



HAMPSHIRE-FRANKLIN COMMISSION ON THE STATUS OF WOMEN & GIRLS

BYLAWS

PREAMBLE

The organization and rules of procedure of the Hampshire-Franklin Commission on the Status of Women shall be as follows:

ARTICLE I—NAME

The name of this organization shall be the “Hampshire-Franklin Commission on the Status of Women and Girls”, herein “the Commission.”

ARTICLE II—PURPOSE:

The purpose of the Commission shall be to advance women and girls toward full equity in all areas of life and to promote rights and opportunities for all women and girls. The mission of the Commission on the Status of Women and Girls is to amplify the voices of women and girls¹ across Hampshire-Franklin Counties that facilitates and fosters community, inclusiveness and well-being for women and girls. The Commission stands for fundamental freedoms, basic human rights and the full enjoyment of life for all women and girls across the lifespan. The Commission shall have the following responsibilities:

- a) Study, review, and report on the status of women and girls in the counties;
- b) Inform leaders of business, education, health care, state and local governments and the communications media of matters pertaining to women and girls;
- c) Serve as a liaison between government and community groups concerned with matters affecting women and girls;
- d) Serve as a clearinghouse for information and resources dedicated to women and girls;
- e) Identify and recommend qualified women and girls for appointive positions at all levels of government, business, and local institutions including boards and Commissions, as the Commission deems necessary and appropriate;
- f) Address programs and practices in all state and local agencies as they affect women and girls, as the Commission deems necessary and appropriate;
- g) Consult with executive and legislative bodies about proposed legislation that impacts women and girls as the Commission deems necessary and appropriate;
- h) Promote and facilitate collaboration among local women’s and girls’ organizations, initiatives, and projects in Hampshire and Franklin Counties, as the Commission deems necessary and appropriate.
- i) Provide an avenue to liaise between the Massachusetts Commission on the Status of Women and the regional Commission.

¹ By women and girls, we mean all those who self-identify as such, regardless of the gender they were designated at birth.

ARTICLE III—REPORTING REQUIREMENTS

The Commission shall annually, on or before June 2, report in writing the results of its findings and activities of the preceding year and its recommendations to the Massachusetts Commission on Status of Women.

ARTICLE IV—POWERS OF THE COMMISSION

The powers of the Commission shall include but not be limited to the following:

- a) To advise and submit recommendations and policies to the legislature and agencies, and officers of the state and local subdivisions of government on matters relating to women and girls;
- b) To confer and/or collaborate with stakeholders, organizations, groups, and state departments on matters of concern to women and girls using such voluntary and uncompensated services of private individuals, as may be needed;
- c) To enact bylaws for its own governance;
- d) To hold regular, public meetings and to hold fact-finding hearings and other public forums as it may deem necessary; and
- e) The Commission may request from agencies such information and assistance as the Commission may require.

ARTICLE V—MEMBERS

SECTION 1. FOUNDING MEMBERS

Members shall be appointed by the Massachusetts Commission on the Status of Women in consultation with women's organizations from a pool of applicants who reside in Hampshire and Franklin Counties. The initial members of the Commission shall be appointed for random one-, two-, and three-year terms.

SECTION 2. COUNTY REPRESENTATION

The Commission shall consist of at least nine members drawn from throughout Hampshire and Franklin Counties, proportionately based on the population of each county and representative of the rural, suburban and city constituencies in each, who are to be appointed by the Massachusetts Commission on the Status of Women and Girls.

SECTION 3. APPOINTMENTS

Applications shall be solicited on a rolling basis throughout the year for appointment consideration during the annual appointment period which occurs in September of every year or during any time in which the Commission has a vacancy. The Commission will send its appointment recommendations to the Massachusetts Commission on the Status of Women, which is the appointing authority. The appointments will be made with staggering terms that match the needs of the Commission.

SECTION 4. DIVERSITY

At least nine members of the Commission shall be drawn from diverse racial, ethnic, religious, age, sexual orientation, socio-economic backgrounds, and geographic locations from throughout Hampshire and Franklin Counties and shall have had experience working toward the improvement of the status of women and girls in society.

SECTION 5. TERMS OF OFFICE

A Member shall serve a term of three years or the term that was assigned to her based on the seat she filled - and until her successor is appointed. Each Commissioner is eligible to serve two

consecutive three-year terms.

SECTION 6. VACANCIES

Any Commissioner may resign by submitting her written resignation to the Chair of the Hampshire-Franklin Commission on the Status of Women and Girls. Upon acceptance, the resignation shall be sent to the Massachusetts Commission on the Status of Women.

The Hampshire-Franklin Commission on the Status of Women will review the applications forwarded by the state commission and send its recommendations to the Massachusetts Commission on the Status of Women, which will have the authority to fill the vacancy with a new Commissioner for the unexpired balance of the term.

SECTION 7. COMMISSIONERS EMERITA

Any Commissioner who serves out two years is eligible to become a Commissioner Emerita. To become a Commissioner Emerita, such Commissioners whose terms have expired may be invited or may request such a title from the Hampshire Franklin Commission on the Status of Women and Girls, which shall be put to a vote of the Executive Board.

The purpose of a Commissioner Emerita is to remain connected to the work of the Commission and to continue to participate and have a voice. Commissioners Emerita may participate in all meetings of the Commission. The Emerita Commissioner shall have no voting privileges.

ARTICLE VI—FINANCES

SECTION 1. FISCAL YEAR

The fiscal year of the Commission shall be July 1 through June 30.

SECTION 2. FUNDING

The Commission may accept and solicit funds, including any gifts, donations, grants, or bequests, or any state or federal funds for any of the purposes of the enabling legislation, for providing outreach and the ongoing study of matters concerning women within our communities.

SECTION 3. ACCOUNTS

Such funds shall be deposited in a separate account, be received by the Treasurer, and expended by the Commission in accordance with state law and intent of the donor or grantors.

ARTICLE VII—COMPENSATION AND LIABILITY

SECTION 1. COMPENSATION

The members of the Commission shall receive no compensation for their services.

SECTION 2. LIABILITY

No person who is now or who later becomes a member of this Commission shall be personally liable to its creditors for any indebtedness or liability, and any and all creditors of this Commission shall look to the assets of this Commission for payment.

ARTICLE VIII—OFFICERS

SECTION 1. OFFICERS

The Commission shall elect from among its members a Chair, a Vice-Chair, Treasurer, and a Clerk, and any other officers it deems necessary. Only members of the Commission shall be eligible for nomination and election as officers of the Commission. If an officer of the Commission shall, during her term of office, no longer be a member of the Commission, she shall automatically cease to be an officer of the Commission.

SECTION 2. ELECTION OF OFFICERS

Officers shall be elected annually, at the last meeting of the fiscal year. The officers shall be elected by a majority of Commission members.

SECTION 3. OFFICERS' TERM OF OFFICE

The elected officers shall serve for a term of one year. The elected officers shall not serve more than two successive terms in any particular office. However, under extenuating circumstances, the Commission's Chair may serve a third consecutive one-year term.

SECTION 4. OFFICER VACANCIES

A vacancy in the Chair's office shall be filled until the next annual election by the Vice-Chair. All other vacancies shall be filled by a majority vote of the members of the Commission. In the event the Chair and Vice-Chair are both unable to preside, a quorum of the Commission shall elect a temporary Chair.

ARTICLE IX—DUTIES OF THE OFFICERS

The duties of the officers are as follows:

SECTION 1. CHAIR

The Chair shall be entrusted to act and carry out policies and decisions of the Commission between meetings of the Commission. The Chair shall assure that the legislative mandates of the Commission are carried out as prescribed by the Legislature and as formulated in these by laws to:

- a) Call and preside at all meetings of the Commission and conduct these in accordance with parliamentary rules;
- b) Be ex-officio (non-voting) member of all committees with the exception of the nominating committee;
- c) Call special meetings when deemed necessary or desirable;
- d) Set the agenda for Commission meetings;
- e) Serve as spokesperson for the Hampshire-Franklin Commission or direct such representation before the public and governmental bodies;
- f) Oversee all recommendations and reports to and from the MA Commission;
- g) Perform such other duties as the Commission may prescribe from time to time;
- h) Sign such instruments as shall be authorized by the Commission;
- i) Share all information pertaining to the work of the Commission in a transparent fashion;
- j) Endeavor to foster and facilitate the democratic process.

SECTION 2. VICE-CHAIR

The Vice Chair shall:

- a) Support any role as needed and will collaborate with the Chair in setting the agenda on the

- Commission meeting;
- b) Assure that the Commission is in compliance with the Open Meeting Law, including but not limited to timely dissemination of meeting notifications to town and city clerks;
 - c) Assure that an attendance roster is maintained for each Commission meeting and committee meetings;
 - d) Perform all duties of the Chair in the event of the Chair's absence or inability to serve, or in the event of a vacancy in that office until it is filled
 - e) Shall also perform other duties as are designated by the Commission and hereafter in these bylaws.

SECTION 3. TREASURER

The Treasurer shall:

- a) Ensure that all financial records are maintained and shall oversee budget preparation and reporting;
- b) Monitor the budget and financial records on an ongoing basis and in accordance with the provisions and requirements of the law and state agencies;
- c) Present the Treasurer's report at regular commission meetings;
- d) Strategize with the Commission as to how to apply for and receive state, local, private and/or individual grants, appropriations and/or gifts in compliance with applicable state laws and regulations in order to further the purposes of the Commission;
- e) Present an annual financial report to the Commission and the MA Commission;
- f) f) Perform all of the duties incident to the office of Treasurer and such other duties as from time to time may be assigned, including accepting funds on behalf of the Commission with the Commissioners approval;
- g) Sign such financial instruments as shall be authorized and or co-signed by the Chair.

SECTION 4. CLERK

The Clerk shall:

- a) Be responsible for preparing, editing, distributing and archiving the minutes of all regular and special meetings of the Commission;
- b) Assure that copies of the minutes are on record and available;
- c) Act as historian to the Commission by assuring that all general correspondence, records of meetings and committees, and business before the Commission is maintained, and transferred to the incoming Clerk;
- d) Perform all other duties necessary for the maintenance of adequate records, files and communications of the Commission.

ARTICLE XI—COMMITTEES

SECTION 1. ORGANIZATION

The Commission may create such committees as it deems necessary to carry out the work of the Commission.

SECTION 2. STANDING COMMITTEES, SPECIAL COMMITTEES, AND TASK FORCES

The Commission may establish Standing Committees for ongoing tasks. Additionally, special committees and tasks forces may also be established.

The work of the Standing Committees, special committee and task forces shall be determined by goals and objectives established annually by the Commission.

All committees shall submit their recommendations to the full Commission for approval for such recommendations to be acted upon.

Each Commission member must serve on at least one committee. Commission members may volunteer to serve on the committee(s) of their choice. In the event that a member does not express a preference or there is an unfulfilled Committee position, the Chair may fill the opening by appointment.

The Commission is empowered to appoint committees, task forces, councils, or other appropriate bodies, to study specialized areas of concern and report their findings to the Commission; disseminate information on issues relating to women; develop and promote programs and services to women; and advocate for women's equity.

All Committee Chairs shall be Commissioners. Chairs and Co-Chairs of any standing committees created by the Commission shall be elected by the members of the individual standing committees at their first meeting of the fiscal year.

However, membership on such committees shall not be limited to Commissioners. Special representatives other than Commission members may be appointed by the Chair to serve on task forces for the period of time designated by the Commission and would submit interim reports on their special assignments as the Commission requests.

Only Commissioners may vote to elect special committee Chairs, and only Commissioners may be Chairs of special committees.

ARTICLE XII—MEETINGS

SECTION 1. SCHEDULE

The Commission shall meet at least six times during the calendar year, typically once a month. Meeting locations shall rotate between Hampshire and Franklin Counties or be held remotely, and shall be accessible in compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA).

SECTION 2. QUORUM

A majority of Commissioners currently holding office shall constitute a quorum for the transaction of Commission business, unless it conflicts with the Open Meeting Law. In the absence of a quorum, the executive committee can act on behalf of the Commission, provided that a quorum of the executive committee is present.

SECTION 3. OPEN MEETING LAW

All meetings shall be conducted in compliance with the Open Meeting Law. Executive sessions, as per the law, may be conducted.

SECTION 4. SPECIAL MEETINGS

A special meeting of the Commission can be called by:

- a) The Chair; or
- b) A majority vote of the Commission.

The purpose of the meeting shall be stated in the call. No business can be transacted at the meeting except that stated in the call. Except in cases of emergency, at least three days' notice must be given to the membership.

A special meeting can be conducted if a quorum of the Commissioners is present.

SECTION 6. PUBLIC COMMENT

Observers may attend meetings of the Commission and may be granted the privilege of the floor by vote of the Commission members.

Normally, at least fifteen minutes will be set-aside at the beginning of the meetings for this purpose. In addition, visitors may speak to specific issues as they arise during the meeting at the discretion of the Chair and the Commissioners.

SECTION 7. ATTENDANCE

All Commissioners are expected to maintain regular attendance at meetings of the full Commission, and to participate fully and effectively in such committees or task forces as are necessary and appropriate to conduct the business of the Commission. It's an expectation of the commission that if a commissioner is unable to attend that a notification will be send to the chair at earliest convenience. The Clerk of the Commission shall maintain a record of attendance at each Commission meeting.

After a Commissioner's third unexcused absence from regularly-scheduled meetings of the full Commission, the Chair of the Commission shall notify the MA Commission of the failure of that Commissioner to comply with the Commission's attendance requirements; provided, however, that such Commissioner may attach her own explanation for the reasons for her absences.

ARTICLE XIII—VOTING PRIVILEGES

At any Commission meeting or committee meeting, each member of the Commission shall be entitled to one vote. There shall be no proxy voting.

ARTICLE XV—AMENDMENTS TO THE BYLAWS

These bylaws may be amended at any regular meeting of the Commission by a two-thirds vote of the Commissioners present and voting provided that the proposed amendment has been submitted at the previous meeting. Bylaws will be reviewed a month prior to the annual meeting, any amendments should be drafted and submitted to the commission for review and vote at the regional commission's annual meeting.

ARTICLE XVI—POLICY ADOPTION AND AMENDMENTS

Policies may be adopted, amended, or repealed by a majority of all votes cast by the Commissioners present and voting, provided that the proposed material has been submitted at the previous meeting.

ARTICLE XVII—PARLIAMENTARY AUTHORITY

When not in conflict with these bylaws, Robert's Rules of Order (Newly Revised) shall govern the actions of the Commission.

Reviewed and Adopted: January 2024