



Governor Terry E. Branstad  
Lt. Governor Kim Reynolds  
San Wong, Director

**MINUTES**  
**Iowa Commission on the Status of Women**  
**January 12, 2017**  
**Wallace State Office Building, 2<sup>nd</sup> floor conference room**  
**Des Moines, Iowa**

**Commissioners present (in-person or by phone)**

Phyllis Peters, chair  
Sean Bagniewski  
Tom Carnahan  
Beth Coonan  
Rachelle Hunt Russian  
Sherill Whisenand

**Commissioners absent**

David Gudenkauf

**DHR/ICSW staff**

Kristen Corey, Program Planner, Office on the Status of Women  
Monica Stone, Deputy Director, Iowa Department of Human Rights (DHR)

**Members of the public - present for all or part of the meeting**

Sandy Mostaert, Women's March on Washington  
Jennifer Tibbetts, Women's March on Washington  
Kelli Soyer, Every Child Matters in Iowa  
Daniel Zeno, ACLU – Iowa  
Lorie Easter, DHR, Division of Community Action Agencies

**Call to order**

Called to order by chair, Phyllis Peters at 10:11 a.m.

**Motion to approve agenda for January 12, 2017.**

Coonan made motion; Carnahan seconded.  
Aye: all  
Nay: none  
Motion carried.

**Motion to approve minutes from Nov. 9, 2016:**

Carnahan made motion; Bagniewski seconded.  
Aye: all  
Nay: none

Motion carried.

### **Public Comment**

Daniel Zeno introduced himself as the Policy Counsel for the ACLU of Iowa. He stated that he will be taking over the work of Erica Johnson, Advocacy Director for the ACLU, which includes the Pregnant Workers Rights Act. Zeno added that Senator Janet Petersen just introduced a bill in the Senate (SF 66) that addresses reasonable accommodation for pregnant workers. Zeno stated that he will be monitoring this bill, as well as several others that are in the legislature.

Kelli Soyer from Every Child Matters in Iowa introduced herself to the Commission. Soyer thanked the Commission for allowing her to speak and added that she is part of several coalitions working to make things better for children and families in Iowa, including several workgroups dedicated to addressing the cliff effect. Soyer stated that she and the coalitions she is a part of would like to see an increase in eligibility for childcare assistance. She added that a few years ago the legislature voted to increase initial eligibility to 150% of the Federal Poverty Level (up from 145%), but the Governor vetoed that increase. Soyer also highlighted that the childcare workforce is 97% female and most of the workers make \$9 to \$12 on average. Soyer stated that the reimbursement rate to providers for accepting childcare assistance is low, and she would like to see that rate increase. Currently, the rate is based on a 2004 market survey, which is not economical for childcare providers so they often limit the number of families receiving childcare assistance that they will accept.

Coonan asked if Soyer knew what the significance is of raising the childcare assistance threshold to 200% versus a different percentage. Soyer stated she was not sure where the number came from, but added that there are other states that have this as the threshold for initial eligibility. Soyer added that several advocacy groups in Iowa have proposed raising the initial eligibility to 200%, including the United Way of Central Iowa.

Soyer also added that childcare assistance is paid directly to the provider, and not to the parent. She stated that the majority of families receiving childcare assistance in the state of Iowa are in the workforce.

### **Presentation: 2017 Women's March on Washington**

Jennifer Tibbetts and Sandy Mostaert from the Women's March on Washington (Iowa Chapter) joined the Commission to explain the Women's March that will be taking place on Saturday, January 21<sup>st</sup> in Des Moines. Tibbetts explained that there are now over 300 marches taking place nationally and internationally. Tibbetts added that the march is intended to recognize that women's rights and human rights are universal.

Mostaert introduced herself and added that she is one of the state coordinators appointed by the national organization to run the Iowa chapter of the women's march. She gave the history of the women's march, which started shortly after the election on November 8<sup>th</sup>, 2016 through a Facebook page.

Whisenand asked where the march was going to be on the Iowa State Capitol grounds.

Mostaert answered that the march would start at 11 a.m. on Saturday, January 21<sup>st</sup> and there would be a rally inside starting at 12:30 p.m. She added that the march in Washington, D.C. would start at 9:00 a.m.

Mostaert stated that the march was to make sure that marginalized communities throughout the nation are being protected and heard.

Mostaert and Tibbetts asked if the Commission would be willing to sponsor the Iowa march and list their logo on the website and write a letter of support.

Peters added that the Commission will be discussing new business and whether to take action at the end of the meeting.

Whisenand asked where the donations from the march on January 21<sup>st</sup> will go after the march. Mostaert answered that right now, the funds have been used to fund some of the costs related to transportation to Washington, D.C. and also to fund some of the sound and technology costs related to the rally on the 21<sup>st</sup>. She added that anything left over from Iowa will go back to the national organization, which will then be divided out.

Whisenand asked how the women's march was considered to be bipartisan and stated that she could not see one thing in the materials given to the Commission that are bipartisan.

Mostaert stated that the march started off because of the rhetoric from the election and people being scared of being further marginalized.

Whisenand stated she wants our voices to be heard, but feels the language used to organize the march is divisive.

Mostaert added that the march is meant to be bigger than just the nature of this election. She added that it is also about how do we get equal representation in government.

Tibbetts stated that one of the great things about Iowa is that Iowa is trying to be the gold standard for how to organize a peaceful march and to create and open space for dialogue.

Peters asked Tibbetts and Mostaert what an endorsement from the Commission would consist of.

Mostaert answered that it would mean placing the Commission's logo on the website, an endorsement letter and possibly conversations after the march about moving forward.

Peters thanked Tibbetts and Mostaert for presenting and tabled the discussion to the end of the meeting.

### **Presentation: Family Development and Self-Sufficiency (FaDSS) & Community Services Block Grant (CSBG)**

Lorie Easter, Program Manager for the Division of Community Action Agencies within the Iowa Department of Human Rights, introduced herself to the Commission. Easter explained the different Divisions that exist within the Iowa Department of Human Rights – Community Advocacy and Services (CAS), Criminal Juvenile Justice Planning (CJJP), and Community Action Agencies.

Easter stated that the Division of Community Action Agencies has a Commission – the Iowa Commission on Community Action Agencies (ICCAA) – which is structured to recommend legislative and policy action to the Governor and the Iowa General Assembly. Easter gave an overview of the ICCAA's recommendations to the Governor and to the legislature as being the following:

- 1) Support increased funding of \$1,000,000 of the Family Development and Self-Sufficiency (FaDSS) program
- 2) Support funding for Individual Development Accounts (IDA's) of \$400,000
- 3) Support self-sufficiency for families with low incomes by making child care more affordable
- 4) Increase the reimbursement rate for child care providers to reflect current market rates.
- 5) Support expansion of the Early Head Start Program to \$900,000.

She outlined areas in which the ICSW and ICCAA's priorities aligned, specifically numbers 3 and 4 of the list related to child care.

Easter added that the ICCAA sends their legislative agenda, along with a cover letter to the Governor and to all legislators every year.

Carnahan asked what 175% and 200% of the Federal Poverty Level would translate to making per hour for a working parent. Easter referred to the guidelines for the Low-Income Heating Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP) and Weatherization Assistance Program (WAP), which are respectively 175% and 200% of the Federal Poverty Level. The Guidelines are as follows:

LIHEAP:

Size of household	Three month gross income	Annual gross income
1	\$5,198	\$20,790
2	\$7,009	\$28,035
3	\$8,820	\$35,280
4	\$10,631	\$42,525
5	\$12,443	\$49,770
6	\$14,254	\$57,015
7	\$16,069	\$64,278
8	\$17,889	\$71,558

WAP:

Size of household	Three month gross income	Annual gross income
1	\$5,940	\$23,760
2	\$8,010	\$32,040
3	\$10,080	\$40,320
4	\$12,150	\$48,600
5	\$14,220	\$56,880
6	\$16,290	\$65,160
7	\$18,365	\$73,460
8	\$20,445	\$81,780

Easter also gave the Commission information on the FaDSS program, including that the program serves over 3,000 families per year. She added that most of the funds come through the Iowa Department of Human Services (TANF funds).

Peters asked how the ICCAA moves the needle on legislative issues. Easter answered that ICCAA starts with a letter to the Lt. Governor and Governor, sends a letter to all legislators and then uses the legislative breakfast that DHR and the Community Action Agencies put on.

Easter also added that the Iowa Community Action Association does have a legislative agenda, but it does not mirror the ICCAA agenda.

### **Iowa Department of Human Rights update**

Monica Stone gave an update for the Iowa Department of Human Rights. Stone stated that the DHR legislative breakfast for this year will take place on February 23<sup>rd</sup> from 7:30 to 9:00 a.m.

She added that the main update she had for the Commission was about the budget. Stone stated that the Governor's recommended budget for the current fiscal year is a cut to the Department's status quo budget, totaling over \$100,000 for the remainder of this fiscal year. This is just over a 4% cut to the status quo budget. She added that the

legislature will ultimately set the budget for the Department, and that recommendation could include more cuts.

Whisenand asked what commissioners could do about the cuts.

Stone answered that commissioners could let people know the work that we do is important for all of the populations that we serve.

Peters asked if there were talking points the Department could share with commissioners.

Stone answered that in preparation for the legislative breakfast, we will be giving commissioners facts about our populations and stories from those we have helped to share.

Peters asked how the Commission can be effective.

Whisenand answered that e-mail would be a good way to reach legislators.

Stone answered that a way to address human rights concerns and get people's attention is to use social marketing techniques and to talk about your points often.

Carnahan asked if handwritten notes get attention.

Whisenand commented that a handwritten note will be in their hands within five minutes. She added that it might also be good to include a fact sheet.

Peters asked if when the Department meets with the Administration and Regulation Appropriations Subcommittee if it would be helpful to have commissioners there. Stone answered that she would take that to the head of the Department.

Whisenand asked how the budget would impact Corey's position as a program planner. Stone answered that right now the entire Department's budget goes through the general fund and the Division is looking to diversify how we get funding. She added that her main goals are to preserve as much seed capital as the Division can, and also keep positions because people are the Department's most valuable resource.

### **Office on the Status of Women update**

Kristen Corey gave an overview of the work she has been doing since the last Commission meeting. Some of the key highlights are:

- Developing a Division-wide quarterly e-newsletter that will be going out to stakeholders
- Developing brochures for each office within the CAS Division for outreach
- Planning for a statewide community advocacy forum for 2017-2018

She added that she is in the planning phase for Capitol Girls, which will take place on Thursday, February 9<sup>th</sup> at the State Capitol. Corey will be working with the Girl Scouts of Greater Iowa and female legislators to make this program happen.

She is also in the planning phase for the Women's History Month video contest and the Iowa Women's Hall of Fame.

### **Women of Achievement Bridge**

Rachelle Hunt Russian gave an update on the status of the Women of Achievement Bridge in Des Moines. Hunt Russian and Peters met with folks from the Principal to discuss what the expectations were for the Commission to take over the nomination process for the bridge.

Hunt Russian stated that they have offered to fund an honors ceremony this year and added that the Friends of the Iowa Commission on the Status of Women could spearhead the search for women's organizations to be the primary sponsor for plaques, which would be around \$2,500 per plaque.

She added that the Principal needs to clarify who owns the maintenance of the bridge.

Peters added that the main reason the plaques are so expensive is that there is elaborate metal work on the bridge and that is why it would be roughly \$2,500 per name on the bridge. She added that the Principal Group gave the gift to the community, but did not have a sustainability plan in place when they did that.

Peters and Hunt Russian recommended that the Commission form a task force of two commissioners who would be willing to work on the project and work with members of the Iowa Women's Hall of Fame to identify people from around the state who could be on the bridge.

Whisenand asked if the Friends of the Iowa Commission on the Status of Women would be the pass through to other entities who would be funding the project.

Peters answered that the Commission would need a sponsor this year to underwrite the costs of the plaques. She added that the Friends of the Iowa Commission on the Status of Women and the Commission could elevate the status of women in the state, but not do the financial piece.

Whisenand asked why the Commission wouldn't have the same commissioners working on the Hall of Fame selection committee as are working on the Women of Achievement Bridge.

Carnahan added that he has a few misgivings about moving forward with the Women of Achievement Bridge. The first is that the Commission's first and primary function is the

Iowa Women's Hall of Fame, and he does not want to see the Bridge and the Iowa Women's Hall of Fame get confused. He stated he is also concerned that whoever takes over financial responsibility will disappear, and that the Commission will be responsible for taking over the financial aspect of the project.

Whisenand added that the Commission does not have financial responsibility to do upkeep and maintenance on the bridge.

Peters added that the Commission needs something in writing about the Commission's responsibilities related to the project.

Whisenand added that she does not see taking over the Bridge nomination process as getting mixed up with the Iowa Women's Hall of Fame.

Coonan and Whisenand stated that they think the Commission should be involved in the Iowa Women of Achievement Bridge nomination process.

Peters stated that instead of adding more responsibilities to the Commission's program planner staff, the Commission could figure out how to make this project mostly volunteer-driven.

Hunt Russian asked commissioner Coonan if, from a legal perspective, the Commission would want to have something in writing from the Principal about the Commission's responsibilities when taking over the project.

Coonan stated that she is here as a layperson, not in a legal capacity for the Commission. Coonan agreed with Hunt Russian that the Commission might want something in writing.

She asked whether the Commission should consult with the Attorney General's office.

Peters stated that she and Hunt Russian would touch base with the Principal again and get back to commissioners.

Whisenand asked how the Commission should move forward.

Peters stated that the Commission should try to get this all set up within 30 days, and include which commissioners want to be involved to help get this moving. She stated the plan is to have a phone call to discuss the plan from the Principal and review within 30 days. Peters added that she would follow-up with commissioners.

### **2017 Iowa Women's Hall of Fame committee**

Peters asked for commissioner volunteers to serve on the 2017 Iowa Women's Hall of Fame selection committee.



Whisenand added that she would be honored to serve on the Iowa Women's Hall of Fame committee and is also interested in serving on the Women of Achievement Bridge committee. She added that she also believed commissioner Gudenkauf (who was absent for the meeting) indicated in the past that he would be interested in serving on the 2017 Iowa Women's Hall of Fame committee.

Coonan and Hunt Russian added that they are also interested in serving on the Women of Achievement Bridge committee.

Coonan stated that she is willing to serve on the Iowa Women's Hall of Fame committee, but does not want to be the chair this year.

Several commissioners asked Whisenand to be the chair of the 2017 Iowa Women's Hall of Fame committee. Whisenand offered to be the chair.

**Motion to accept the formation of the 2017 Iowa Women's Hall of Fame committee as commissioners Whisenand (serving as chair), Gudenkauf and Coonan.**

Carnahan made motion; Hunt Russian seconded motion.

Vote:

Aye: all

No: 0

Motion carried.

Corey added that the deadline for Iowa Women's Hall of Fame nominations is April 1<sup>st</sup>, 2017. The ceremony is Saturday, August 26<sup>th</sup>.

**Report and discussion: Legislative committee proposal**

Peters asked the Commission how commissioners want to push forward the Commission's legislative agenda.

Carnahan passed out a study he received from Iowa Works related to how many employers offer child care as a benefit. According to the 2015 study, 3.7% of full-time positions were offered child care as a benefit. Carnahan pointed out that "benefit" could mean anything from the employee receiving a stipend to employers being flexible with the employee's hours.

Commissioners discussed the topics discussed and agreed upon at the November 9<sup>th</sup> Commission meeting:

- 1) Pregnant Workers Rights Act
- 2) Child Care cliff effect
- 3) CAS budget

Carnahan suggested that the Commission ask to increase to increase the requirement to qualify for child care assistance to 200% of the Federal Poverty Level, instead of the 175% that the ICCAA asked for.

Whisenand suggested the Commission stay with the ICCAA on what they asked (175% of the Federal Poverty Level).

Several commissioners agreed that the Commission should use the language similar to the ICCAA, "to increase the child care income eligibility limit from 145% of the Federal Poverty Level to at least 175%."

Peters suggested a phone meeting in early February to vote on a document that Corey will type up related to the Commission's legislative agenda and to talk further about the Women of Achievement Bridge. Commissioners agreed.

Corey will set up a call in late January/early February to review and vote on the legislative document and talk about the Women of Achievement Bridge.

Peters asked if the Commission as an entity wanted its name and brand listed as a sponsor of the Women's March.

Carnahan noted that he looked at who had endorsed the march and he only say private or not-for-profit entities. He added that he did not see a state entity on the list.

Whisenand and Coonan agreed.

Carnahan asked if the Commission should give a scenario such as this to the Attorney General's office and ask if this violates the Hatch Act. He asked if there is a state law in Iowa that covers this type of scenario. He added that he will put something together related to the Hatch Act for commissioners.

Peters added that no matter how much the organizers can state that this is a bipartisan march, the Commission cannot control how other people will react to it.

Tibbetts and Mostaert thanked the Commission for listening to their proposal and for having them at the meeting.

Whisenand added that she appreciated Tibbetts and Mostaert bringing this issue to the Commission. Commissioners Peters, Coonan, Hunt Russian and Carnahan agreed. Peters concluded with reminding commissioners that the Commission will have a phone meeting in early February. Corey will type out the legislative agenda and get it to commissioners.

She added that the next meeting after February would be in May by phone to vote for the 2017 Iowa Women's Hall of Fame nominees. She asked if it would be necessary to have a brief meeting after the DHR legislative breakfast on February 23<sup>rd</sup>.

Stone stated that several other commissions are meeting on that day and several are setting up meetings with specific legislators as a group. She added that the Commission could hand them their legislative agenda on that day.

Commissioners thought that was a good idea to meet with specific legislators.

Commissioners also discussed the value of connecting on that day and potentially getting together for lunch.

### **Adjournment**

**Carnahan made a motion to adjourn. Whisenand seconded the motion.**

Ayes: all

Nay: none

Motion carried.

Meeting adjourned at 1:07 p.m.