



**MINUTES**  
**Oregon Commission for Women**  
**Oregon Commission for Women (OCFW)**  
**Wednesday, September 9, 2015**  
**11 am - 2 pm, Chintimini Senior Center (Game Room)**  
**2601 NW Tyler Ave., Corvallis, OR 97330**

**Chair:** Dr. Barbara Spencer  
**Vice Chair:** Jessica Rodriguez-Montegna  
**Commissioners:** Dr. Doris Cancel-Tirado, Stephanie Swanson, Stephanie Vardavas, Representative Komp, Senator Monnes Anderson  
**Excused Absence:** Sheri Malstrom  
**Guests:** Lizardy Cancel, Sylvia Roberts, Rocio Munoz, Kelly Volkmann, and Fabiola Herrera, Benton County Health Dept.; Dr. Mary Ellen Dello Stritto and Andrea Hugmeyer, Abby's House; Misty Freeman, OSU-Women in Policy; Annabelle Jaramillo; Jessica Katz and Nova Sweet, Family Preservation Project; James I. Manning Jr., OCBA Chair; Lawanda Manning; Cyndee Ross, Willamette Women's Farm Network; Anne Schuster, Benton County; Paul Smith, Strengthening Rural Families; Penny York; Pam Hood Szivek; Adam Villarreal, Rep Komp's office; Brigetta Olson and Rebecka Weinstein, Willamette Neighborhood Housing Services; Joan Reukauf; Guadalupe Diaz, OSU; Denise Harvey, Confederated Tribes of the Grand Ronde; Karen Randolph, Zonta; Amanda Stevens, Western Oregon University; Lorena Reynolds and Erin Duncan, Reynolds Law Firm; Jaya Conser Lapham; Claire McMorris, OSU student; Felicia Torres, Maria Lugue, Organizacion de Latinas Unidas (OLU)  
**Staff:** Lucy Baker, Nancy Kramer

**I. Welcome, Introductions and Old Business**

- A. Call to order - Welcome and Introduction of Commissioners and Staff - The meeting was called to order at 11:04am. Chair Spencer welcomed the guests to the OCFW meeting. Commissioners introduced themselves and each shared a goal for this meeting. Several commissioners were eager to identify possibilities for collaboration with women's organizations in Corvallis.
- B. Adoption of the agenda  
**MOTION (Vardavas/Swanson): To approve the agenda. CARRIED.**
- C. Approval of July 2015 Minutes

**MOTION (Vardavas/Cancel-Tirado): To approve the OCFW July Minutes as written.**

**CARRIED.**

**D. Public Comment**

1. Penny York, Corvallis City Council President, welcomed the Commissioners to Corvallis. Her goal is to connect with other women in the community who have needed skills. She would like to see more women run for elected office.
2. James I. Manning, Jr., Chair of Oregon Commission on Black Affairs, acknowledged the important work of the OCFW over the years and their growing relationship with OCBA. Women's issues, including equal pay, are of personal interest to him and he looks forward to future collaborations with the OCFW.
3. Annabelle Jaramillo, Vice-Chair and Benton County Commissioner, briefly recounted her numerous experiences as a public servant, including former Executive Director of the OCHA, and collaborations with the OCFW and OCBA, and 15 years as a Benton County Commissioner.
4. Anne Schuster, Benton County Commissioner, seeks new tactics to engage younger women to volunteer and be active participants in the community. Commissioners recommended she connect with the Oregon Bus Project, which is looking to engage with activists outside of Portland, and to also consider the new venues for connecting through social media and other technology.

**E. OCFW Old Business - Overviews - OCFW + Legislative; Women's Economic Security and Women's Health and Wellness**

Chair Spencer gave a brief overview of the history of the OCFW, including its years of advocating for women's rights with the Oregon legislature, and also current and upcoming projects: Public Policy Research projects with state partners, such as the State Library in Salem; the newly re-funded Family Preservation Project for incarcerated mothers; and the Women of Achievement Awards. She encouraged the audience to nominate women for the award and Nancy will send the link to everyone who signed in.

Chair Spencer also described the Commission's two subcommittees: Women's Economic Security Committee (WESC), which generated two bills in the 2015 Legislative Session, and the Health and Wellness Committee (HWC), which is preparing a Public Policy Research project on women's health. It was noted that the committees are ad hoc; committee members do not need to be on the OCFW in order to participate.

Vice Chair Rodriguez-Montegna, a member of the WESC, would like the WESC to establish partnerships outside the OCFW, and encouraged the audience to consider collaborations. Commissioner Cancel-Tirado, who is on the HWC, echoed the sentiments of the Vice Chair and also referred to the women's health bills the OCFW recently supported through testimony.

**II. OCFW New Business - Presentations and Q&A**

Chair Spencer invited members of the community to introduce themselves and their organizations.

**A. Misty Freeman, OSU-Women in Policy:**

She is a founding member of OSU's Women in Policy Student group, committed to developing future women leaders in policy making. She talked about the importance of having diverse voices involved in women's issues. Empowerment means:

- 1) Support the ongoing conversation about what needs to change and ask "Who is not at the table?"
- 2) Remain open to different ideas of what it means to empower women.

3) Ensure those who are not at the table are represented and include them in the planning part.

The Commission thanked Ms. Freeman for her presentation.

B. Dr. Mary Ellen Dello Stritto, Director and Andrea Hugmeyer, Assistant Director from Abby's House at Western Oregon University:

Abby's House, named for women's rights activist Abigail Scott Duniway promotes equity and non-violence on WOU campus. The majority of advocates are volunteers, and work-study students. They provide referrals on a variety of women's issues for on-campus and off-campus resources. They do a wide variety of programming including leadership development, advocacy, and financial literacy, and partnered with Dr. Cancel-Tirado's Women's Health Class on a project recently.

The Commission thanked Dr. Dello Stritto and Ms. Hugmeyer for their presentation.

C. Guadalupe Diaz, OSU Extension:

Linn County conducted a survey of Latino families and Guadalupe presented the findings. Children of one or more undocumented parents experience fear that a parent could be deported at any time. This impacts a child's ability to learn which can have lasting impact on earning ability. Considerable concern was also expressed regarding the lack of bicultural educators and the need for a teacher to look like the students in the classroom.

The Commission thanked Ms. Diaz for her presentation.

D. Maria Lugue and Felisa Torres, Organization de Latinas Unidos (OLU):

Ms. Lugue and Ms. Torres explained the issues they find most pressing in the community: their mental health and physical health suffer, because without proper documentation they cannot access preventative health services and end up using the emergency room which is much more expensive. Mental health service providers are not bilingual or culturally aware and it directly affects the effectiveness of these services. Rocio Munoz assisted with the discussion by serving as translator.

Their children's education is negatively impacted by the language barrier and discrimination in the schools. Housing is a huge problem because some low-cost housing options require a Social Security Number. An undocumented person cannot access these services and they experience the same problem regarding driving. Driving is a necessity to go food shopping, to work, and to the doctor, and undocumented people who do not have a driver license experience a lot of fear when driving. Their children sense the fear and this impacts the family's mental health.

Ms. Lugue and Ms. Torres came to the U.S. for a better life for their children and themselves and are grateful for the services they receive.

The Commission thanked Ms. Lugue and Ms. Torres for their presentation.

E. Brigetta Olson, Willamette Neighborhood Housing:

This organization provides affordable housing, budget counseling and foreclosure prevention strategies. There is currently a housing crisis as prices rise on houses and rentals and many are squeezed out of affordable housing. Homelessness is on the rise and the mental health population is part of this. More wraparound services are needed. Representative Komp urged the audience to

advocate in the legislature for more funding for housing and to look ahead to the 2017 session for more advances in stable families and housing.

The Commission thanked Ms. Olson for her presentation.

F. Paul Smith, Strengthening Rural Families:

Paul thanked the OCFW for coming to Corvallis to meet with the community. Rural populations struggle more than urban populations across the board. Small communities in the area are struggling and most children are on the free school lunch program. Families need access to good education and childcare, good healthcare and housing. The state responds to crises which does not help. The best approach is prevention and wellness, and these short-term government programs have a high return on investment but then funding ends and people revert back to crisis management.

Paul supports systems thinking, which is a holistic approach to analysis that focuses on the way that a system's constituent parts interrelate and how systems work over time and within the context of larger systems.

The Commission thanked Mr. Smith for his presentation.

G. Lizardy Cancel and Sylvia Roberts, Benton County Health Services, Maternal Health /Oregon Health Plan Expansion:

Lizardy is a Clinic Health Navigator for Benton and Linn County. Linn County identified gaps in the Oregon Health Plan and the Affordable Care Act for pregnancy services for undocumented women and developed an innovative healthcare system to bridge the gaps. The expansion of services also includes vision and dental for those who do not have residency status. Another gap is the lack of prenatal services in rural areas. BCHS is building the capacity of community partners and pointed out that it is important to include translation services from the beginning of any new program. She also asked that for future meetings to please keep in mind that many mothers are not available in the daytime Monday through Friday.

The Commission thanked Ms. Cancel for her presentation.

H. Jessica Katz and Nova Sweet, Family Preservation Project (FPP):

Jessica Katz introduced herself and thanked the Commission for its support of the Family Preservation Project, now a project of the YWCA in Greater Portland. FPP was developed for these reasons:

- 1) To address the consequences to children of incarcerated parents without visitation/intervention.
- 2) To meet the specific needs of incarcerated women in a system that was largely designed with men in mind.

The FPP was created in response to the overrepresentation at Coffee Creek Correctional Facility of women of color, with low education levels, low income and addiction issues and the knowledge that children of incarcerated parents have a higher likelihood of early death. In Oregon 35,000 children have an incarcerated parent. Studies show that incarceration within families is cyclical, but programs such as FPP that focus on prevention and wellness, can break the cycle. Those who graduate from FPP returned to prison less and their children experience more positive outcomes. The program was defunded February 2015, but in response to a surge in

community support, the Oregon legislature provided another \$400,000 for early intervention of incarcerated parents.

Ms. Katz shared an idea for future legislation: a Bill of Rights for children of incarcerated parents. San Francisco already has one, and could be used as a template for creating one in Oregon. SB 939, which gave the greenlight for the Department of Corrections (DOC) to develop a program for children of incarcerated parents, was the result of convening cross-agency collaborating. It is likely that many of the stakeholders who supported SB 939 would back a Bill of Rights.

Nova Sweet introduced herself and advocated for continued support for the FPP. She is a former inmate and a graduate of the FPP. She would like to see the DOC provide more equality of services for incarcerated women and men and increased support by the DOC for volunteers to be part of the FPP.

The Commission thanked Ms. Katz and Ms. Sweet for their presentation.

I. Cyndee Ross, Willamette Women's Farm Network:

Ms. Ross has been a farmer in Oregon for 15 years and one of few women who make their living as a farmer. She briefly outlined the challenges a farmer who makes under \$50,000 a year faces, such as juggling requirements of state regulations while working 60 – 80 hours per week. She proposed farming being added to the state's programs for apprenticeships, as she found working hands-on to be more practical than earning her degree in horticulture. She also noted that the state of Vermont provides supports for agri-tourism for their farmers and would like to see Oregon do the same.

The Commission thanked Ms. Ross for her presentation.

### III. Group Discussion and Next Steps

A. Group discussion: Next steps in planning and building local partnerships

Vice Chair Rodriguez-Montegna led the discussion on how to keep the information flowing and next steps. Suggested methods for staying in touch included BaseCamp and listservs. Senator Steiner-Hayward's Oregon Women's Health and Wellness Alliance (OWHWA) group listserv was cited as a best practice. It was noted that the OCFW has a Facebook page. It was agreed a listserv will be created from all participant's contact information as listed on the sign-in sheet. Commissioner Cancel-Tirado offered to create a Benton/Linn/Polk County group on women's health based on who was in attendance today.

The audience was asked to invite people from other organizations who were not at the meeting to be added to the conversation. The Corvallis Multi-Cultural Literacy Community was mentioned as being absent from the day's discussion. Commissioner Swanson announced that the OCFW is seeking ad-hoc committee members and to contact the office if they are interested in joining either the Women's Economic Security Committee (WESC) or the Health and Wellness Committee (HWC) that were described earlier in this meeting. Commissioner Vardavas asked audience members who are interested in specific legislative initiatives to contact the OCFW as far in advance as possible, as developing legislative concepts is a lengthy process.

Brigetta Olson from Willamette Neighborhood Housing offered to funnel information on emerging housing issues to the OCFW.

#### **IV. Adjourn**

A. Adjourn - Wrap up and thank you.

Chair Spencer thanked everyone for taking the time to attend the meeting and for the warm welcome to Corvallis. The meeting was adjourned at 2:02pm.