

N.C Council for Women Quarterly Meeting Minutes

February 24, 2023, 10:00 am until 2:00 pm

Members Present: Annette Taylor, Chair, Lyric Thompson, Vice-Chair, Candance Gingles, Chavi Koneru, Adrienne Spinner, and Dr. Tracey Ray were present at the Department of Administration in Raleigh. Liz Doherty, Alison Kiser, Dana O'Donovan, Dr. Patricia Parker, Beth Posner, Judge Robin Robinson, Tara Romano, Carrie Stewart, Judge Mary Ann Tally, Karen Wallace Meigs, and Pamela Young-Jacobs joined remotely.

Members Absent: Dr. Michelle Meggs, Elizabeth Outten, and Kate Woodbury.

Council for Women & Youth Involvement Staff Present: Danielle Carman, Charnessa Ridley, Sandra Ross, and Deborah Torres were present at DOA. Mario Richardson, Deatrice Williams, and Angela Winston-Hill joined remotely.

Guests Present: DOA Secretary Pamela Cashwell was present for part of the meeting. DOA Deputy Secretary David Elliott joined part of the meeting remotely.

The meeting was called to order by Chair Taylor at 10:00 a.m.

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

Approval of Minutes: Thompson moved to approve the minutes of the August 26, 2022 and November 18, 2022 meetings, and Ray seconded. All Council members who were present approved the motion.

Oaths of Office: Judge Robinson administered oaths of office for reappointed Council member Candance Gingles, and for newly appointed Council members Chavi Koneru and Tara Romano.

Follow-Up on November 18, 2022 Strategic Planning

Taylor directed the Council members to a PowerPoint presentation in their materials. She summarized the November 2022 strategic planning workshop, which was designed to generate consensus on values statements and a vision and mission statement for the Council. Carman added that the original idea for the strategic planning workshop was to generate specific goals and objectives, but the pre-session survey responses revealed a lack of consensus on more fundamental matters.

After discussion, Thompson moved to approve the following Values Statements for the Council, and Ray seconded the motion. All Council members who were present approved the motion.

- *Accountability – We take responsibility for the measurable impact of our collective actions, and we hold policy makers and power holders accountable to the people.*



- *Equity – We are committed to developing and sustaining a culture that removes barriers that limit opportunities for women.*
- *Collaboration – We are at our best when we work together to leverage the creativity, expertise, and integrity of the entire Council to fulfill our mission.*
- *Strategic – We make clear choices, anticipate changing conditions, and plan for the future.*
- *Justice – We advocate for true and lasting equality for women, respecting and showing compassion for those who are not treated fairly.*

After discussion, Thompson moved to approve the following Vision Statement: *“North Carolina is a state where women thrive economically and socially, racial and gender justice prevail, and women’s quality of life ranks at the highest levels.”* Spinner seconded the motion and all Council members who were present approved.

After discussion, Tally moved to approve the following Mission Statement: *“To advocate for and empower women, to amplify the voices of women, and to drive policies that promote education, safety, health, and social and economic justice for the women of North Carolina.”* Thompson seconded, and all Council members who were present approved.

Remarks by DOA Secretary Cashwell

Cashwell complimented the Council on the work it is doing to refine its values, vision, and mission statements. She said the Governor’s office is currently in the FY23-25 budget development process, and Medicaid expansion is his top priority. Cashwell said the House passed a version of Medicaid expansion, and time is now of the essence for the Senate to pass its version. She noted that North Carolina must have the first participants enrolled by the end of June to receive the back money for this year, and she encouraged Council members to advocate for expansion in their communities.

Cashwell said DOA has been working on a project to revamp the electronic procurement system for state agencies and vendors. The new system will merge Historically Underutilized Business (HUB) certification and the tracking of contracts with HUB vendors with the e-procurement system, and she believes it will be a national model once it is complete. Cashwell added that DOA was successful in getting changes to the procurement rules last year that reduced the small purchase benchmark, thereby allowing purchases under \$50,000 without an RFP process. She said that will encourage agencies to utilize HUB vendors, which include women, racial minorities, veterans, and people with disabilities. The new HUB rules also now require a good faith effort to include HUB businesses in meeting subcontracting needs on the goods and services side, which previously existed in statute on the construction side. Cashwell stressed that this new requirement will help women-owned businesses in the state.

Follow-Up on November 18, 2022 Strategic Planning (con’t)

Taylor returned to the PowerPoint presentation and said the OSBM facilitators who led the strategic planning session recommended that the Council’s next step should be to conduct a sentiment analysis of the SWOT (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats) factors in the pre-session survey responses. A working group of the Council met in early February to conduct that analysis.

Taylor said Council members identified the top internal weaknesses as limited resources and an unclear mission/lack of focused goals and objectives. The top internal strengths were committed Council and staff members, as well as supportive leadership from the Governor and DOA Secretary. The top external opportunities all centered around building better relationships with stakeholders, including the Governor, Cabinet/Executive Branch leadership, General Assembly, local municipal leaders, grassroots organizers/local community advocates/impacted communities, academic experts, and local women’s councils. The top external

threats were political opposition and lack of resources, public awareness, communication, clarity of purpose/action, and partnerships.

Taylor said, per OSBM's guidance, the next steps are to draft goals, objectives, and strategies that prioritize the highest frequency themes from the sentiment analysis, and to assign goal champions for each goal. Taylor said we can ask the facilitators to lead us through a second session at the Council's next quarterly meeting on May 19, 2023, but Council members also want to identify work that can be accomplished in the meantime.

Taylor noted that the Outreach and Partnerships Committee had previously talked about encouraging the establishment of additional local women's councils, and about having some type of summit with existing councils and potential advocates for new ones. She said the Council has also talked a lot about the need for a communications strategy. Thompson said the Council's recent work has been more activity-based than goal-based, and the critical issue now is how to put the Council's limited resources toward what it is best positioned to achieve in the next year and a half. Thompson said, previously, the Council received some funding from Wells Fargo and the Department of Transportation to contract with the Institute for Women's Policy Research and produce a four-part report series on the States of Women in North Carolina. Following each report, the Council sponsored a launch event and released talking points about the findings and recommendations. Thompson said the Council subsequently issued a fifth report on the racial and gendered impact of the COVID-19 pandemic that documented the ways in which the pandemic had exacerbated existing inequities. Thompson added that, during Women's History Month in March 2022, the Governor hosted a women's roundtable where Council members identified their top policy recommendations for the Governor and some of his Cabinet members and policy staff.

Absent resources for more reports, Thompson said the Council needs to focus on ways to advance its policy priorities, which will require a strategy for nimble reactive communications. For example, she said the Council released a statement on the *Dobbs* opinion, but it was several weeks after the opinion issued, and the Council needs more established communications processes.

Thompson said the Council's mandate is to advise the Governor and legislature on issues impacting women, and the report series identified a number of findings and recommendations. She directed the Council members to a one-page handout in their packets that distilled those recommendations to the top priorities that the Council put forth at the women's roundtable. Romano complimented the report series, and said it appears the Council now needs to set goals around advancing its policy recommendations. Thompson agreed, noting that the Council should use its remaining time to move from education/outreach to policy advocacy and implementation. She added that there may be other potential goals around local women's councils. Robinson said the Council should also continue its ongoing outreach activities for things like Women's History Month and Women's Equality Day, but she agrees with adding more advocacy and accountability to the mix. Spinner said the Council should also focus on building coalitions and strategic partnerships in impacted communities.

Taylor asked if the staff should ask the OSBM facilitators if they could lead a second strategic planning session at the Council's next quarterly meeting on May 19, 2023, and all Council members who were present agreed. Taylor suggested that the Council could identify one or two things to prioritize in the interim. Tally said the Council needs to identify ways to effectively communicate with policymakers, especially legislators. For example, she said, if the Council wants to prioritize supporting Medicaid expansion, it needs to know when bills are filed and when key committee meetings are scheduled. Carman noted that DOA's Legislative Liaison left at the beginning of the month, and that one of the Deputy Secretaries is filling that role in an interim capacity until a replacement can be hired.

Spinner asked whether the Council should prioritize the policy recommendations it shared at the women's roundtable, or whether it should select a subset of those recommendations or add others. She suggested two

main buckets of activities around: 1) policy, including advocacy with leaders and other stakeholders; and 2) communications and engagement with community partners such as local councils. Taylor said the Council should definitely support the goal of Medicaid expansion. Spinner suggested prioritizing Medicaid expansion, affordable childcare, and affordable housing. Kiser suggested that the Council could also adopt an administrative agenda to address issues like the disenrollment from Pregnancy-Related Medicaid after delivery; an automatic conversion from Pregnancy-Related Medicaid to Family Planning Medicaid would close that coverage gap. Thompson suggested adding enhanced funding for domestic violence and sexual assault agencies and supporting paid leave policies. Posner suggested that the Council could support other groups that are opposing anti-LGBTQ legislation. Spinner said the Council could look to Equality NC for leadership on that front. Koneru suggested including opposition to gerrymandering and voter suppression in the Council's top priorities.

Posner asked whether the Council could identify groups that are working on these issues around the state and then draft a policy that endorses their proposals. The group discussed whether there are limits on what they can do in their capacity as appointed members of the Council for Women, including lobbying. Tally said the Council members need clear information/education on what activities they are permitted to engage in with respect to policy and legislative advocacy, and what assistance and support they can expect from DOA's Legislative Liaison.

Tally said it would be an enormous step to get Medicaid expansion through the Senate, and she suggested focusing for now on how the Council can help advance that goal. Thompson agreed that Medicaid expansion could be a concrete example of the type of policy the Council wants to advance, so that the staff can seek guidance from DOA leadership on what assistance and support it could look to from DOA's Legislation Liaison and Communications Division. Taylor said Cashwell specifically asked them to support Medicaid expansion, and all Council members asked Carman to seek additional guidance from DOA leadership on how they can best support that effort. Taylor noted that, in her remarks to the Council, Cashwell encouraged the Council members to engage in education and outreach about Medicaid expansion in their communities.

The Council members discussed work that was already being done on Medicaid expansion by groups such as the North Carolina Justice Center and MomsRising. Council members mentioned additional possible actions such as contacting their Senators and writing local op-eds. Carman directed the Council to a summary of the [benefits of Medicaid expansion on the NC DHHS website](#). Spinner asked about a template for contacting Senators, and Kiser and Romano said they would share templates from MomsRising.

Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 2:00 p.m.