

**CITY OF NORWALK
COMMISSION ON THE STATUS OF WOMEN
REGULAR MEETING
DECEMBER 19, 2022**

ATTENDANCE: Shannon O'Toole Giandurco, Acting Chair; Sharon Baanante, Jasmine Prezzie, Ivonne Zucco, Sarah Rendon Garcia, Chantal Coffy

STAFF: Michelle Woods Mathew, Director of Communications

CALL TO ORDER

Ms. Giandurco called the meeting to order at 7:20 p.m.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

November 21, 2022

****P2 Sec 4 Change to:** Ms. Banaante commended the commission for bringing Margaret Lauder as a guest to the meeting. Ms. Banaante discussed the Arlington, VA practice of bringing non-profit leaders to their commission meetings to discuss and raise awareness of gender-focused issues in the community and encouraged the commission to do the same.

****P3 Sec 4 Change to:** Ms. Banaante explained that the Diversity Committee had created a 22-page presentation on how to make boards and commissions more diverse and that there was a meeting scheduled to present to LaToya Fernandez on November 30.

**** MS. BANAANTE MOVED TO ACCEPT THE MINUTES OF NOVEMBER 21, 2022 AS AMENDED.**

**** MOTION PASSED WITH TWO ABSTENTIONS (GIANDURCO, GARCIA)**

PUBLIC COMMENT

Diane Lauricella
21 Little Fox Lane

Ms. Lauricella said that as an advocate for environmental and social justice, and as a female; she wished this commission would get going. She asked if the public could see the diversity committee's PowerPoint deck. She said she had stood up for women who felt unheard, bullied, and isolated. She said she'd written a letter and that nobody had answered her, so she thought the commission might need to restructure to work better.

She said she was hoping to resolve issues she'd laid out in her letter, but she was being brought before the administration and didn't know what would happen. She said that ignoring her would not make it go away, and that she was willing to help but nobody had responded to her.

OLD BUSINESS

A. 2023 Meeting Dates have been approved

Ms. Giandurco said they'd be changing weeks to ensure that more people would be consistently available. She said that she suggested that they have a working session in person soon.

B. Reports of Committees

- Nominations Committee

There was no action on this item.

- Research Committee

There was no action on this item.

- Diversity Committee

Ms. Banaante said their November meeting with LaToya Fernandez had been rescheduled to January 11. She said that there was already progress happening. Ms. Wood said that the progress was the appointment of the first female chief of the Department of Public Works had led them to do some research and discovered that females held most of the chief and director positions. She said it had been included in a press release.

NEW BUSINESS

a. Update from Michelle Woods Matthews about January meeting speakers

Ms. Matthews said that Claudia Connor planned to reach out to a few elected officials to come and share 2023 legislative information that the commission might want to consider supporting. She said that Dominique Johnson would attend in January.

b. Update from Michelle Woods Matthews on working with the Commission on Women, Children and Seniors (CWCS) in 2023. Discussion and motions on the creation statement committee

Ms. Matthews said she'd seen the Lt. Governor and discussed the commission. The Lt.

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Governor had suggested allowing someone from the CWCS to come speak at an upcoming meeting—and to share ways they could partner. She said the Lt Gov had said that domestic violence legislation was one place they could get involved.

c. Guest Speaker: Senator Bob Duff, Senate Majority Leader on the 2023 legislative session

Senator Duff said that the everyone would be sworn in on January 4 and the session would run through June. He said the legislature was very responsive to constituents, so if people had issues. He said the best way to reach him was email. He noted that of the 2-3000 bills proposed, about 200 would become law.

He said Connecticut Legislature didn't have rules on debate, so they often worked through things work on bipartisan basis. He also noted that there were disagreements based on geography. He said there were a lot of issues this year and that last year they'd done a lot about mental health. He said that they would focus on equity and housing issues, education, energy, more on mental health, criminal justice reform and perhaps cleaning up past laws. He said he thought they needed to put more focus on homelessness.

He noted that Connecticut had done a lot of criminal justice reform and that it was one of the safest states in the nation because of it.

Ms. Banaante asked how people could track a bill. He suggested that if people were interested in a specific topic, they should sign up with advocacy groups to get alerts on issues that may be of interest to them. He said that when bills were first introduced, they were just a plain language concept, and not always easy to understand, and advocacy groups would help. He said they could also look on the website CGA.CT.gov to track bills.

Ms. Banaante asked about written versus in person testimony. He said he thought meetings would still be on Zoom in the new session, and that participation increased via Zoom during the pandemic. He said verbal testimony was great. He said people shouldn't be nervous, just saying something, and saying it authentically makes a difference. He said they could also send something in writing, even short, would help because committee members did read testimony.

Ms. Garcia asked if there had been conversation in planning Paid Family Leave about doing something for families dealing with miscarriage. Senator Duff said he didn't remember but noted that it was an example of something that could be amended if there was a need.

Ms. Matthews asked about timing for identifying bills for the commission to support. Senator Duff said that bills would be submitted by 5p on January 13. He said that early February would be a good time to check in, suggesting they work with advocacy to identify topics, and suggested that they invite Steven Hernandez to speak at a future commission

meeting.

Ms. Banaante asked if they could get together in person in the beginning of the year to start strong. Ms. Matthews said she'd send a Doodle poll out to see what worked for people.

MOTION TO ADJOURN

Ms. Giandurco asked for a motion to adjourn.

**** MS. BAANANTE MOVED TO ADJOURN THE MEETING.**

**** MS. PREZZIE SECONDED.**

**** MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

The meeting adjourned at 8:00 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

L. Grassilli
Telesco Secretarial Service

