

## NC Council for Women Quarterly Meeting Minutes

December 8, 2023, 10:00 am until 2:00 pm

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**Members Present:** Annette Taylor, Chair, Lyric Thompson, Vice-Chair, Candance Gingles, Fontella McKyer (arrived after roll call), Beth Posner, the Honorable Robin Robinson, Tara Romano, and Adrienne Spinner were present at the Department of Environmental Quality Office Building in Raleigh. Liz Doherty, Alison Kiser (joined after roll call), Dr. Tracey Ray, Dawn Rookey, Karen Wallace-Meigs, and Kate Woodbury joined remotely via Webex.

**Members Absent:** Chavi Koneru, Dr. Michelle Meggs, Elizabeth Outten, Dr. Patricia Parker, Carrie Stewart, and Pamela Young-Jacobs were unable to attend.

**Council for Women & Youth Involvement Staff Present:** Danielle Carman, Charnessa Ridley, Sandra Ross, and Deborah Torres were present. Lori Gerber, Harriet Lunsford, Jean McBride, Lisa McLaughlin, and Angela Winston-Hill joined remotely.

**Guests Present:** DOA Secretary Pam Cashwell and Governor's Policy Advisor Andrea DeSantis joined part of the meeting at the DEQ office. DOA Deputy Secretary David Elliott and DOA Digital Media Specialist Jaylan Harrington joined remotely.

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**The meeting was called to order by Chair Taylor at 10:15 a.m.**

Welcome: Chair Taylor welcomed everyone who was present and gave opening remarks and the ethics advisement.

Approval of Minutes: All Council members who were present at roll call approved the minutes of the September 8, 2023 meeting with one correction.

Oaths of Office: Judge Robinson administered oaths of office for reappointed members Kiser, Taylor, and Woodbury.

### **Chair Report**

Taylor stated that she was recently contacted by the daughter of Juanita Bryant—the first Director of the Council for Women, the first woman to be appointed by the Governor to a state board, and a 70-year member of the General Federation of Women's Clubs—who wants to donate some of her memorabilia. Taylor said the memorabilia probably cannot go to CFWYI because of the Department of Administration's (DOA) impending move, but it may need to be sent to state archives. Taylor suggested that the Council may also want to recognize Bryant at its 2024 convening.



Taylor said the Council has been talking about ways to engage more stakeholders, and she suggested that future quarterly meeting agendas include reports from one or two members about the work they are doing. She said the Council may also want to invite outside presenters, such as representatives of the Governor’s task forces on racial justice and environmental justice; the [All Stages, All Ages](#) steering committee; or [NC Early Childcare Foundation’s Family Forward NC](#) initiative.

Taylor encouraged Council members to share information about various initiatives and upcoming events, either through the staff or by creating a GroupMe chat. Taylor added that her office has launched a [new program offering \\$14 million in grants](#) to community service, nonprofit, and higher education organizations for digital equity projects.

Taylor said [The Women’s Forum of North Carolina](#) held a lunchtime conversation on December 1, 2023 on the North Carolina Justice Center’s State of Working Women report, and will be holding a follow up conversation on January 24, 2024. Taylor added that Oxfam issued a report in September 2023—[Best and Worst States to Work in America 2023](#)—and North Carolina ranked last on the index, which was based on wages, worker protections, and the right to organize.

### **Master’s Project Presentation: Institutional Analysis of Women’s Councils Across the Country**

Doherty said she graduated from the Duke Sanford School of Public Policy in May 2023, and her research project focused on women’s councils across the country. She said she built a database of councils and looked at their enabling statutes and the issues they focus on in an effort to generate best practices and recommendations for the North Carolina Council.

Doherty shared a PowerPoint presentation about her research that addressed the problem statement, policy question, history of women’s councils, framework of council types, analysis of the 35 currently active councils across the country, and application/recommendations. Doherty’s recommendations included serving as an information clearinghouse, particularly with respect to education and employment of women; supporting local women’s commissions; and partnering with foundations or academic institutions. Taylor suggested posting Doherty’s presentation on the Council’s website. Doherty said she would also circulate her research paper and a spreadsheet with information about other councils across the country.

### **Report from Governor’s Policy Team**

DeSantis gave the Council an update on executive priorities and efforts. She said the Governor appointed Jessica Holmes as the new state auditor the prior week, noting that Holmes will be the first African American woman to serve on the North Carolina Council of State.

DeSantis said the Governor’s team was disappointed by the lack of funding for early childhood education in the final state budget, but the Departments of Commerce and Health and Human Services have been working with early childhood funders and will be making an announcement next week about some shared support. She added that, last spring, the North Carolina Business Committee for Education, a nonprofit that works out of the Governor’s office, started a program that now has 193 apprentices. The Governor is continuing to advocate for investing in our public schools, which will be his top priority in the coming year, and he is visiting schools to hear from teachers and school administrators. In October 2023, the Governor announced \$1.4 million in funds to support school breakfast programs; DeSantis said those are Covid relief funds that have to be spent by September 2024.

In other areas, DeSantis said the new Department of Adult Correction Secretary is building out the state’s capacity for supporting reentry and rehabilitation services. The Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) recently responded to a request for information about the importance of access to over-the-

counter birth control without a prescription. In October, she said the Governor issued an executive order that elevated the existing Environmental Justice Advisory Council that was operating out of the Department of Environmental Quality and moved it to the Governor's office. Thompson asked about the implications of moving that council to the Governor's office, and DeSantis said the change was designed to elevate the voices of environmental justice advocates and to create a more direct line to the Governor.

Romano asked whether there is data that could be shared on what is needed for childcare initiatives. DeSantis said DHHS is leading the charge on analyzing the imminent funding cliff for early childhood education and what the gap looks like, and she offered to send a follow-up email with the available data.

Robinson asked whether the Governor was aware of the Council for Women when he took office, and what he thinks the Council could do to support the rest of his administration. DeSantis said she would be happy to explore what he knew about the Council when he took office and how he sees its role moving forward.

### **Secretary Cashwell Remarks**

Secretary Cashwell said she was looking forward to hearing the discussion about a potential 2024 statewide convening. She noted that she has some thoughts on the written proposal and that she has spoken to two potential corporate sponsors about it.

Cashwell said the state budget was certified last week and DOA did well overall. Cashwell said DOA's vacancy rate is lower than many other departments, and she has been pleased to see CFWYI filling a number of vacancies. She added that the final budget included two new human trafficking positions in CFWYI to work with domestic violence and sexual assault providers that serve human trafficking survivors, and the division will be working on the postings for those positions in the new year.

### **Discussion of 2024 Governor's Conference on Women**

Taylor said the Council has been focused on creating a conference for women in 2024. With assistance from CFWYI staff, they created a written proposal/concept note and shared it with the Governor's team. The most recent version of that proposal was included in the meeting materials, as were the minutes from the last Outreach and Partnerships Committee meeting. Taylor said Thompson, Carman, and she met with representatives of the Governor's office to discuss the proposal. The Council does not yet have formal approval to use the Governor's name but has received permission to move forward with planning. She said three Executive Branch departments have expressed interest in providing funding and support for the conference, and CFWYI has also identified some funding. It may be possible to secure additional funding from foundations and/or corporate sponsors, but the Governor's team has not yet confirmed whether the Council can move forward with soliciting such funding.

Cashwell asked if the goal is for the convening to be free for attendees, and Taylor said yes. Taylor asked Carman to share an update on recent discussions. Carman said the Governor's Office of Public Engagement (OPE) is able to contribute some personnel time to staffing this event. CFWYI staff time is limited, although she and Ross can devote some of their time as well. Carman said the three departments that have indicated an interest in contributing funds also want to be part of the planning process.

Carman said the Council originally wanted to hold the event in March or April, but that no longer seems feasible. The notion now seems to be to hold it in August around Women's Equality Day, although the Council can consider other dates based on the availability of Jennifer Klein at the White House Gender Policy Council. The Governor's team is supposed to be sending some preferred dates and/or dates to avoid.

Carman said she has identified lapsed salary funds within CFWYI's budget that can be used to contract with an event planning company to handle some of the logistics. As long as the cost remains under \$50,000, that can be pursued without a formal Request for Proposals and with up to three informal quotes (one from a HUB vendor). She said she has already spoken with TCG Events in Charlotte, which is the company that handled the 2011 Governor's Conference on Women. Carman said that was a much larger event, with approximately 3,000 people attending, and they provided a list of their services but no cost estimates. Carman added that we will have to draft a specific scope of work for the contract with the chosen vendor to include deadlines, deliverables, etc.

Cashwell said she is excited about the proposed conference and thinks it will be a great way to highlight the work of the Council. Taylor said the original proposal was to host the convening in March around Women's History Month, but having it in August around Women's Equality Day will be more feasible. Taylor said the Council is hoping to hold it at the McKimmon Center at North Carolina State University. Posner asked about holding it in a more central part of the state, possibly at North Carolina A&T State University. Taylor said the Council could explore that further, although parking at A&T is difficult. Carman said Cashwell thought the McKimmon Center would be easier for the Governor to attend.

The Council members discussed the following priorities and tasks for planning the one-day conference:

1. There needs to be a Conference Planning Committee and a process for decision-making that includes how and when information should be fed back to the larger Council.
  - a. The Planning Committee will serve as a liaison to the event planning company and will be comprised of:
    - i. Council members Taylor, Thompson, Gingles, McKyer, Ray, and Spinner;
    - ii. Representatives of the Governor's team (such as Jess Englert, Andrea DeSantis, and/or Tracy Lovett with OPE);
    - iii. Representatives of the Executive Branch departments that are contributing funding; and
    - iv. The CFWYI Director.
  - b. Other CFWYI staff who are willing and able to help with planning include McBride and Ross.
  - c. Spinner offered to start a draft planning timeline for the Committee.
  - d. The Committee will hold its first meeting on Monday, December 11, 2023, in lieu of the scheduled Outreach and Partnerships Committee meeting.
2. McKyer agreed to make the initial contact with the McKimmon Center to see what August dates they have available and to obtain more information about what services they offer and the associated costs. Their availability may depend on the number of breakout rooms that will be needed.
3. The Council needs to identify an event planning company that can assist with planning, implementation, and logistics, such as Accenture or TCG Events. The group agreed that the cost of an event planning company would depend on the extent of services required, so it will be necessary to create an itemized list and a more precise scope of work before getting quotes. That, in turn, may require more information from the McKimmon Center (or other conference location) about the services they provide.
4. The Conference Planning Committee needs to identify the invitees. The initial proposal includes an estimate of 300 to 400 attendees, but it may be possible to have more attendees, particularly if there is a modest charge for attendance.

5. The group suggested that the convening run from 8:30 am to 4:00 pm. Format suggestions included an opening session, morning panel, lunch keynote, several breakouts, and a closing call to action. Due to time and staff constraints, presentation topics and presenters will be handpicked, without a formal session proposal process.
6. The Council (through the Conference Planning Committee and the Council's Education and Advocacy Committee) wants to be responsible for planning content. The proposal includes the basic substantive topics, but Council members suggested adding gender-based violence to the list of potential breakout sessions, and pairing affordable housing with the affordable childcare topic. Council members can serve as breakout session monitors.
7. The Council does not believe there needs to be a formal timeline for receiving reports back from the Conference Planning Committee, and agreed that the group can report back whenever there is something important to share or something they need from the full Council.
8. Carman should speak with DOA Communications Division about what role, if any, they want to play in program design and branding.
9. Additional fundraising remains an open question, but the Governor's team has indicated that they want to be involved in any official asks.

Thompson noted that Council members will need to be actively involved in executing these tasks without relying heavily on CFWYI staff.

### **Adjournment**

The meeting adjourned at 1:45 p.m.

### **2024 Council Meeting Dates**

February 23, 2024; May 3, 2024; September 6, 2024; and November 22, 2024.