

**City of Worcester Advisory Committee on the Status of Women  
Meeting Minutes  
Tuesday May 4, 2021, 5:45 PM**

Virtual meeting on Cisco WebEx:  
advisorycommitteeonthestatusofwomenwebex@cow.webex.com  
This meeting was not live streamed. A video recording is posted on the city website.

**Members Present:** Tracey Whitney, Ariel Lim, Samantha Sendrowski, Casey Thomas, Coretta McCarter

**Members Absent:** Heather Borelli, Kayanna James, Rubby Wuabu

**Staff:** Jayna Turchek

**Call to order and instructions for virtual participation**

The meeting was called to order at 5:47pm

**Review and approval of April 6, 2021 meeting minutes**

Committeewoman Sendrowski made a motion to approve minutes as written and Committeewoman Thomas seconded to approve the April 6 meeting minutes. All approved.

**New Business**

**Review of updated and new Committee planning documents (Alyssa Mareiro)**

Alyssa Mareiro, an intern working with Director Turchek, shared documents created to assist the Committee with planning events and programs. Alyssa shared documents and sent them to Director Turchek for future work within the Committee.

**Review updated draft report on the impact of COVID-19 and the family structure (Samantha Sendrowski)**

Committeewoman Sendrowski shared the draft report she created based on the research done regarding the impact that COVID-19 has had on the family structure. Follow up before presenting a final draft of the document will include

- Adding data about domestic violence statistics during COVID-19
- Adding more data about race and ethnicity

Committeewoman Sendrowski shared information regarding COVID-19 vaccine first dose numbers. The Committee discussed reasons why people may not be getting the second dose, as well as the fact that the state is compiling data regarding first doses but not second doses. The Committee also discussed how some people wanted the Johnson & Johnson vaccine, and may have waited to get vaccinated when that vaccine got pulled from use, and how the people who had severe side effects from that vaccine were women. Also discussed was misinformation regarding the vaccines and their side effects.

Committeewoman Sendrowski to follow up with Committeewoman Wuabu regarding domestic violence statistics. Director Turchek to follow up with Committeewoman Lim regarding housing statistics. The Committee will also try to follow up to find statistics about how women-owned businesses have been impacted by COVID-19.

The Committee also discussed education within the report. 28% of students opted out of in-school learning, and there has been a decline in Pre-Kindergarten and Kindergarten enrollment this year. Chairperson McCarter shared information about how students will have to enter the grade level that aligns with their age, even if they did not attend Kindergarten. There is also a question about how childcare will be impacted once high school students go back to in-person learning, as high school students often provide childcare for their families. There was also a discussion regarding the COVID-19 vaccines being approved for children aged 12 and up: how many parents will opt out; will schools require the vaccine; how will it impact developing/puberty age students, especially girls.

Committeewoman Sendrowski will also add talking points to the draft to acknowledge that there are other important topics that need to be considered in relation to COVID-19 that do not fall under the scope of this report.

Chairperson McCarter requested to add a recommendation of adding training for people to enter the childcare workforce to strengthen it.

The Committee will vote on publishing this report at the June 1 meeting.

Conversation with Stephanie Williams, City of Worcester Chief Diversity Officer, regarding the status of women in municipal employment and volunteer opportunities

Ms. Williams joined the Committee to discuss the diversity of the City of Worcester's employment. She shared statistics that showed that the city workforce is a total of 47% women, and that they have a number of minorities. She shared that she does not know what the term "minority" is based on in this instance. She shared that there are no current initiatives to recruit more women. Chairperson McCarter brought up the profile that was done a few years ago about the leadership in the city, and how it was mostly white men. Chairperson McCarter shared her hope for more women in leadership roles, beyond just representation, and that they need to be in decision making roles. She also shared that she would like to see mentorship opportunities for women within the city as well.

The Committee asked Ms. Williams what her plan is to address the lack of women in leadership roles. She shared that oftentimes women look for jobs based on their qualifications, while men look at their future potential in a position.

Ms. Williams responded that she had not heard of Chairperson McCarter's concerns being raised as an issue within the city, but that they need strategic planning in order to work on this. She spoke of the "glass cliff," where women are more likely to be appointed to unstable roles that are not well supported, which often leads to women "falling off the cliff" and not being successful in the role. Women also tend to experience "imposter syndrome" more than men do, meaning that women are less likely to apply for a job unless they perfectly match the qualifications of that job. Women are also leaving the workforce for various reasons and not returning. She said that all of this needs to be addressed and taken into account when looking at the diversity in jobs.

Ms. Williams will follow up with the Committee regarding the gender and demographic breakdown of the volunteers that make up the boards and committees. Director Turchek shared that when appointed to one of these roles, the volunteers are able to voluntarily self-disclose information about their gender, so some form of this information should be available.

Ms. Williams discussed the city's pay equity study, but the results of this have not been shared with the public. She shared that the study may not be relevant nor helpful and that additional review and strategic planning needs to be conducted.

Ms. Williams shared her plans and initiatives for 2021. Her current goal is to work on diversity, equity, and inclusion data gathering, assessment, and analysis. There needs to be more transformative change within the city, and this data needs to be available in order to get to that. She is also working on diversity, equity, and inclusion recruitment, retention, and workforce development, as well as fixing the city's job recruitment techniques to be more modern and accessible.

Chairperson McCarter asked what the Committee can do to help her. She said she does not know what the Committee can do yet, since she has only been in the position for a short time, but that allyship is important. It is going to take a lot of work and education to get people on board with her role, and to see the importance of it. She says people need to get comfortable with being uncomfortable, and that the Committee should be ready to help in the future.

### **Old Business**

Vote on whether to support: Equality Model MA bill No. HD.1761/SD.940,  
An Act to Strengthen Justice and Support for Sex Trade Survivors

The Committee discussed how sex trafficking numbers have gone up during COVID-19, with many youths being exploited, especially girls of color. This is a nationwide issue, but it is very prevalent in Worcester, even in daylight. Chairperson McCarter shared stories from recent years in Worcester of attempted abductions. There is a city task force also dedicated to this issue. Committeewoman Sendrowski motioned to approve the Committee supporting this bill. It was seconded by Committeewoman Thomas. All approved.

Review request for proposals and timelines for 2021 programs, events, activities  
Mentor Program/day (Rubby Wuabu) - TABLED

Wonder Women of Worcester Poster Series- Round 2 (Tracey Whitney)

Committeewoman Whitney shared the progress of the RFP. The focus of this series would be on women in the non-profit world, with a selection of 3-4 women who are in retirement age. This would be to showcase the importance of non-profits, especially during COVID-19.

Committeewoman Whitney also explained how she would want to include the children of Worcester in this project by having them draw pictures of what a Wonder Woman of Worcester looks like to them. This artwork would be displayed alongside the posters. It would also bring visibility to the Committee and the current projects they are working on. Committeewoman Whitney shared her hope for a local photographer to take pictures of the women selected, or consult with to ensure that the pictures are good quality and can be made into a poster. Committeewoman Thomas agreed to assist Committeewoman Whitney with this project. Committeewoman Whitney to share the RFP with the Committee.

Updates and planning for the "The Talk" virtual forum and "We Are the Women of Worcester calendar" (Coretta McCarter and Kayanna James) – TABLED

Chairperson McCarter shared about a recent Asian American and Pacific Islander Heritage Month (May) kickoff event that she went to, where the speakers shared a common theme of changing their names to be more palatable to English speakers. Chairperson McCarter asked members to be conscious of people's names and the stories behind them, and to ask questions to ensure that members are pronouncing people's names correctly.

**Next Meeting:** June 1, 2021 at 5:45pm

**Meeting Adjourned at 7:44pm**

*"The power of visibility can never be underestimated."* – Margaret Cho