentoring program will be attending. After the morning session, the girls will be going to different breakout sessions featuring a panel of distinguished women. The conference will also be held in different high schools on March 18, 19, and 20 that week. Some FIU and Miami-Dade College students have also been invited for March 17. Jude will send the conference flyer to Laura when it is ready.

In connection with the issue of women's financial empowerment, Michelle briefly talked about the Women's Opportunity Workshop (W.O.W.) held this past Saturday at Miami-Dade College, North Campus. The event was co-sponsored by the CFW and was very informative and comprehensive about different financial and economic topics that are important to women's advancement.

Michelle reported that the NACW conference is coming up in July in Sarasota and that it is time for the CFW to renew its annual NACW dues of \$275. Dona moved that the CFW pay the \$275 dues from the CFW Trust Fund. Linda seconded the motion, and the **motion passed**.

Leah now moved to approve the Agenda and Linda seconded the motion. The motion passed and the **Agenda was approved**.

Leah moved to approve the minutes of the CFW meeting of 01/22/14 and Marie Woodson seconded the motion. The motion passed and the **minutes were approved**.

Back to Committee reports, the CFW discussed the Nominating Committee and CFW election of officers. Michelle explained that the Nominating Committee needs to meet to put together the slate of officers for elections in April. She also reminded everyone that, if the proposed changes to the CFW ordinance passes, then the CFW will have to have elections again in November. There is also the issue of the proposed amendment to the CFW Bylaws to add another Member at Large officer position to the Executive Committee. Mara moved to amend the Bylaws to add another Member at Large position and Leah seconded the motion. The motion passed and the **Bylaws were amended**.

Then the Nominating Committee was created. Michelle asked for volunteers. Linda was appointed and Michelle called for the Board to vote on electing volunteers Dona and Eveline. Phyllis moved to elect, Viviana seconded the motion, and **the motion passed**. Michelle will serve on the Committee and give some thought as to the fifth member of the committee to be appointed. Laura will send out an email to all CFW members requesting that anyone who wants to be considered for a position on the slate of officers so express their interest.

Going back to the presentation by Bradley and Renee Rosen, Mara moved that the CFW co-sponsor the Women's Health and Wealth Conference. Phyllis seconded the motion, and **the motion passed**.

Michelle handed out her **Executive Committee report** and asked the CFW members to take a few minutes to read the report. The content of the Executive Committee report is as follows:

**Miami-Dade County Commission for Women
Executive Committee Report
February 26, 2014**

For many months the Executive Committee has been attempting to resolve an unfortunate issue involving Board member Marie Sourette Eloi. Based upon Ms. Eloi's actions and a recent decision issued by the Miami-Dade Commission on Ethics and Public Trust, the Executive Committee recommends the CFW send a letter to Commissioner Monestime requesting withdrawal of Ms. Eloi's appointment.

The Executive Committee greatly appreciates the work of each Board member in helping women and children. This unfortunate circumstance has not previously occurred in the history of the Commission for Women. We believe taking this action and other procedures will prevent future conflicts and will ensure the CFW can move forward to work together as a team in making a true difference to help our community.

Summary

On June 26, 2013, the Executive Committee reviewed information and a report provided by Ms. Eloi, as well as other information regarding issues of Bylaws and Ethics violations involving Ms. Eloi. The Executive Committee unanimously voted that it was in the best interests of the Commission for Women to request that Ms. Eloi voluntarily resign from the Commission for Women. Ms. Eloi was removed from her position as Chair of the Events and Fundraising Committee.

As a courtesy to Ms. Eloi, she was provided with a two-week period to make her decision and to provide the appropriate paperwork. This would have avoided involving the full Board while at the same time protecting the organization. Instead, of providing this courtesy to her fellow Board members, Ms. Eloi chose not to resign. She further chose to target the CFW Chair with personal attacks to the Chair's reputation and profession, and to expose the CFW to unwarranted investigation and harm.

The evening of July 8th, the Commission for Women received notice that Ms. Eloi had filed an official complaint with Commissioner Monestime a week earlier on June 28th. Over the next few months, Ms. Eloi involved other members of the community and the Board in a personal dispute, despite the fact that a special meeting of the Executive Committee was called by the Chair to again provide Ms. Eloi with further opportunity to present her positions and take corrective action.

On September 10th, it was determined that Ms. Eloi had been provided with numerous opportunities to take corrective action, but had chosen to continue escalating activities that were harmful to the mission of the organization. Based upon the Executive Committees findings and the continued personal attacks and divisive actions, the Chair removed Ms. Eloi from the Events and Fundraising Committee as well as the Human Trafficking Committee.

That same day, Ms. Eloi again complained to Commissioner Monestime's office and involved other CFW Board members. Shortly thereafter, she filed a complaint with the Miami-Dade Commission on Ethics and Public Trust against the CFW Chair. After months of investigation, the Commission on Ethics and Public Trust dismissed the complaint finding no grounds for any wrongdoing on the part of the CFW Chair. Based on information and documents provided by Ms. Eloi, the Ethics Commission additionally decided to refer the matter to the State Attorney's office for review of possible sunshine law violations involving Ms. Eloi and other Board members.

Conclusions

The responsibilities of the CFW Chair include protecting the organization. The Executive Committee recognizes the Chair's efforts and contributions in complying with the Bylaws, and in attempting to protect the organization by resolving conflicts caused by Ms. Eloi. The Chair's actions included: ethics training, special meetings, revisions and clarification to Bylaws, removal of Ms. Eloi from certain positions, and defense against groundless accusations and harmful complaints.

The Executive Committee further recognizes that additional disciplinary actions are now required to protect the organization, and to comply with the Bylaws and professional duties. **Therefore the Executive Committee recommends this report be provided to Commissioner Monestime, and that a letter be sent to Commissioner Monestime requesting withdrawal of Ms. Eloi's appointment. The facts that form the basis for this recommendation include, but are not limited to:**

- **Bylaws violations by Ms. Eloi.**
- **Filing of complaints by Ms. Eloi against CFW Chair Michelle Dunaj Lucking that contained false statements, material omissions of fact, and were found lacking in merit by the Miami-Dade Commission on Ethics and Public Trust.**

- **Ms. Eloi's exposure of other Board members to sunshine law violations which resulted in referral to the state attorney's office.**
- **Ms. Eloi's actions resulting in loss and threatened loss of Board members.**
- **Ms. Eloi's continued actions over a period time that are contrary to the spirit and mission of the organization and that have caused detriment to the CFW.**

The Executive Committee thanks you for your time and commitment in addressing this difficult situation and in helping the CFW to continue its mission and good works in the community.

The CFW then discussed the report, particularly about whether Commissioner Jean Monestime should be advised now that the matter regarding his CFW appointee is with the State Attorney's Office for possible investigation. During the discussion Michelle advised that the Executive Committee had voted to approve the report at its earlier meeting immediately preceding this general CFW meeting. Marie Woodson moved to approve the report and Eveline seconded the motion. **The motion passed and the report will be forwarded to Commissioner Monestime.**

Under **Old Business**, Dona talked about the recent tour of Sun Life Stadium that she and Laura took. She explained that Sun Life Stadium can hosts events such as meetings, luncheons, weddings, etc. and stated that the stadium would be a nice venue for a future CFW event.

Michelle drew everyone's attention to the memo and provisions in the Miami-Dade County Code regarding the Sunset Review Report that all County boards have to submit every two years so that everyone is aware of this requirement and of the filing deadlines.

Laura next distributed the CFW t-shirts ordered by several members and collected payment for the t-shirts.

Michelle congratulated Linda on the "Women of Impact" award that she will be receiving this Sunday from the Women's History Coalition.

Michelle and Leah reported on the Chapman Partnership's RunWild 5K held on February 8 at ZooMiami.

Under **New Business**, Laura reminded everyone that the National Association of Commissions for Women (NACW) is having its annual convention July 23-26 in Sarasota. The CFW has moved its July meeting so that it would not conflict with the convention and everyone is encouraged to attend.

The meeting adjourned at 7:10 p.m.

Laura Morilla, Recorder