

## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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## Milwaukee 2020 Host Committee Announces New Leadership Team

**MILWAUKEE**—The Board of Directors of the Milwaukee 2020 Host Committee today announced the leadership team that will direct the Committee’s ongoing critical work in preparing for the 2020 Democratic National Convention. The Board made two new appointments—each a well-known leader in the Milwaukee community—while also retaining and elevating three key advisors.

**Raquel Filmanowicz** will serve as **Chief Executive Officer** of the Milwaukee 2020 Host Committee, where she will oversee and guide the Committee’s fundraising operations, volunteer recruitment efforts, and venue organization plans. Filmanowicz works as Director of U.S. Community Giving for BMO Harris Bank and previously served as Health Operations Administrator/Deputy Chief of Staff at the City of Milwaukee Health Department in the Mayor Tom Barrett Administration. She also serves as Chair of the Board of Directors of Hispanic Professionals of Greater Milwaukee.

**Paula Penebaker** will join the team as **Chief Operating Officer** and will be responsible for administering operations of the Milwaukee 2020 Host Committee, as well as managing the Host Committee staff. Penebaker has extensive leadership and human resources experience and previously served as Chief Executive Officer of YWCA Southeast Wisconsin, where she spent 20 years with the organization. She has also previously served on the Board of the Rotary Club of Milwaukee, as a Trustee for the Public Policy Forum, and as a Trustee for the Milwaukee County Federated Library System. She currently serves on the Board for the Milwaukee World Festival, Inc.

Both will begin their new roles next week.

In addition, **Shirley Ellis**, **Teresa Vilmain**, and **Phillip Walzak** will serve as **Senior Advisors** to the Milwaukee 2020 Host Committee. Vilmain, a convention veteran, has led the Milwaukee 2020 Host Committee during the transition period. All three will provide counsel to the Committee and oversee special projects. These leaders are trusted allies for many stakeholders in the Milwaukee community, and they have provided valuable leadership and guidance to the Host Committee, including during the transition.

“For four days in July, the entire world will see firsthand what those of us here in Milwaukee have always known—this is an amazing city with wonderful people and vibrant communities,” **said Milwaukee 2020 Host Committee Chief Executive Officer Raquel Filmanowicz**. “The convention is a terrific opportunity for Milwaukee and our region to showcase our diversity, our inclusiveness, and all of our many strengths to 50,000 global visitors. I can’t wait to get to work with the incredible Host Committee staff, who every day perform at the highest level, to secure the resources, recruit the volunteers, arrange the local venues, and partner with local vendors to make this convention the best in history.”

“Over the last several months, the Host Committee staff has done a remarkable job of making connections in the community, building out an energetic vision, and preparing Milwaukee for a truly special event,” **said Milwaukee 2020 Host Committee Chief Operating Officer Paula Penebaker**. “I am excited to join the leadership team of this terrific group and continue these important efforts in the months to come. This whole project is about people—as we look to showcase Milwaukee to the world this summer, it will be the hardworking and hospitable people of Milwaukee, and the outstanding members of the Host Committee team, who will make this convention a success for the tens of thousands of visitors we will welcome. It is with great enthusiasm that I join what promises to be a monumental moment in Milwaukee’s history.”

“Raquel and Paula have the skills, experience, leadership, professionalism, and dedication to the Milwaukee community that are key to ensuring the Host Committee’s success moving forward,” **said the Milwaukee 2020 Host Committee Board of Directors**. “We are confident that they will help the Host Committee make history and ensure the economic and societal benefits of the convention will be felt by Milwaukee, Southeastern Wisconsin, and the state as a whole.”

“I am fully confident Milwaukee will put its best foot forward for the 2020 Democratic National Convention, and today’s announcement only reinforces my confidence,” **said Milwaukee Mayor Tom Barrett, Co-Chair of the Milwaukee 2020 Host Committee**. “Raquel Filmanowicz and Paula Penebaker are an ideal team to lead the Host Committee because they both bring records of accomplishment, an understanding of our community, and a love for Milwaukee. I applaud them for their willingness to take on this huge task, and I know they are eager to get to work. They have my enthusiastic support.”

“These highly-respected civic leaders have served the Milwaukee community well for decades and will no doubt successfully lead the Host Committee as we prepare for this historic moment in July,” **said U.S. Congresswoman Gwen Moore, Co-Chair of the Milwaukee 2020 Host Committee**. “Raquel and Paula are supremely qualified and in a terrific position to provide this effort with leadership, wisdom, and guidance. They will make a great Host Committee team even stronger, and I’m thrilled to work with both of them over the next five months.”

“The new leadership team of the Host Committee brings fresh perspective and strong Wisconsin roots to our planning efforts and will help ensure that the 2020 Democratic National Convention is an inspiring experience, not only for the people of Milwaukee but also for the nation,” **said Democratic National Convention Committee CEO Joe Solmonese**. “We look forward to sharing the Democratic Party’s vision for a brighter future with the entire country this summer.”

Over **Filmanowicz’s** tenure at BMO Harris, she has developed several signature community partnerships in health, education, youth development, and the arts. As a member of the Chancellor’s Committee for Hispanic Serving Initiatives, Raquel is helping to establish the strategic priorities through which the University of Wisconsin—Milwaukee will achieve its goal of becoming a federally-designated Hispanic-Serving Institution. As Chair of the Board of Hispanic Professionals of Greater Milwaukee, Raquel helps lead the organization in its important work helping Hispanic professionals and students take their deserved place at the table as leaders of tomorrow.

“Raquel always has a great deal of energy and positivity. She is outgoing, intelligent, and a hard worker. The Host Committee could not have found a more perfect candidate who will help Milwaukee shine,” **said Ricardo Diaz, United Community Center Executive Director.** “She is a great asset to the city who can now showcase that on a national stage. Congratulations to Raquel for this wonderful opportunity.”

“Raquel is an exemplary community leader, and she knows and loves Milwaukee and Wisconsin,” **said Mary Lou Young, retired CEO of the United Way of Greater Milwaukee & Waukesha County.** “She will execute a plan that showcases the best of our region to the rest of the nation. This is an exciting time to be in Greater Milwaukee, and I’m confident Raquel will lead with fierce determination, while adding her well-demonstrated grace.”

**Penebaker** is a member of the Milwaukee Alumnae Chapter of Delta Sigma Theta, Inc. and Milwaukee (WI) Chapter of The Links, Incorporated. Her successful work has earned her awards and recognition from a number of highly-esteemed institutions, including the Milwaukee Business Journal, Community Brainstorming Conference, North Central Service Club, the Medical College of Wisconsin, BizTimes, the Greater Milwaukee Foundation, and Professional Dimensions.

“I fully endorse Paula Penebaker in her new role as the Host Committee's COO,” **said Steve Hesel, System Director for the Milwaukee County Federated Library System.** “Paula served with distinction for roughly six years on the Milwaukee County Federated Library System Board and was a valued trustee. Her unique perspective as a community leader and her genuine concern for the citizens of Milwaukee County was evident any time you spoke with her. She’ll make an excellent addition to the Host Committee as COO.”

“I’ve had the privilege of working with Paula since the 1990s, and there is no one with a greater sense of equity, justice, and fairness,” **said Mary McCormick, Executive Director of the Rotary Club of Milwaukee.** “She is not only level-headed and focused on outcomes; she also inspires her colleagues to be their best selves and produce their best work. Paula is a great asset to Milwaukee, and she will be a great asset to the Milwaukee 2020 Host Committee.”

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### **About the Milwaukee 2020 Host Committee**

*The Milwaukee 2020 Host Committee is responsible for funding, organizing, and hosting the Democratic National Convention. Through community engagement, grassroots fundraising, and intentional inclusion, the Host Committee works to ensure that the convention builds capacity for and makes a lasting, positive impact on Milwaukee and the surrounding region. This is not just a convention in Milwaukee, it’s a convention with Milwaukee. Learn more at [Milwaukee2020.com](http://Milwaukee2020.com), or follow the Milwaukee 2020 Host Committee on [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#), [Instagram](#), and [LinkedIn](#).*