

Commission on Women
February 24, 2025

A meeting of the Commission on Women was held on this date beginning at 4:01 p.m. over a video conference call.

Notice of this meeting was sent to all local news media.

Present: Chair Trischia Khouri, Louis Weinstein, Leslie Skarden, Cynthia Bolt, Hilda Gadsden, Emma Cromedy, Amy Castle-Rogers, Carolyn Wright-Porcher, Jennifer Brown, Denise Fugo, and Kate Wade.

Staff: Patrick Carlson, recording.

1. Approval of Minutes

On a motion of Commissioner Weinstein, seconded by Commissioner Brown, the Commission voted unanimously to approve the November 20, 2024 minutes as amended.

2. Discussion

Commissioner Weinstein said he had contacted Mamava concerning the company's lactation pods. There were several options of varying sizes and costs with a phone-booth sized pod starting at a purchase price of just under \$20,000-in addition to a maintenance contract price. He supported the concept but thought it was very expensive.

Commissioner Brown asked if it was glass like an actual phone booth.

Commissioner Weinstein said it was not clear it was just shaped like a phone booth. He said it functioned as a small closet that could be placed in a safe space near bathrooms so it would not be necessary to provide plumbing to the structure.

Chair Khouri asked if there were other municipalities that had contracted with Mamava that the commission could contact for reference.

Commissioner Weinstein said Mamava had previously established contracts in other large municipalities, but they did not mention a specific city. He said they could also establish their own lactation spaces in different downtown areas for much less money.

Commissioner Fugo said that Mayor Cogswell had introduced a proposal for 118 rapid housing units for homeless men and she said representatives of various nonprofits had asked him to commit to producing a similar project for the roughly 5,000 housing insecure women and their children throughout the region. She suggested contacting the proposed manufacturer of the rapid housing pods to create similar shelters for lactation purposes.

Commissioner Castle-Rogers said the Mamava app advertised three downtown Charleston locations at MUSC.

Chair Khouri said she would contact different large facilities in the region to see if they offered any specific lactation spaces and get a sense of what large employers were already offering.

Commissioner Fugo said there was a woman at the Chamber of Commerce who had a research database for all the companies in the state and could be a good resource to utilize.

Commissioner Weinstein said that the homeless situation was a much more dire need.

Commissioner Fugo said they could focus on educating companies to provide their own lactation spaces and the commission could focus on the housing crisis. She also mentioned that she saw the County library system was now offering meals to people under 18, which she thought was a great idea and helped to combat the epidemic of America children eating less than three meals a day.

Chair Khouri asked Commissioner Bolt if there were any lactation spaces on the Citadel campus.

Commissioner Bolt said there was one space in the humanities faculty building.

Chair Khouri asked if there were any other known lactation spaces throughout the City.

Commissioner Fugo said she would contact the College of Charleston and Roper St. Francis hospital to ask about their respective campuses.

Chair Khouri said she would commit to attending City Council meetings and would appreciate any Commissioners who were also available to join.

Commissioner Fugo said they should create a calendar invite to remind people to attend.

Chair Khouri said she would circulate a schedule with links to the agendas and submission pages for public comments.

Chair Khouri asked Commissioner Gadsden to talk about the South Carolina Women in Leadership organization.

Commissioner Gadsden said the organization focused on electing more women to public office. She said they could help elevate several of the topics the commission had discussed and suggested a future collaboration.

Chair Khouri said she spoke with Jennifer Cook about the commission having a landing page on the City website that listed external links and contact information for relevant organizations and initiatives.

Commissioner Fugo suggested inviting a representative from Transformation Village in Asheville, NC, to talk about introducing a similar concept in South Carolina.

Commissioner Brown suggested supporting the circulation of a community resource guide and adding it to the proposed landing page.

On a motion of Commissioner Brown, seconded by Commissioner Gadsden, the Commission voted unanimously to explore creating a community resource guide.

Commissioner Bolt proposed asking the Mayor's office to include some of the discussed initiatives in the weekly email newsletter.

On a motion of Commissioner Bolt, seconded by Commissioner Brown, the Commission voted unanimously to ask the Mayor's office to include some of the discussed initiatives in the weekly City newsletter.

3. Adjournment

There being no further discussion, the Commission adjourned at 4:51 p.m.

Patrick Carlson
Clerk of Council's Office