

N.C Domestic Violence Commission Meeting Minutes
February 25, 2022, 10:00 am until 12:00 pm
This Meeting was Conducted Remotely by Zoom Virtual Meeting

Ethics Statement: The State Government Ethics Act mandates that, at the beginning of every meeting, the Chair remind all members of their duty to avoid any conflicts of interest and inquire as to whether any member knows of any conflict of interest or potential conflict with respect to matters to come before the Commission. If any member knows of a conflict of interest or potential conflict, please state it for the record.

Members Present: Deborah Weissman, Chair, Tiffany Bell, Shelby Benton, Jada Brooks, A.W. Burgess, April Burgess-Johnson, Cathy Cloninger, David Elliott, Jessica Englert, Karen Fairley, Carianne Fisher, Regina Gurley, Sarah Kirkman, Honorable Nathaniel Knust, Kathleen Lockwood, Sheriff Hans Miller, Vickie Pait, Ricky Parks, Sheriff Larry Pierce, Starleen Scott-Robbins, Honorable Terri Sharp, Annette Taylor, Caroline Valand, Amy Vaughan-Jones, Karen Wallace-Meigs, and Sarah Owens Weeks. Dawn Kriquette Davis joined after roll call.

Members Absent: Saira Estrada, Surabhi Gawande, Cheryl Howell, Elizabeth Hunt, Holly Jones, Denise Mazza, Bryan Miller, TeAndra Miller, Krishana Polite, and Honorable Christine Strader.

NC Council for Women & Youth Involvement Staff Present: Danielle Carman, Charnessa Ridley, Lori Gerber, Gabrielle Smith, Diane Blumel, Philisa Fowler, Deatrice Williams, Alisa Milliken, Alana Denton, Angela Winston-Hill, and Sebrina Phillips.

Meeting was called to order by Chair Weissman at 10:00 a.m.

Welcome/Member Roll Call: Chair Weissman welcomed everyone who was present and read the Ethics Statement. No conflicts of interest were noted. Carman conducted the roll call and members stated present as their names were called.

Approval of Minutes: Wallace-Meigs moved to approve the October 22, 2021, minutes as written. H. Miller seconded. All members who were present approved the minutes, with Committee members Benton, Brooks, Cloninger, Gurley, Knust, and Scott-Robbins abstaining because they were not present for that meeting.

Oaths of Office: Clerk Terri Sharp administered oaths of office for reappointed members Benton and Cloninger. Oaths for reappointed member Estrada and for new members Brooks, Hunt, and Knust will be administered at the next quarterly meeting. (While Knust was present for roll call, he was not present for the administration of the oaths.)

CFWYI Executive Director Report – Danielle Carman

Carman gave a brief update on CFWYI's ongoing work.

Chair Report – Deborah Weissman

Recitation of Conflicts and Potential Conflicts Per G.S. 138A-15(c)

When an actual or potential conflict of interest is cited by the Ethics Commission with regard to a public servant sitting on a board, the conflict shall be recorded in the minutes of the applicable board and duly brought to the attention of the membership by the board's chair.

1. Wallace-Meigs: No actual conflict, but the Ethics Commission did find a potential conflict because she works for Pisgah Legal Services.
2. Burgess: No actual conflict, but the Ethics Commission did find a potential conflict because he is the Executive Director of Family Mankind, Inc.

Both Commissioners should exercise appropriate caution if issues involving their employing agencies come before the Commission for official action.

Weissman reminded the Commissioners of their duty to file a Statement of Economic Interest by April 15th of each year and to complete ethics training every two years.

Committee Reports and Updates

Access to Health Services Committee Report – Starleen Scott-Robbins and Regina Gurley, Co-Chairs

Scott-Robbins stated that the Committee is planning a lunch and learn series focused on trauma-informed care and education about domestic violence and sexual assault screening in the primary care setting. She said the programs will be presented via Zoom and will be free of charge to participants. They are tentatively scheduled for July, September, and November of 2022. The Division of Mental Health can support them financially.

Scott-Robbins said she and Gurley have also had meetings with the Co-Chairs of the Legislative and Advocacy Committee to discuss some potential joint projects around education about intimate partner violence in the school systems and enhancing services to women who are incarcerated.

Domestic Violence Offender Management Committee – Tiffany Bell, Chair

Bell said the DVOM Committee is focusing on guidelines and best practices with the goal of updating the Administrative Code sections on Domestic Violence Intervention Programs. She said they are working with interns at different universities to research trauma-informed practices and restorative justice models for DVIPs. The deadline for new DVIP programs to apply for approval recently passed, and the Committee will be recommending new programs for approval at the next Commission meeting.

Victim Services Committee – Shelby Benton, Chair

Benton said the Victim Services Committee works to raise awareness of services in marginalized populations, and it is currently focused on the Deaf/DeafBlind/Hard of Hearing community. The Capacity Building Workgroup is currently working with Disability Rights NC to provide three lunch and learns on the topic of ensuring access for survivors from that community. She noted that a flyer about the webinars was included in the Commissioners' meeting materials. Benton encouraged everyone to register for one of

those webinars and to share the opportunity with their networks. We currently have 188 people registered for the first webinar.

Benton directed the Commissioners to a memo in their materials written by three UNC Law students (Sawyer Davis, Amber Knepper, and Halie Mariano) about the legal obligations of domestic violence and sexual assault organizations with respect to this population. She said the Committee is asking the Commission to adopt and publish that memo on its website so that it can be provided to all the webinar attendees. She noted that the memo contains critical information about providing meaningful access to the Deaf/DeafBlind/Hard of Hearing community.

Benton said the same law students have provided a state-by-state survey of the services being provided to this population across the country. The Workgroup plans to review that survey further and come back with some ideas that might be worth exploring in North Carolina. Benton thanked the three law students for their work, and thanked Chris Hodgson and Larkin Taylor-Parker from Disability Rights NC in advance for their work as presenters.

Benton said the Committee is also asking the Commission to approve a document containing best practices for language access for domestic violence survivors, and she thanked Commission member Estrada for her work on that document. She said the Committee wants to publish the document on the Commission's website as well so that it can be shared with providers.

Benton moved to approve the law student memo and to circulate/publish it as appropriate, and Wallace-Meigs seconded the motion. Benton moved to approve the best practices for language access and to circulate/publish it as appropriate, and Gurley seconded the motion. A roll call vote on those motions was held later in the meeting.

Transportation Access Committee – Kriquette Davis, Chair

Davis said the Transportation Committee initially wanted to host a lunch and learn during the month of March, but it will more likely be held in April instead. She said the Committee is also working on an issue with respect to the high cost of car insurance and the lack of a discount for nonprofits working on domestic violence issues. She said Pierce has a connection with the Division of Insurance and will be reaching out to that person for guidance. She added that the Committee is also still working on a transportation inventory resource list.

Davis said Parks is working on making some connections about broadband access. Parks said Jeremy Collins from the Governor's Office of Digital Equity and Literacy spoke to the Committee last February. He added that he is also working to set up meetings with two key legislators who are pushing the issue of statewide broadband, and he hopes to have more to report by the next Commission meeting. Parks noted that the pandemic has resulted in increased efforts and funding around broadband access. Davis added that Weeks is looking into the Appalachian Regional Commission in the western region to find out more about the Greenway Public Transportation Flex Service.

Legislative Committee – Kathleen Lockwood, Co-Chair

Lockwood said the Legislative Committee voted to change its name to the Legislative and Advocacy Committee to better reflect the work they are doing and want to continue doing. The Committee is also meeting monthly now. She noted that there may be some instances during the upcoming short session when the Committee will need to send information to the full Commission. She said issues related to immigration and firearms that impact domestic violence may arise during this session.

Lockwood directed the Commissioners to a proposed legislative agenda for the short session, which is limited to the following two issues:

1. Increase court access for domestic violence protective order filings during emergency court closures. Proposed legislative changes to G.S. 50B-2 would require Chief District Court Judges to ensure that a judge or magistrate remains available to hear requests for emergency ex parte domestic violence protective orders when courthouses are unexpectedly closed for inclement weather, COVID-19 exposure, and other emergencies.
2. Ensure equal access to domestic violence protections for all survivors. This proposal would amend the definition of “personal relationship” in G.S. 50B-1 to remove the discriminatory “opposite sex” requirement for qualifying dating relationships. This change is necessary to ensure all survivors can access domestic violence protections, regardless of their sex or gender identity.

The Committee is also discussing other initiatives in conjunction with the Access to Health Committee. Lockwood moved to approve these two items as the Commission’s legislative agenda for the short session, and Benton seconded the motion.

Roll Call Vote

The Commission conducted a roll call vote on the three motions on the floor. Commission members Bell, Benton, Brooks, Burgess-Johnson, Cloninger, Davis, Elliott, Fisher, Gurley, Kirkman, Lockwood, H. Miller, Pait, Parks, Pierce, Scott-Robbins, Sharp, Taylor, Valand, Wallace-Meigs, Weeks, and Weissman voted in favor of all three motions. No one present voted against the motions.

Various Commission members thanked the CFWYI staff for their support of Committee meetings and initiatives.

2022 DVC Meeting Dates

May 13, August 26, and November 4, 2022, from 10:00 to 12:00 p.m. They will remain virtual for the time being.

Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 11:20 a.m.