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Mayor's Office of Resilience and Equity

## **Tulsa Women's Commission**

Regular Meeting | March 7, 2025 | 12:00 – 1:00 pm

City Hall at One Technology Center | Room 411

### **Meeting Minutes**

Commissioners Present: Premadonna Braddick, Mary Quinn Cooper, Susan Crenshaw, Dezeray Edwards, Ashleigh Frohrip, Betsy Jackson, Charisa Jacobs, Deidra Kirtley, Laura Latta, Amy Mariska, Kate Neary, Maria Carlota Palacios

Commissioners Absent: Janet Levit, Meg Myers Morgan

#### **I. Call to Order**

- a. Chairwoman Latta called the meeting to order at 12:01 pm.

#### **II. Approval of Meeting Minutes**

- a. Chairwoman Latta entertained a motion to approve the February meeting minutes.
  - i. Commissioner Crenshaw made a motion, Commissioner Kirtley seconded.
    1. Aye: 10, Nay: 0
    2. Commissioners Braddick and Jacobs were not yet present in the meeting.
  - ii. Motion carried, February meeting minutes approved.

#### **III. Chair / Vice Chair Report**

- a. Chairwoman Latta noted the exciting launch of the Office of Children, Youth, and Families. Already invited the folks overseeing the office to attend a future meeting once they're more established. Commissioners expressed excitement.

#### **IV. Wrap Up: Women's Economic Security and Housing Stability**

- a. Completed first term of inquiry focused on women's economic security and housing stability. Looked at a variety of topics:
  - i. Economic security – Technology training opportunities (Abisoye Ajai and Commissioner Edwards)
  - ii. Housing stability (Housing Solutions Tulsa and Commissioner Jacobs)
- b. Reflect on Presentations, topics, and one-pagers**
  - i. Chairwoman Latta prepared a one-pager for each inquiry area (Appendix A). Commissioners reviewed the document.



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- ii. Vice Chair Neary asked about a one-page brief to present to local high schools and colleges to highlight technology career pathways and support students selecting this opportunity.
    - 1. Commissioner Jacobs agrees a student-facing resource would be valuable.
    - 2. Commissioner Carlota Palacios mentioned career fairs can be a good avenue to get this information out. Need to have it designed to be appealing to students. Lexi shared she can ask the City's communications team about this.
  - iii. Commissioner Edwards shared there are already connections with local tech companies and area schools that can be leveraged. Reminder that this information needs to be delivered to the Mayor in some way, need more details about resources on resources already engaging in this work and what the City can amplify.
  - iv. Chairwoman Latta synthesized that audiences can include students (youth and adult learners) and the Mayor's office.
  - v. Commissioner Carlota Palacios noted that the commission should spread the word about NACA. Perhaps could write an editorial for Tulsa World.
  - vi. Commission discussed avenues to get the word out about these resources, including the City of Tulsa's social media, nonprofit organization's social media and email newsletters, and discussing with City of Tulsa staff.
  - vii. Commissioners shared positive reflections on the structure of the first term of inquiry. Appreciated insights from different sectors, exposure to new resources, increased awareness of initiatives in Tulsa.
- c. Discuss resources generated and potential action items**
- i. Priority Items:
    - 1. Communication of accessibility and pathways.
    - 2. Lean into areas of focus of the Mayor's office, such as housing.
    - 3. Determine channels available to share with community.
  - d. Product of this first term of inquiry will be a brief that synthesizes the information.

**V. Planning: Mental Health, Human Trafficking, and Trauma Recovery**

- a. Second term of inquiry will be from April – June.
  - i. Two speakers slated for the April meeting. Commissioner Braddick will speak in June and invite others to present alongside her. Commissioner Kirtley will help identify a speaker(s) for May's meeting.
  - ii. Vice Chair Neary recommended inviting someone with lived experience to come speak. Commissioner Braddick offered to share her insights from her personal and professional experiences and noted the importance of cultural sensitivity and considering the intersection of race when discussing trauma recovery.



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- b. Commissioners were in consensus that they will proceed with the second term of inquiry as laid out.
- c. Third term of inquiry will focus of women's health, safety, and empowerment and will take place from August – October.

## **VI. Old Business**

### **a. YWCA Pinnacle Awards Update**

- i. Commissioner Mariska shared a call for support/donations from YWCA Tulsa.
- ii. Commissioner Jackson noted that commissioners will need to coordinate their attendance individually. Commissioner Mariska will ask the YWCA Tulsa team about a discounted ticket or a way for the commission to sit together.
- b. Atlas School Equal Pay Day Event next Friday, March 14 from 5 – 7. Chairwoman Latta will speak about TWC and TWC will have a table. Reach out to Chairwoman Latta if you are available and interested in attending.

## **VII. New Business**

- a. Chairwoman Latta shared a legislative update highlighting Oklahoma bills related to women's issues. Can track through Legiscan.

## **VIII. Announcements / Public Comments**

- a. Commissioner Carlota Palacios shared Tulsa Educare received a \$3 million grant to support childcare centers.
- b. Commissioner Jacobs shared Royce Myer Gallery is having a women's month exhibit, her art will be featured in the exhibit. Opening is today, March 7 and the exhibit will be up all month.
- c. Commissioner Braddick will be on a panel on March 29 from 10 – 2:30 at Greenwood Cultural Center.

## **IX. Adjournment**

- a. Chairwoman Latta entertained a motion to adjourn.
  - i. Vice Chair Neary made a motion, Commissioner Edwards seconded.
    - 1. Aye: 12, Nay: 0
  - ii. Motion carried, meeting adjourned at 12:55 pm.



## **Tulsa Women's Commission: Advancing Women's Opportunities in Tulsa**

From October 2024 through February 2025, the Tulsa Women's Commission has been actively investigating three critical areas affecting women in our community: economic security, technology training opportunities, and housing stability. These interconnected issues represent both significant challenges and promising pathways for women in Tulsa. Through research, community engagement, and collaboration with local organizations, the Commission has compiled valuable information to guide policy recommendations and support initiatives that empower women economically, professionally, and personally. This document summarizes our key findings and strategic opportunities in each focus area.

### **Economic Security: Building Career Pathways in Technology**

Tulsa is positioning itself as an emerging technology hub through initiatives led by the Tulsa Innovation Labs (TIL), piloted by the George Kaiser Family Foundation. With projections to create 56,000 jobs by 2033 and capture \$1.6 billion of the global market in autonomous systems, these initiatives aim to ensure 20,000 of those positions are filled by women. Currently, women represent only 33% of the tech workforce.

The earnings potential in technology careers presents significant economic opportunities for women. Entry-level positions such as IT Technician (\$32,200-\$59,696) and IT Specialist (averaging \$71,270) provide solid foundations, while advanced roles in cybersecurity, data science, and cloud architecture offer six-figure salaries ranging from \$105,000 to over \$330,000 annually.

Several Tulsa-based employers are actively hiring in these fields, including:

- Data Science & AI: Data Annotation, Microsoft, ServiceNow
- Cybersecurity: AAON, QuikTrip, NSU, ONEOK, BOK Financial
- Cloud Computing: Lumen, Cherokee Federal, Family & Children's Services
- Engineering & Design: QuikTrip, Cox Communications, Google, Xperi, Zeeco



## **Educational Opportunities: Technology Training**

Despite the opportunities in technology, women face significant barriers to entry and advancement. Less than 20% of leadership positions in technology are held by women, and less than 30% of technology jobs overall. Half of women in tech report experiencing gender discrimination, and 50% leave the field by age 35. Women are also underrepresented in STEM education, comprising only 20-22% of computer science, engineering, and physics degrees.

Tulsa offers numerous education and training pathways to help women overcome these barriers:

Tulsa's educational institutions offer diverse technology programs, including TCC's 28+ tech programs and Cyber Skills Center, OU Polytechnic's degrees in AI and cybersecurity, and specialized programs at OSU, TU, and NSU. Non-degree options include Tulsa Tech's information technology programs and Atlas School's full-stack development curriculum.

To address specific barriers, the Commission has identified several areas requiring focused attention:

- Accessible training options that accommodate caregiving responsibilities
- Financial support for equipment, tuition, and living expenses during career transitions
- Mentorship programs that connect women with role models in the industry
- Professional networks that provide ongoing support and opportunities



## **Housing Stability: Foundations for Economic Mobility**

Housing stability represents a fundamental requirement for women's economic security and career advancement. Currently, Tulsa faces significant housing challenges that disproportionately affect women. The city needs 13,000 affordable housing units to meet current demand, with average rents of \$1,000/month requiring minimum wage earners to work 100 hours weekly to afford housing.

Housing instability and homelessness affect many Tulsa women, with 1,389 individuals experiencing homelessness according to the 2024 Point-in-Time count. Of particular concern for women are contributing factors like domestic violence (the second highest cause for women re-entering homelessness) and loss of income/benefits. Oklahoma's lack of tenant protection laws, including anti-retaliation provisions, makes addressing housing issues particularly challenging for vulnerable residents.

Strategic solutions being implemented include:

1. Housing Solutions/A Way Home for Tulsa (AWH4T) strategic plan focusing on preventing homelessness, transforming care systems, increasing housing access, and building community partnerships
2. The NACA (Neighborhood Assistance Corporation of America) mortgage program, which offers character-based lending without credit score requirements, no down payments, and no closing costs
3. Advocacy for affordable housing development in all Tulsa neighborhoods
4. Tenant protection initiatives through policy change and educational programs

## **Conclusion**

The Tulsa Women's Commission recognizes that economic security, technology training, and housing stability are deeply interconnected issues affecting women's opportunities and wellbeing in our community. By focusing on developing technology career pathways, eliminating barriers to training and education, and ensuring access to stable, affordable housing, we can create a more equitable future for women in Tulsa. The Commission remains committed to advocating for policies and programs that address these critical areas and to working collaboratively with community partners to implement effective solutions. Through these combined efforts, we aim to empower women economically and socially, strengthening our entire community in the process.