

MIAMI-DADE COUNTY COMMISSION FOR WOMEN

Meeting Minutes

Wednesday, September 24, 2025 | 6:00 PM

Stephen P. Clark Government Center, 18th Floor, Conference Room 18-4

I. Roll Call

Chairwoman Michelle Abreu called the meeting to order at 6:00 PM.

The following board members were present (per sign-in sheet): Michelle Abreu, *Chairwoman*, Lourdes Abadin, *Vice Chairwoman*, Clora Adkins, Lunicel Alvarado, Mercedes Carlson, Dr. Gabrielle Carey-Johnson, Milagros “Millie” Del Valle, *2nd Vice Chair*, Marie Soeurette-Eloi, *Member at Large*, Elise Gerson, Chelsea Granell, Katherine Leiva, *Member at Large*, Dr. Jacqueline Peña, Yama Paillere, Gloria Martinez, Josephine Novo, Stephanie Daniels

Excused Absences: Yvette Ayala, Heather Paschal Binns, Maria Santamaría, Yumanela Candelaria, Nadege Vilsaint, Dr. Sharon Kendrick-Johnson

Guests signed in:

- Griselle Marino (Hispanic Affairs Advisory Board)
- Miriam Perez
- Betty Vazquez (Vice Chair, City of Sweetwater Zoning Committee)
- Omari Williams (Chair, Community Relations Board, Florida City)

Staff Member Present: Dr. Rose Martin, Director

Quorum was established.

II. Welcome and Opening Remarks

Chairwoman Abreu welcomed members and guests, emphasizing the importance of active participation and accountability within board committees.

III. Approval of July Meeting Minutes

Motion to approve the July minutes was made by Vice Chair Lourdes Abadin, seconded by Josephine Novo.

Vote: Motion passed unanimously.

IV. Reasonable Opportunity for the Public to be Heard

A domestic violence survivor addressed the board.

- She described her experiences as a survivor, noting systemic gaps such as lack of timely access to therapy (11-week wait for survivors vs. immediate therapy for abusers), absence of adequate resources for children in violent households, and the stigma of silence around domestic violence.
- She stressed the need for summer camp opportunities and safe environments for children in at-risk households.
- She shared her frustration with being compared to war veterans in PTSD literature, noting that survivors were never trained or prepared for battle.
- She expressed disappointment in limited acknowledgment from the County, emphasizing that survivors “suffer in silence.”

Board response:

- Members expressed deep appreciation for her courage.
- Several members shared their own experiences, including one who lost her sister to domestic violence and another who is herself a survivor.
- Members recommended she be given space to present as a formal agenda item at a future meeting, rather than only during public comment.
- Dr. Rose Martin provided her contact information and invited follow-up.

V. Special Presentation

Office of the Citizens’ Independent Transportation Trust (CITT) – The People’s Transportation Plan and SMART Plan

CITT representatives presented updates on transit and roadway projects:

- Roadway expansion is limited due to geographical constraints (Everglades, ocean, Keys).
- The County is investing in **advanced traffic management technology** (smart signals) to reduce inefficiencies at intersections.
- Updates on transit investments: new Metrorail, Metrobus, and Metromover vehicles; MetroMover is now fare-free; Metrorail expanded to the airport (Intermodal Center).
- The **South Corridor Bus Rapid Transit (BRT)** is expected to open by end of year, with train-like service and hurricane-proof infrastructure.
- Other SMART Plan corridors (Beach, East-West, Kendall, Northeast, North) were discussed, with varying levels of feasibility.

Board engaged with questions and discussion, including:

- Concerns about hurricane resilience of new BRT stations.

- Feasibility of reversible express lanes (as on I-595).
- Need for realistic solutions in the Kendall corridor.

The presentation was noted as one of the most engaging received, and members thanked the presenters.

VI. Director's Report (Dr. Rose Martin)

1. Ethics Code Compliance Update

- Reviewed sections of the Miami-Dade County Ethics Code relevant to board members.
- Clarified that board members may not use their official position to benefit organizations where they are employed or serve as directors.
- Shared written opinions from General Counsel Larissa Felix and feedback from the Ethics Commission and Laura Morilla.
- Members raised questions about recusals. Dr. Martin will invite Commission on Ethics to attend a future meeting for discussion.

2. Financial Report

- Friends of the Commission account: \$2,574.31
- Trust Fund balance: \$8,565.28
- Combined available funds: \$11,139.59

3. Officer Elections Reminder

- Elections will take place at the November meeting.
 - Positions: Chair, First Vice Chair, Second Vice Chair, and two Members at Large.
 - Nominations will open from the floor; written and signed ballots required if multiple candidates are nominated.
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VII. Committee Reports

Legislative Committee (Chair: Josephine Novo)

Committee presented the 2025 legislative recommendations in three areas:

1. Women's Health

- Address maternal mortality and chronic illness.
- Highlighted increase in severe maternal morbidity from 2022–2023 (7.7% rise).
- Miami-Dade recorded six maternal deaths in 2023.
- Recommendation to **reissue and enforce the 2021 Public Health Trust directive** requiring a 5-year strategic action plan with disaggregated data, systemic barrier identification, and timelines.
- Debate centered on the absence of disaggregated racial data in the 2024 Status of Women Report.

- **Amendment (Yama Paillere):** Ensure explicit inclusion of Black women’s maternal health and infant mortality, reference prior reports, and require future reports to disaggregate by race.
 - Recommendation revised to **urge BCC to work with the Miami-Dade Health Consortium to establish a Women’s Health Subcommittee** rather than create a new advisory board at this time. Membership should include Public Health Trust, DOH, CFW, medical professionals, and advocates. Note: if insufficient progress is made, a standalone board may be revisited.
2. **Safety, Human Trafficking, and Violence Prevention**
- Urged completion and release of the mandated Human Trafficking Report (sponsored by Commissioners Gilbert and Cabrera), as funding is tied to the report.
 - Supplemented with reference to University of South Florida’s 2025 regional study and State Attorney’s “Train the Trainer” call to action.
 - Encouraged consideration of district-level community forums with commissioners, law enforcement, and nonprofits.
3. **Economic Opportunity and Procurement**
- Recommendation to incentivize vendors to support maternal health, pay equity, and community well-being through procurement scoring.
 - Suggested mechanisms include awarding additional RFP points for vendors that integrate maternal health and supportive services into projects.
 - Clarified distinction from existing women/minority small business incentives.

Motion: To approve the 2025 legislative recommendations with amendments as outlined.

Motion by: Yama Paillere

Seconded by: Katherine Leiva

Vote: Motion passed unanimously.

Events & Fundraising Committee (Chair: Lunicel Alvarado)

- Reported on successful maternal health fair with Commissioner Gonzalez’s office.
 - Attendance: 20–30 mothers; 12 vendors; resources, food, and supplies distributed.
 - Commissioner Gonzalez’s office expressed interest in hosting annually. Commissioner Orbin has also requested to host in her district.
 - Plans underway for October fair with Commissioner Messian’s office to align with Breast Cancer and Domestic Violence Awareness.
 - Chair Alvarado noted lack of quorum for committee meetings, resulting in much of the work being completed individually with Director Martin’s support.
 - Members discussed importance of committee accountability and resignations if unable to meet obligations.
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VIII. Old Business

1. **Proposal to Approve Convening Stipend for Tallahassee Meeting:** To approve the allocation of \$1,250 from the Friends of the Commission account to cover the Director's travel to the Statewide Convening and Mary Brickell Hall of Fame Induction in Tallahassee, including hotel, mileage, and meals, calculated per GSA per diem guidelines; and to approve an additional allocation of \$250 per board member attending the convening as reimbursement toward their expenses, also from the Friends account.
 - **Motion by:** Mercedes Carlson
 - **Seconded by:** Katherine Leiva
 - **Vote:** Passed unanimously.
 2. **Proposal to Approve NACW Membership Renewal**
 - Annual membership renewal at \$75.
 - **Motion by:** Lourdes Abadin
 - **Seconded by:** Mercedes Carlson
 - **Vote:** Passed unanimously.
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IX. New Business

1. **Mary Brickell Commemoration Event**
 - Proposal for CFW participation in October 29, 2025 event hosted by K&L Gates Law Firm, with Miami-Dade Association of Women Lawyers, Women's Fund, and Mary Brickell descendants.
 - **Motion by:** Mercedes Carlson
 - **Seconded by:** Milagros "Millie" Del Valle
 - **Vote:** Passed unanimously.
 2. **Breast Cancer Awareness Walk**
 - Proposal to approve inclusion of CFW logo in materials for Walk of Fame event with Councilwoman Monica Perez.
 - **Motion by:** Lourdes Abadin
 - **Seconded by:** Lunicel Alvarado
 - **Vote:** Passed unanimously.
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X. Announcements

- Vice Mayor Porras of Doral will host a community baby shower benefiting Tree of Life, requesting volunteers and sponsors.
 - Hispanic Heritage Month events: Commissioner Gilbert's October 5 event at Country Village Park; October 8 Vendor Outreach Academy (Spanish-language) at Milander Park; October 11 "Me Libro Hispano" at Westchester Regional Library. Flyers to be circulated.
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XI. Adjournment

Meeting adjourned by Chairwoman Michelle Abreu at 8:22pm

Respectfully submitted,
Dr. Rose Martin, Director