

Commission for Women
Strategic Planning Meeting
May 17, 2008

The meeting was convened at 9:03 a.m. by Chairperson, Marta Kelsey.

Attendance: Rose Everett, Juanita Nether, Norma Pipkin, Andree Wells, Katie Werner, Darlene Johnson, Pat Friend and Susan Gough.

Eve Taylor arrived at 9:45 a.m.

Staff Support: Cynthia Brown, Commission for Women Liaison; Stephanie Figeroux, Admin Asst.

The meeting started with an ice breaker, and then the April minutes were discussed. Some members wanted additional comments added to the minutes so it was decided to send out revised minutes and vote on them at the June meeting.

Election: Marta Kelsey provided ballots for an anonymous vote. The results were Katie Werner as Chair, Andree Wells as Vice Chair and Rose Everett as Secretary. The one member who was late was given the opportunity to cast her vote when she arrived.

The remainder of the meeting was led by the new Chairperson, Katie Werner.

Membership Recruitment: Members agreed this is a shared responsibility among the group. New members are welcome at this time, particularly younger women and/or college-age women, in order to bring new and balanced perspectives to the group. Potential members can access an application through the County Government's website.

Members discussed how to most effectively describe the mission of the CFW. Katie distributed a handout titled Selecting the Important Things to Say (& How to Say Them). Discussion continued on how to develop an "elevator speech" (a concise description of the CFW in the time it takes to ride an elevator). Members agreed it's important that all of them provide a "unified voice" regarding the CFW mission and goals. Members agreed the current brochure is outdated and needs revisions and the current mission statement is too lengthy. Rose suggested "The Commission for Women Champions Women's Issues and Concerns". All agreed to adopt this slogan/mission statement. Raising public awareness about the CFW is a main goal. Monthly meetings are advertised but additional effort is needed to make the public aware of guest speakers ahead of time, as well. This may attract more participants.

Rose suggested the CFW create a small laminated card with key information about the commission. Members could refer to this card when discussing the mission of the commission. The card could prove very useful as an introduction tool for new members, too. Rose, Susan and Andree volunteered to work on this project.

Identified topics of concern included health (including dental and insurance), domestic violence, affordable housing, shelters, mental health, daycare, legal representation, wives of deployed spouses and pay parity.

The membership voted to continue the following projects and/or partnerships for the upcoming year: membership on the Family Violence Coordinating Council, participation in the Federally Employed Women's Fair and Delicados Health Fair and providing informational material to local libraries, the County Fair, Department of Social Services, etc.

Cynthia agreed to bring the current CFW brochure to the June meeting so it can be revised.

The membership agreed to continue exploring a possible partnership with the Historical Society. Another important project for the upcoming year is the possibility of an independent website. About two years ago, a CFW member initiated this idea and the current membership would like to follow up on it.

Members agreed their event to recognize the contributions of local women is valuable, however, some clarity is needed regarding the selection criteria. An area the CFW wants to strengthen is building partnerships and collaborating with other agencies and organizations.

Commission Responsibilities: Commission Liaison, Cynthia Brown, reminded members that while the County Government greatly values the contributions of volunteers, there are certain responsibilities that come with being appointed to an advisory board. One being, CFW members cannot use CFW activities as a platform to express their personal views or agendas. Specifically, activities the CFW engages in should be discussed and agreed upon ahead of time by the entire membership. Individual members clearly have the right to engage in whatever activities they may select, however, it isn't appropriate to state or imply that member is representing the entire group at that specific function. Cynthia further reminded the group that the County's Public Information Officer is to review any written information the commission may want to submit publicly.

These comments lead to a discussion about one of the members whose photograph was recently printed in a local newspaper. She was at an event reading poetry she had written and the caption stated she was "from the CFW." The Commission was not aware of the event and the member was not representing the CFW; she was participating as an individual. The membership agreed members clearly have the right to participate in any activity they choose on their own time, however for the sake of consistency, it is important to make the clear distinction when a member is and is not representing the commission. It does not matter what type of activity it is. Members stated their desire for consistency and the importance of being clear and truthful about activities in which the CFW participates.

There was additional discussion regarding the same member who participated in a CFW event several months ago and unexpectedly chose to publicly read one of her poems. CFW members present at the event asked the member not to present her poem or to at least share the content before reading it publicly but the member refused both requests.

During the discussion the member expressed her extreme annoyance and stated "the very same thing may occur in the future" and she felt singled out and not welcomed by the remaining commission members. Commission members reiterated to the member that she is not being treated differently. Members stated they felt it was an appropriate request for the entire membership to vote on activities the CFW will support and exactly how that support is provided.

Bylaws: Revisions are currently with the County Attorney for review before going to the County Commissioners for approval.

The meeting adjourned at 12:20 p.m.
Minutes respectfully submitted by Cynthia Brown