

Edward M. Augustus, Jr.
City Manager



CITY OF WORCESTER
Advisory Committee on the Status of Women

Heather Borelli
Deborah Hall
Ariel Lim, Vice Chairperson
Coretta McCarter, Chairperson
Casey Thomas
Tracey Whitney

Tuesday September 1, 2020, 5:45 PM
Virtual meeting Cisco WebEx

Members Present: Heather Borelli, Ariel Lim, Coretta McCarter, Casey Thomas, Tracey Whitney

Member Absent: Deborah Hall

Staff: Jayna Turчек

Guests: Shaitia Spruell

1. Call to Order at 5:48pm and Introductions

2. Review and approval of August 4, 2020 meeting minutes

Committeewoman Lim motioned to approve the minutes as written and Chairperson McCarter seconded and all approved. Unanimously approved.

3. Old Business:

A. Review of Committee statement supporting Black lives

Item tabled for final review next month. All agreed to review and comment for next month.

B. Discussion: How is Covid 19 affecting the family structure?

Covid has taken a toll on many aspects of family life including:

Education-

- Children and remote learning, parents not being home;
- Some parents are choosing to home school their children;
- State mandated flu shot is also a concern among parents;
- Spotty internet access and stress related to technology gaps;
- Parents being put in a teaching role may not be able;
- Work, who is at home, who is in work;

Emotional toll-

- Children have not seen their friends in person;
- Colleges have started, depending on the college mask wearing is mixed;
- On the other side business may get a boost with recent re openings;
- Senior citizen are feeling isolated, the Senior Center is not open. There are programs on line which some are benefiting from; encouragement for keeping in touch with information on the city website

c/o Jayna Turчек, Director of Human Rights & Accessibility
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Suggestions for positive activities-

- A pen pal program for seniors;
- Take walks;
- Take a ride and learn new streets;
- Movie nights, staying up late for kids, playing games;
- Balance between being informed and shutting off news.

School remote learning will begin September 15; review that at next meeting.

C. Review planning document for virtual forum on “The Talk: preparing children for police encounters”

The goal for “The Talk” is for children to come home safely. This Talk is very personal to the individual family. Some families talk to sons and daughters differently or with other family related children and at different ages.

Continued conversation on format of program. Questions raised- Offer the ability to share a Talk in writing anonymously as there may be stigma and victim shame attached? Possibly use Face book Live or produce a ten to fifteen video with different families talking? Not sure a lecture would work. Should the focus be on why the Talk? The Talk is proactive not reactive. Need to be careful not to put down police officers. *Sesame Street* did a show about The Talk for young children.

The Committee will do more research and bring ideas back to the next meeting.

D. Debrief/Reflections on virtual program of 2020 Women of Consequence Awards and Wonder Women of Worcester posters aired Thursday August 27, 2020

The consensus was the evening was great and so relevant for this time in history. The posters were wonderful. Chairperson McCarter thanked all including cable services for helping make the evening such a success.

4. New Business:

A. Conversation with Shaitia Spruell from the MA Office of Economic Empowerment

The MA Office on Economic Empowerment is about five years old and has a mission on economic literacy in MA working with seniors, veterans, educators, students and women. Ms. Spruell works mainly with women’s issues. Recently the Equal pay website has been overhauled. On the website is a wage scale of jobs comparing men and women. It also denotes women of color and age in this wage scale data. There is also an employer’s tool kit for businesses to look at to do a pay audit or would like best practice information. The Attorney General and other resources are also on the website.

Another part of the website is myfinanciallifeandaids.org This includes areas such as: How to Start a Business, Credit Scores, How to Buy a Home, Understanding your Taxes etc. There are webinars and the series of Money Talks will begin again in October. 6. Financial experts are brought in for different topics.

Covid has precipitated more domestic violence. The prediction is that there will be more divorces coming in the next few months. The Empowerment Office is working with appropriate groups to provide information on this topic in the next months.

The flagship program right now is a baby bank account. As of January 1, 2020 a \$50 special bank account can be opened for an eligible MA baby with a social security number and address by parents or another party. This also applies for adopted children of any age.

Committee thanked Shaitia for her work and bringing it to the Committee's attention and invited her to return.

B. Planning for 2021 Women of Consequence Awards

Questions about how people can submit next year's nominees. Receiving nominations was difficult this year due to technological issues and WPS server blocking access to google doc. Communication during Covid brings new challenges this year.

Agreement the 2021 Awards would be virtual using this year's model program. Intentional and focused outreach needed. Idea for theme could be passing the torch and using a logo to promote.

5. Suggestions for future agenda items

Bring Ma Office on Economic Empowerment back

6. Adjournment at 7:22pm