Wayne County Commissioners wear white to honor 100th anniversary of women’s vote

The women of the Wayne County Commission were dressed in white for the Thursday, June 20, commission meeting to honor of the 100th anniversary of the 19th Amendment, which granted women the right to vote in all elections throughout the United States.

The 19th Amendment was ratified by the Michigan Legislature on June 10, 1919, and adopted as part of the U.S. Constitution in August 1920.

Suffragists, those who campaigned for the right to vote in the early 20th century, traditionally dressed in white to call attention to their cause and to stand out in the black and white newspaper photographs of their era.

The meeting also included a program on the history of the suffrage movement and the 19th Amendment featuring Nancy Kursman, professor of political science at the University of Michigan-Dearborn.

Dr. Kursman reminded listeners that suffragists were often the subjects of sexist, racist and physical attacks and that full suffrage for all Americans wasn’t achieved until the landmark Voting Rights Act of 1965.

“The truth is that suffragists – men and women, black and white – were not handed the right to vote. They had to fight for it,” she said.

Dr. Kursman was introduced by Commissioner Melissa Daub (D-Canton), who chairs the commission’s Special Task Force on the 100th Anniversary of Women’s Suffrage.
The special task force was created earlier this year by commission Chair Alisha Bell (D-Detroit). Its members include Commissioners Melissa Daub, Jewel Ware (D-Detroit), Martha G. Scott (D-Highland Park), Ilona Varga (D-Lincoln Park) and Diane Webb (D-Livonia).

The meeting was held in the Wayne County Commission Chambers, located on the mezzanine level of the Guardian Building, 500 Griswold, in Detroit.