

MIAMI-DADE COUNTY COMMISSION FOR WOMEN
111 N.W. 1st Street, Suite 1034, Miami, FL 33128
Minutes of Meeting of June 24, 2015

Present: Leah Blumenfeld, Marie Eloi, Viviana Jordan, Sharon Kendrick-Johnson, Tara Leighton, Beverly Nixon, Raissa Sequeira, Phyllis Sloan-Simpkins, Marie Woodson, and Mara Zapata

Excused: Clora Adkins, Nordis Forcade, Monica Interian, Noreen Lagault Mendoza, Francesca Menes, Kit Rafferty, Linda Robinson, and Dona Zemo

Guests: Claudia Kitchens, Executive Director of Kristi House; Rosa Naccarato, Zonta Club of Miami Lakes
and former CFW Chair; Laurie Scop from MUJER

Staff: Laura Morilla

Chair Mara Zapata commenced the meeting at 5:35 p.m. and welcomed everyone. The new CFW member is Tara Leighton, appointed by Commissioner Pepe Diaz. Eveline Pierre resigned from the CFW because she was appointed to the Children's Trust and cannot serve on both boards.

First there was a **Presentation** by Claudia Kitchens, Executive Director of Kristi House, about what Kristi House is doing to address the issue of human trafficking. Claudia mentioned that Kristi House is 20 years old this year and has provided help to 13,000 families. Claudia first talked about the multidisciplinary approach that Kristi House has for sexually abused children. Kristi House also does training in the community to parents, professionals, etc.

Claudia explained that about 10 years ago, teen girls were seen as teen prostitutes/bad girls. The conversation started to change so that the question was asked whether these girls were criminals or victims and there was an awareness and shift in philosophy that these children were really victims of sexual abuse. At about that time Kristi House approached the Women's Fund for seed money for a program and the community started stepping up. The community also started learning that these kids were horribly victimized many in the care of the Dept. of Children and Families or the Dept. of Juvenile Justice; sexually abused or trafficked by their parents; runaways, etc. More recently, as a nation, everyone has become aware that these kids need services.

Claudia said that in traditional child abuse cases, therapy with parental involvement works but that this does not work with kids who have been trafficked. The two competing philosophies regarding kids who are trafficking victims is lock them up vs. don't lock them up. Kristi House takes a gentler approach through its Drop-In Center in the area of Miami Avenue and 54th Street, which is open 10a.m. to 7 p.m. At the Center, the girls are invited over for dinner, programs, therapy, conversation, etc. to try to create trust and engage the girls. About 25% of the girls come back to Project GOLD and if they become a "member" they get more extensive help. Sometime the girls run away but they come back and the girls are offered economic incentives to stay as a "member." During any given month there are about 25 girls in the program; any given day 10-12 girls may show up. Claudia said that Kristi House needs mentors to come in to the Center on a semi-regular basis to cook, teach a craft, etc. They also need tickets to the movies, the zoo, other attractions, etc. There is also a little store behind the Center where the girls can purchase items. Some of the girls have children.

In response to questions from CFW members, Claudia said that the Drop-in Center is 18 months old. So far, Kristi House has not said goodbye to any of the girls if they want to stay on. The girls who come to the Center generally live with foster parents who have received special training (13-14 beds in Miami-Dade County) or live with extended families. Project GOLD is not doing street outreach right now; the girls get referred to Project GOLD.

The State Attorney's Office, the Guardian Ad Litem program, and other programs have offices in the Kristi House building to reduce trauma and better coordinate services. About 85% of the clients served are eligible for Medicaid. Another Kristi House location is in Miami Gardens, and there is a great need for a location in Homestead.

After the presentation from Claudia, Rosa Naccarato said a few words. Rosa is a past CFW Chair and is currently active in the Zonta Club of Miami Lakes service organization, which is also interested in the issue of human trafficking. Rosa spoke about the need to find or build a property/location to house the girls. Perhaps there is some County property available, or a donated property. Rosa suggested that it may be a good idea to form a coalition to find a property.

Viviana suggested starting a conversation with Ron Book about joining forces with the Homeless Trust; maybe a wing for the girls at a current facility and incorporate the specific services for these girls. Laura mentioned that the Domestic Violence Oversight Board (DVOB) was in the process of building a new shelter in South Dade. Marie Woodson mentioned that the County used to donate buildings for \$1.00. Laura also mentioned that Avra Jain, the developer who has been doing work in the MiMo district, could be approached about donating property. Viviana moved to follow up with the DVOB about the matter. Marie Woodson seconded the motion, and the motion passed. Mara, Rosa, Marie Woodson, Marie Eloi, and Tara volunteered to meet with Vaughn Tooley, the Director of the DVOB.

At this point there was a quorum.

Phyllis moved to approve the agenda and Viviana seconded the motion. The motion passed and **the agenda was approved.**

Phyllis moved to approve the minutes of the CFW meeting of 05/27/15 and Leah seconded the motion. The motion passed and the **minutes were approved.**

The **Committee Reports** were then presented.

Events and Fundraising Committee. Mara reminded everyone that the scholarship presentation to the YWPA students will be this Tuesday, June 30, at 8:30 a.m. in the County Commission Chambers. Marie Woodson obtained a \$1000 donation from Dr. Smith Joseph to pay for one of the scholarships.

Bylaws Committee. Mara explained that proposed amendment to the Bylaws, which is a minor change required because of the ordinance that passed last year that changed the CFW election of officers to November. Because of this change, some other dates in the Bylaws need to be changed to conform to the ordinance. Leah moved to approve the amendments to the Bylaws and Tara seconded the motion. **The motion passed and the Bylaws were amended.**

Marie Woodson then moved to amend the Bylaws to include the language that is in the ordinance about waiver of the Miami-Dade County residency requirement. The language will be added to Article III, Section 1, and will be voted on at the July meeting. Phyllis seconded the motion and the motion passed.

Old Business. Mara reminded everyone that the public hearing on the CEDAW ordinance is July 9 at 2 p.m. in the County Commission Chambers.

Laura gave a quick update on The Envelope Please Initiative that the CFW is supporting. Laura stated that she recently met with Fatima Perez, the Chief of Staff to Miami Beach Mayor Phillip Levine, to discuss the Initiative. Fatima told Laura that Mayor Levine had been in California recently and had talked to Maria Shriver and that she was going to be speaking with the Executive Director of A Woman's Nation the next day. Laura further reported that she will be part of a conference call that is being organized with A Woman's Nation, Fatima, Bill Talbert, and Wendy Kallergis to discuss strategy for getting more hotels to participate.

Mara reminded everyone that the financial disclosure form is due July 1.

New Business. Mara reported that the Women's Equality Day event will be on Saturday, August 22, at 10:30 a.m. at the Women's Park. The CFW is hosting this event with the League of Women Voters of Miami-Dade. The speaker will be Dr. Lynette Long, who will also be coming to the CFW meeting in July to talk about her project.

Raisa and Viviana talked about their recent meetings with their appointing Commissioners. Raisa said that Commissioner Bovo has these meetings with his board appointees every three months and that she attended the most recent one. Viviana met with Commissioner Zapata, who wanted to make up for missing the CFW's on the road meeting of May 27 in his district. Viviana told Commissioner Zapata about the CFW's upcoming events and he agreed to donate \$2000 for the scholarships. Viviana said that Commissioner Zapata wants to do something for single mothers in his district and is seeking ideas and suggestions. Per Viviana, Commissioner Zapata also said that District 11 has the highest number of calls regarding domestic disputes so he is also seeking advice on this.

Attendance at Community Events. Marie Eloi stated that she reported to Chairman Monestime about the CFW's visit to the Metro West Detention Center and that he was pleased and supportive about the CFW's efforts.

The meeting adjourned at 7:30 p.m.

Laura Morilla
Recorder