

Baltimore Commission for Women
Bylaws

GENERAL PROVISIONS

Name and Authority

- A. The name of the Commission is the Baltimore Commission for Women.
- B. The Commission was formed by the Mayor and City Council of Baltimore via Art. 1, Subtitle 20 of the Baltimore City Code.

Purpose

- A. The Baltimore Commission for Women will be established in the community as a resource for women to assist them in accessing information and services intended to improve their lives and the lives of their families.
- B. The Commission will empower women through education and coordination of opportunities. The Commission will work to ensure that barriers to equal rights and opportunities for these individuals will be reduced, with the eventual goal of eliminating such barriers throughout Baltimore City.
- C. The Commission is specifically tasked with the following:
 - (1) Referrals
 - (a) develop an information and referral system for all services in the City related to women;
 - (b) recommend other services when a need for them is determined;
 - (2) Forum for Amelioration
 - (a) serve as a dedicated platform that addresses and seeks solutions to the distinct challenges encountered by women, especially those who have been marginalized, and serve as a space to identify and rectify any instances of gender-based discrimination or prejudice;
 - (3) Research and Education
 - (a) conduct research, conduct policy analysis, and create public information and education programs and activities to assist in addressing the needs of women;
 - (b) institute and conduct other programs, meetings, and conferences to promote equal rights, mental health & wellness, economic, social, and political empowerment opportunities for women;
 - (c) ensure programs and activities address the special needs of women related to race, age, national origin, religious preference, disability, sexual preference, physical characteristics, marital status, reproductive health, economic status, and involvement in the criminal legal system;
 - (4) Monitor Workforce
 - (a) review and monitor the conditions of women in the workforce of Baltimore City;

- (b) make recommendations promoting equal pay for work of equal value and equitable representation by women in all job levels;
 - (c) direct attention to the problems facing women in the workforce.
- (5) Advise and Counsel
 - (a) advise and counsel the residents of Baltimore City, the City Council, the Mayor, and the various departments and agencies of the City, state and federal governments on all matters involving women;
 - (b) recommend programs and legislation it considers necessary and proper to promote and ensure equal rights, equal opportunities and equal access to services for all persons regardless of gender;
- (6) Evaluate Policies and Programs
 - (a) review and evaluate the impact of existing and proposed policies, programs and legislation affecting women;
 - (b) monitor existing policies and program implementation to ensure transparency and compliance;
- (7) Seeking to Remove Inequalities
 - (a) Work to remove inequalities due to discrimination or prejudice on the basis of gender in housing, recreation, employment, education, community services, criminal justice, financing, credit, insurance and related matters.
- (8) Monitor Boards and Commission
 - (a) Monitor City government so as to ensure the equitable representation of women on all City Boards and Commissions.

MEMBERSHIP

Composition

- A. The Commission shall consist of 19 members appointed by the Mayor in accordance with Article IV Section 6 of the City Charter.
- B. All candidates are subject to the standard confirmation process for Boards and Commissions members as outlined in the City Charter. The appointment of members shall be made without regard to political affiliation.
 - (1) Non-Voting Members
 - (a) The Mayor may appoint 1 or more members of the Baltimore City Council or the Baltimore City Delegation to the Maryland General Assembly as additional, non-voting members of the Commission.
 - (2) Notwithstanding the Mayor's appointments, any female member of the City Council shall be an ex officio, non-voting member of the Commission.
 - (3) The Mayor shall appoint a representative from the Baltimore City Office of Equity and Civil Rights or its successor agency to be a non-voting member of the Commission.

Duties & Expectations

- A. Commission members shall attend all scheduled meetings in a timely manner or notify the Chairperson as soon as practically possible that they will not be in attendance.
- B. Commission members shall review the agenda and read all meeting materials prior to the start of the meeting and be prepared to have a robust discussion of all items.
 - (1) If members are unable to complete all of the required review, they should notify the Chairperson prior to the start of the meeting.
- C. Commission members shall confine their remarks to the question under discussion or debate, avoid digression and refrain from personal attacks.
- D. Commission members shall also respond to communications from the Chairperson and Office of Equity and Civil Rights staff members requiring input or feedback on Commission matters within three (3) business days, unless advised otherwise.

Term of Office

- A. Commission members shall serve a four-year term concurrent with the terms of the Mayor and City Council. At the end of a term, a member continues to serve until a successor is appointed.
- B. A member appointed to fill a vacancy in an unexpired term or to succeed a member who is holding over only serves for the remainder of that term.
- C. Any Commission member who wishes to resign shall submit a written resignation letter to the Chair and Director of the Office of Equity and Civil Rights.

Expense Reimbursement

- A. Commission members serve without compensation, however they are entitled to reimbursement for reasonable expenses incurred in the performance of their duties, as provided in the Ordinance of Estimates.
- B. Members seeking reimbursement shall submit itemized receipts for items they wish to be reimbursed for to the Office of Equity and Civil Rights.

Leaves of Absence

- A. The Baltimore City Women's Commission recognizes that members may need to take a leave of absence due to personal, medical, family, or other significant reasons.
- B. All active members of the Baltimore City Women's Commission are eligible to request a leave of absence.

- C. A leave of absence may be granted for a minimum of one (1) month and a maximum of six (6) months. Extensions beyond six (6) months may be considered on a case-by-case basis.
- D. Members that wish to request a leave of absence must submit a written request to the Chairperson of the Commission at least one (1) week prior to the start of the intended leave, except in emergency situations.
- E. The member will be notified by the Chair within one (1) week of submitting the request that the request was received. The notice will also include the leave of absence begin date, and the date at which the member must either return to the Commission or seek an extension. This notice will be shared with the Commission at the next monthly meeting.
- F. The member on leave is excused from all Commission duties and responsibilities for the duration of the leave. The member on leave should share all working documents with the Chairperson. The Commission may appoint an interim member or delegate the duties of the absent member to other members to ensure continued functionality.
- G. The member on leave should provide a preferred method of communication for urgent matters, if possible. The member is encouraged to update the Commission if there are any changes to their return date or if an extension is required.
- H. Upon return, the member will resume their duties and responsibilities. It is the member's responsibility to reorient themselves to the Commission minutes, emails, and working documents. Then, the Chairperson or a designated member will assist in updating the returning member on any important developments or decisions made during their absence.
- I. If a member does not respond to communication attempts and fails to return to their duties after the approved leave period, the Commission will consider the member to have resigned. A new member will then be appointed following the standard selection process.

OFFICERS

Chairperson

- A. The Mayor shall select one member from the Commission to serve as the Chairperson
- B. The responsibility of the Chairperson is to lead meetings, ensure the Board runs smoothly and carries out its assigned activities and verify that all members and officers are meeting expectations.

Vice Chairperson

- A. A Vice Chairperson may also be elected by majority vote from among the Commission members.
- B. The role of the Vice Chairperson is to support the Commission Chairperson with any duties they may assign.

Secretary

- A. A Secretary may also be elected by majority vote from among the Commission members.
- B. The role of the Secretary is to draft agendas, take minutes during meetings, record motions and votes, and complete any necessary documents for the Commission.

Elections

- A. Elections for officers not appointed by the Mayor are to be held yearly at either the second meeting of each start of the Mayoral term or at the first meeting of each calendar year.
- B. If for some reason a Commission officer, who was not appointed by the Mayor, needs to vacate their position for any reason, Commission members may motion to hold an off- cycle election.
- C. Officers serve in their positions until a successor is elected.

MEETINGS

Frequency

- A. The Commission shall meet on the call of the Chairperson as frequently as required to perform its duties, but not less than four (4) times each calendar year.

Voting

- A. A majority of the voting members, whether in person, virtually, or via telephone, constitutes a quorum for the transaction of business, and an affirmative vote by the majority of a quorum is required for official actions

Order of Business

- A. Commission meetings may be held in person, virtually, or by telephone. Meetings will be staffed by members of the Office of Equity and Civil Rights.
- B. The Secretary will draft an agenda for all Commission meetings convened for the purpose of conducting official business.
 - (1) In accordance with the Open Meetings Act, the agenda must be posted at least 24 hours before the meeting date.
 - (2) The Chairperson will review and approve the agenda before posting.
 - (3) If Commission members wish to add an item to the agenda, they should speak with the Chairperson.
 - (4) The Commission Chairperson has the discretion to proceed out of order when practical reasons dictate.

- C. All meetings convened for the purpose of conducting official business and has a quorum of voting commission members present will be governed by the rules contained in the current edition of *Robert's Rules of Order Newly Revised*, and in which utilizing the Rules are not inconsistent with these bylaws, State and Local law, or any special rules of order adopted.

Quorum

- A. Ten (10) or more members will constitute a quorum for the purposes of conducting business.

Attendance

- A. If any member is absent from regularly scheduled meetings more than three (3) times in one (1) calendar year, not counting absences excused by the Chairperson, the member is considered to have resigned.

Open Meetings Act

- A. All meetings convened for the purpose of conducting official business and have a quorum of voting commission members present will be open to the public in compliance with the provisions of the Maryland Open Meetings Act.
- B. All members shall become familiar with the Open Meetings Act and complete the online training within one (1) month of their first meeting.
- B. The Vice Chairperson will be in charge of ensuring compliance with the Act.

Subcommittees

- A. The Commission shall maintain subcommittees as they see fit in accordance with their powers and duties:
- B. Subcommittees shall meet as needed to conduct their business and will provide their meeting schedule to the Chairperson at the beginning of the calendar year.
- C. The Commission may appoint other subcommittees as needed by making a motion and holding a vote.
 - (1) A new subcommittee will be appointed by majority vote.
- D. Each subcommittee shall have a minimum of three (3) members and a maximum of six (6) members.
- E. Subcommittee meetings will take place at a time, date, and location determined by agreement of the subcommittee members.

- F. Subcommittee meetings that do not involve a quorum of the Commission will not be subject to the Open Meetings Act.

REMOVAL

Removal

- A. Each Commission member serves at the pleasure of the Mayor.

PERSONNEL AND BUDGET

Staff

The Director of the Office of Equity and Civil Rights may employ a staff as provided in the Ordinance of Estimates. Staff members shall be members of the classified service.

Volunteers

The Commission may engage the services of volunteer workers and consultants, without salary, as it considers necessary from time to time.

Budget

- A. The Director may expend funds as authorized in the Ordinance of Estimates or in any supplemental appropriations.

COMPLIANCE WITH OTHER LAWS

Confidentiality

- A. Commission members shall maintain confidentiality relating to any records prohibited from disclosure under the Maryland Public Information Act or other applicable law regarding confidentiality of certain records.

Financial Disclosures

- B. Women's Commission members must file financial disclosure statements as required in Article 8, Subtitle 7 of the Baltimore City Code.

EXTERNAL INQUIRIES

Inquiries from the Public

Inquiries directed to Commission members should be sent to the Office of Equity and Civil Rights.

Inquiries From the Media

Media inquiries related to the Commission should be directed to the Office of Equity and Civil Rights

AMENDMENTS**Amendments**

These bylaws are subject to periodic review by the Commission and can be amended, repealed, altered, or rescinded by majority vote of the Commission with seven (7) calendar days' notice.

ADOPTION**Adoption**

- A. These bylaws were approved by the Baltimore Commission for Women on [DATE] and became effective upon adoption.